

# UNTAPPED POTENTIAL

Gender Inequality in Southern African Mining





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# FOREWORD

Untapped Potential is a sober and deep analysis of the challenges and opportunities to advance not just the representation of women but their leadership role in the mining sector.

For centuries, the mining sector on the African continent has been led by men, most of the time non-Africans. The drive to increase women's representation in the mining sector has gained momentum in the previous two decades. The number of women in the mining sector has been increasing, and women are occupying key positions in the sector – including government ministries, mining companies, chambers of mines and suppliers.

While recognising this noticeable advance in women's representation in the sector both at policy and practice levels, in the five countries looked at (Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe) gender equity, safety and retention of women in the industry still face very serious challenges.

It is clear that more needs to be done. There are two key recommendations that this report provides. Firstly, gender equality must be elevated as a top priority for governments and mining companies in Southern Africa. The responsibility to redress ongoing injustice rests primarily with governments and the private sector through stricter policy enforcement. Secondly, women must fight for their voices to be heard. The urgency to advance women's representation and role in the sector (both industrial and artisanal small-scale mining) will have teeth if it is driven by women themselves. Women's fight must aim for a paradigm shift to re-create a sector that accepts gender diversity and equity, and that deliberately provides an inclusive and protective physical environment for women. Achieving this change will inevitably have an impact on the wider society considering the socio-economic, political and cultural role that mining plays on the continent.

Untapped Potential is a consolidation of five country studies, focussing on the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. I want to thank my colleagues who contributed to these country studies which we hope will be published as stand-alone documents: Darlington Muyambwa (Zimbabwe), Edward Lange (Zambia), Georges Mukuli and Joseph Cihunda (DRC), Monica Mbungua (South Africa), and Luis Huamusse (Mozambique).

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*Claude Kabemba*

*Executive Director*



# ABBREVIATIONS

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
AMV	- African Union's Africa Mining Vision
ASM	- Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining
BBBEE	- Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment
CEDAW	- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CGE	- Commission for Gender Equality
CNAM	- National Council for the Promotion of Women (Mozambique)
DMRE	- Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (South Africa)
DRC	- Democratic Republic of Congo
EITI	- Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
FPRW	- Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work
GEI	- Bloomberg Gender-Equality Index
GRPBMEA	- Gender-Responsive Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Auditing
HCCL	- Hwange Colliery Company Limited
HME	- Heavy Mobile Equipment
HRD	- Human Resources Department
IFC	- International Finance Corporation
IGF	- Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals and Sustainable Development
ILO	- International Labour Organization
ILRA	- Industrial and Labour Relations Act
ISSN	- International Standard Serial Number
LSM	- Large-Scale Mining
MIREME	- The Mozambican Ministry of Mineral Resources
MSG	- Multi-Stakeholder Group
NRGI	- Natural Resource Governance Institute
OSISA	- Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa
SADC	- Southern African Development Community
SARW	- Southern Africa Resource Watch
SMEs	- Small and Medium Enterprises
STEM	- Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math
TVET	- Technical Vocational Education and Training
USGS	- U.S. Geological Survey
WILSA	- Women in Law in Southern Africa
ZCDC	- Zimbabwe Consolidated Diamond Company



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Governments and mining companies in Southern Africa agree that greater gender equality is desirable, and are making some progress towards this goal.

Efforts are being made to address the obstacles faced by women in mining and to ensure that their needs and rights are respected, but progress is slow. Ending discrimination against women in mining will not be given priority until women's voices are heard much more clearly by decision-makers.

This document draws on research in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. It examines the roles of government and mining companies before making recommendations on how to end gender inequality in the mining sector.

## The Nature of the problem

Mining has traditionally been seen as 'men's work', and women were assumed to also be unsuited to management roles in the industry. These prejudices have not disappeared, and are exacerbated by women's lack of power in the broader society and by their lack of access to skills and training.

Although more women are now being employed in the industry, only about five per cent of those employed in the formal mining sector in Southern Africa are women. Over 40 per cent of those in the African continent's artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) sector are estimated to be women, but these women face particular difficulties in relation to mineral licences, access to capital, health and safety. Women engaged in ASM are often forced into it in order to survive, rather than choosing it because they see it as a route to advancement.

Women in mining face sexual harassment and violence. It is important to understand gender

inequality in the mining industry – and in the wider society – as the consequence of a power imbalance between men and women.

## The Role of governments

While the governments of the five countries studied are obliged by their constitutions and by international treaties to pursue gender equality, this has seldom been translated into legislation that specifically governs the mining industry. All five countries (and particularly South Africa) have adopted laws that promote gender equality. These laws can be used to enforce women's rights in mining activity, but this will require active lobbying.

Where national policies and programmes exist to promote the equality of women, these often lack clear goals and targets (particularly in relation to mining).

## The Role of mining companies

Unlike national governments, formal mining companies have generally not made a firm commitment to gender equality. While they say that they want to see more women participating in the industry, this is seldom seen as a core priority.

While some companies (e.g., Kibali gold mine in the DRC) have adopted an approach that others could follow, other companies insist that they are 'gender blind' rather than taking active measures to advance equality. Few companies have adopted clear targets for women's participation, and those that have are still aiming for very low levels of participation.

Some companies have created forums which give women a say over gender equity policies. Other measures include actively recruiting and training women, changing work environments to suit women, actively combatting bullying and

harassment, and supporting woman-owned businesses which supply the mines.

*Like governments, companies are showing a willingness to promote gender equity, and positive changes have been achieved, but progress is slow.*

## The way ahead

The report recommends that gender equality be seen as a priority issue for governments and mining companies in Southern Africa.

Governments need to ensure that the law mandates mines to pursue gender equity and is specific about what is required of them. International instruments need to be incorporated into domestic law. Governments can use procurement laws to penalise companies that do not address discrimination against women and to open opportunities for women-owned businesses. The study urges greater collaboration between the government, mining companies, and civil society organisations to promote the effective implementation of a gender equality strategy. Governments must also regulate artisanal mining without penalising women.

An important role for governments is to combat the prejudices and stereotypes which exclude women from mining or impose hardship on them when they do take part. They also need to address some of the barriers to women's participation which do not originate within the mines, such as inequalities in education.

Companies need to acknowledge that active measures are needed to ensure women's inclusion. This involves formulating concrete plans, setting clear targets, and actively monitoring progress towards gender equity.

Gender equality will only be achieved if it becomes a greater priority for governments and companies, which will only happen if women are heard.

# INTRODUCTION

Governments in Southern Africa and most of the region's mining companies agree that greater gender equality and an enhanced role for women in the mining industry is desirable. However, while progress is discernible, there is a clear gap between promise and reality.

*More women are now engaged in mining, either in formal companies or in the informal artisanal mining sector.*

Efforts are under way to address the obstacles that women face in mining, and to ensure that their needs and rights are respected when they do participate in mining, but progress is slow. Despite policy statements and legal instruments that require gender equality in several countries, there is little evidence that this is a priority or that governments and companies are doing all that they can to speed up and deepen the progress. As long as this persists, the current pattern is likely to continue, with women enjoying some opportunities but still facing severe obstacles.

Ending discrimination against women in mining (and its effects) will not receive the priority it deserves until women's voices are heard much more clearly by decision-makers in governments and companies, and until women are thus able to ensure that their concerns remain in the foreground when decisions are made.

That is the core finding to be derived from a study of gender patterns in mining in five Southern African countries (Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe). The study relied on documents, questionnaires, interviews and focus groups to gather data. Five country reports were compiled and this document attempts to synthesise their findings to offer a comprehensive picture of the current status of women in mining in the region and to offer proposals for quicker and deeper change.

This report consists of four sections. The first discusses the problem – why are women not treated equally in the mining industry and what consequences flow from this reality? The second examines the role of governments in seeking to enhance the role of women in mining, while the third looks at the role of companies. The fourth and final section offers recommendations for change.



# SECTION ONE: THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

Across the globe, mining has traditionally been seen as 'men's work'. Women's role in the industry was, therefore, usually restricted to clerical and secretarial work in mining companies and providing support services such as cleaning and catering. Because women were supposed to be unsuited to mining work, they were usually assumed also to be unsuited to management roles in the industry.

These prejudices have not disappeared. On the contrary, they run deep and are often presented not as bias or bigotry but as expressions of 'culture' and therefore as a guide to how members of a particular group should think and act. The Zimbabwean study which contributes to this report identifies many myths and negative perceptions that women face in the mining sector. This includes the belief that women are not physically capable of handling the demanding work of mining, or that they are not interested in pursuing careers in this field. There are also some long-held myths that women (especially during their menstrual cycle) cannot go underground. These myths discourage women from venturing into a profession in mining and also result in some stigma for those already in the sector. High levels of stigma make the sector unattractive to women choosing a career, and those already in the industry are unwilling to be champions and encourage others to join.

As a consequence, the mining industry's female workforce across the globe is estimated at just 5-10 per cent.<sup>1</sup> Mining companies, on average, rarely employ more than 10 percent of women in their workforce.<sup>2</sup> Women's participation is limited in Southern Africa too – all five country studies reported low percentages of women

in formal mining employment, ranging from 5 per cent in Mozambique to 12 per cent in South Africa. On average, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) minerals sector draws about five per cent of its labour force from women. Over 40 per cent of the African continent's artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) sector workforce are estimated to be women<sup>3</sup> but, as we will see, the conditions under which they work relegate them to a secondary position in this sector too.

## Wider Constraints

But it is not simply the traditional view that women do not belong in the industry that is responsible for gender inequality in the mining industry.

Many of the prejudices that retard women's progress in the industry are found elsewhere in the economy and in broader society. The high levels of violence which women experience in the industry reflect social realities well beyond the industry. Women's ability to contribute to the industry is also retarded by social biases against women. The fact that women do not receive equal educational and training opportunities, for example, ensures that few acquire the qualifications needed to play a role in the middle and upper echelons of the mining industry. Thus a 2021 workshop organised by Southern Africa Resource Watch in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), reported that the limited number of qualified women professionals in geoscience and related fields obstructed women's participation in skilled jobs which require these qualifications. This compounds the problems of women who often face gender-based discrimination in

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_dialogue/sector/documents/publication/wcms\\_821061.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/sector/documents/publication/wcms_821061.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> ILO, Women in Mining, Achieving Gender Equality, Sectoral Policy Department, Switzerland, 2021, pg13.

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_dialogue/sector/documents/publication/wcms\\_821061.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/sector/documents/publication/wcms_821061.pdf)

recruitment and are less likely to be selected for technical and managerial roles generally.

Women who seek an entrepreneurial role in mining are hampered by a lack of access to

capital, which means that they rarely hold mining licenses. In Zambia, Ministry of Mines data covering the first half of 2017 shows that only 119 of 1262 mining titles (9.4 per cent) were issued to women.<sup>5</sup>

**Table 1: Summary sheet of the common challenges of women in companies in their working relationships with men – Democratic Republic of the Congo**

Common challenges in companies		Score	%
1	Performance competition	14	48
2	Dress code	00	00
3	Sexual harassment	4	13,79
4	Intimidation	3	10
5	Any other	8	27,5

Source: SARW, 2023<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The table is a summary sheet of common challenges that women face in companies in their working relationships with men in the Democratic Republic of the Congo:

- Performance Competition: This is the most prevalent challenge, with a score of 14, indicating that 48% of respondents view it as a significant issue. It suggests that women often find themselves in direct competition with their male counterparts for performance recognition.
- Code vestimentaire (Dress Code): Interestingly, this challenge scored 00, meaning it was not identified as a challenge by any respondents, suggesting that dress code is not perceived as an issue in the workplace.
- Sexual Harassment: Scored by 4 respondents, it constitutes 13.79% of the challenges faced, pointing to a recognition of sexual harassment as a problem within the workplace but less so compared to performance competition.
- Intimidation: With a score of 3, making up 10% of the responses, it indicates that intimidation is a challenge for some women in their professional interactions with men.
- Any Other: This category, which likely encompasses challenges not specifically listed, scored 8, representing 27.5% of the challenges. This suggests that there are various other significant but less easily categorised challenges that women face in the workplace.

The data reflects the spectrum of obstacles that women encounter in professional settings, with performance competition emerging as the most reported challenge, followed by a variety of other issues including sexual harassment, intimidation, and other unspecified challenges.

<sup>5</sup> WILSA, OSISA and Zimbabwe Gender Commission (2020). Enquiry Into the Systemic Barriers to Women’s Participation in Zimbabwe’s Mining Sector Value Chain

In Zimbabwe, women in the ASM sector complained that, besides the problem of securing capital, it was difficult to acquire the necessary collateral to secure mining claims. Women in that country comprise about 10 per cent of the country's 535 000 artisanal and small-scale miners.<sup>6</sup> Further research indicates that 11-15 per cent of the estimated 50 000 small-scale mines in the country are owned by women.<sup>7</sup>

This seems to indicate that the difficulties which women face in the industry stem less from the industry itself than from patterns in society which affect all economic activity – that mining is no more hostile an industry to women than others. But a study by the Natural Resource Governance Institute (NRGI), an international organisation based in New York, estimates that women living in mineral-dependent countries often experience greater wealth and rights inequality than those not dependent on natural resources.<sup>8</sup> This could partly be a result of mining's impact on the society rather than work patterns within the industry's companies, but it does raise the possibility that the notion of mines as a place for men rather than women may also play a role.

The fact that not many women are employed in the industry is not the only obstacle faced by women in mining. Research has shown that women are often responsible for the most arduous tasks in mining such as carting heavy bags of earth or grinding stones by hand, but they are paid the least. This is partly a consequence of the fact that, in all market economies, manual labour is poorly paid regardless of the gender of the people who do this work, but it places a disproportionate

burden on women given the already mentioned inequities in access to skills and education.

## Artisanal Mining

Women are better represented in the artisanal mining sector than in the formal sector, but they often work in very difficult conditions.

It is important to note here that there is a strong 'survivalist' dimension to women's work in artisanal mining – many of the women who labour in this sector are seeking not a fulfilling career or the more comfortable lifestyle which an adequate wage or salary can buy. While some are attracted to this work because they believe that they can earn more than in agriculture, which is often the only alternative available to them, many see mining as the only way of sustaining themselves and their dependents and are thus motivated by sheer necessity.

Some enter the sector because drought-related crop failures have left them with no alternative. Others are responding to unfulfilled promises of marriage and the shared income that it would have provided, to a lack of care by their families, or because their small businesses collapse (often because they are the victims of fraud). In Zambia, all the mining sites visited by researchers were dominated by women whose families had been deprived of a breadwinner, either because they were widowed or because their husbands were absent or unemployed. In all of these cases, of course, artisanal mining is simply a way to survive. There is also a significant presence of children at artisanal mining sites, accompanied by their mothers who are trying to augment the family income.

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<sup>6</sup> PACT (2016) A Golden Opportunity: Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining in Zimbabwe. Accessible on: <https://www.pactworld.org/library/golden-opportunity-artisanal-and-small-scale-gold-mining-zimbabwe>

<sup>7</sup> Nyakanyanga S., Women Miners' Stake a Claim in Zimbabwean Women and Economy Interprets News Agency online <http://www.ipsnews.net/2018/03/women-miners-stake-claim-zimbabwe/>

<sup>8</sup> Indra Thevos Towards a more inclusive extractive sector for women, 2 July 2020, NRGI, , <https://eiti.org/fr/blog-post/towards-one-sector-extractive-plus-participatory-for-the-wives>

While opting for ASM work does offer women a means of earning an income, it also places burdens on them. Women in this sector work as miners and are involved in aspects of the ASM value chain, including ore processing, panning, and transporting goods. They also play a critical role in support activities by working as shopkeepers and cooks. Small businesses play an extremely important role in supporting mining and some of these are owned by women. Despite this contribution, however, women are usually marginalised in ASM communities and have limited decision-making power because they are rarely recognised as miners. While data is not available on the proportion of small businesses serving the ASM sector which are owned by women, women currently own only 30-37 per cent of all small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in emerging markets,<sup>9</sup> so it is likely that they are a minority. More generally, women play a very limited role in the mining value chain – in the production of goods and services which sustain mining.

The sector may offer much labour for little reward. Interviews conducted in Zambia indicate that women work at arduous tasks between 8 and 10 hours a day and that this causes ‘immeasurable fatigue’. Because the women are working for themselves and do not receive a salary, their income depends on the volume of minerals collected each day and this creates an obvious pressure to endure unsanitary conditions and to endanger their health by working too hard.<sup>10</sup> Women artisanal gold miners, for example, crush ore using traditional pounding methods. The Zimbabwean study notes that one reason for this is that women in the ASM sector cannot afford the equipment which would be needed

to reduce the drudgery of using older mining methods.

There are specific health dangers – Zambian woman artisanal miners interviewed may be risking their health by exposing themselves to harmful minerals. Women and their children handle manganese, which threatens their health because they have no access to personal protective equipment. The South African study reports complaints from women that the protective equipment which is available is designed for men and therefore does not fit women. Working in artisanal mines also damages families because married women are forced to spend long periods away from their husbands.

### **Power and Powerlessness**

A particularly serious problem which faces women in mining is sexual harassment and violence against women. This was mentioned in all the country studies. In Mozambique, 73 per cent of women in the mining sector reported experiencing sexual harassment, while 32 per cent reported that they were victims of physical violence.<sup>11</sup> In Zimbabwe, women who hold mining claims are sometimes bullied out of them by machette gangs as well by people with political connections. Sexual harassment and bullying (which relies on the threat of force even if no violence is used) are also a risk to women in mining. This particular problem is a reaction by men to what they see as an encroachment by women on ‘their’ territory – they seek to reclaim it by showing women that men are in charge.

It is therefore important to understand gender

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<sup>9</sup> U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). “Mineral Commodities Summary 2019.” <https://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs/mcs/>.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p15.

<sup>11</sup> International Labour Organization (ILO), 2017

inequality in the mining industry – and in the wider society – as the consequence of a power imbalance between men and women. The ‘cultures’ which are said to relegate women to an inferior status are all devised by men because men have the power to decide on the attitudes and actions which should be expected of members of a group. The attitudes, behaviour patterns and business arrangements which advantage men and assume their superiority are products of the fact that men already wield power within the industry and the wider economy, and women, because they lack power, are forced to allow men to determine their role (or lack of one). This implies that a key route to greater equality lies in boosting the power of women as well as the opportunities available to them. We will return to this point in our final section.

Mining’s role in sustaining gender equality is not restricted to the employment relationship. Women are also affected disproportionately by what economists call ‘externalities,’ the impact that economic activity has on the surrounding society. Thus the roles and expectations imposed on women by their society means that they suffer more than men from the impact of mining on their communities and on the environment. While mining obviously creates employment and sometimes sustains entire towns, large-scale mining replaces subsistence economies, which have nurtured generations of indigenous communities and peoples, with a money-based economy. The new market economy implies a significant deterioration (or even the destruction) of traditional values and customs which have been fundamental to maintaining community, tribal, clan and family solidarity and unity. In this process, women

become marginalised because their traditional roles as providers of food, water and care are entirely disrupted. Economic visibility depends on the ability to work in the public domain, and the unpaid nature of work at home or in the community enables women to be labelled as ‘unproductive, unoccupied and economically inactive.’<sup>12</sup> Their work, once essential to the subsistence economy, is devalued – as are they. While this change did not create the belief that men are superior to women, it perpetuates it. Research in Zambia showed that women suffer several negative social, economic, and physical environmental impacts from mining activities. According to community members, the major impacts include land displacement, heavy air pollution, and soil and water contamination arising from mine activities, which have negatively affected household food production. Other social impacts were revealed such as the increase in respiratory and eye diseases, sexually transmitted diseases due to prostitution, increased domestic and gender-based violence, and degradation of social infrastructure such as health and water supply. These all affect women more than men. The study also found that the increased prices of basic commodities due to the presence of mining activities negatively affected household budgets and that the mechanisation of mining has reduced the number of local people in formal employment in the mines, causing more harm to women than men.

It seems likely that, where formal mining activity contracts or mines close, the resultant economic hardship is likely to fall disproportionately on women by forcing them not only to continue to perform their household tasks but also to play a major (or even exclusive) role in earning the

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<sup>12</sup> Assembly Parliamentary from the Francophonie, Report on the place of women in the Francophone extractive sector, conference held by videoconference, 30 June 2021, p12-13

family income. Their lack of power ensures that women are usually not party to the investment decisions that shape the fate of the areas in which they live, presenting an additional reason for altering the power inequality between men and women.

*These inequities not only restrict the potential of women – they are also bad for the economy and society.*

The SADC Gender and Development Monitor of 2016 noted that considerable environmental and economic benefits could be derived from championing women's participation in the mining sector. It should be obvious that a sector that relies on the skills and energies of slightly less than half the adult population is likely to offer far less benefit than one that includes all.

The artisanal sector, despite the hostility it is currently attracting in South Africa, has considerable potential for growth. In 2017, the Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals and Sustainable Development (IGF) estimated that ASM directly employs more than forty million people worldwide while supporting the livelihoods of over 150 million across eighty countries.<sup>14</sup> This potential would be greatly enhanced if women were able to work in it more productively than they do now. The South African study notes that the ASM sector has the potential to contribute to employment creation, poverty alleviation and social upliftment as well as women's empowerment.<sup>15</sup> It notes also that comparative studies highlight the opportunities presented by the ASM sector in Southern Africa.<sup>16</sup> These potential benefits are more likely to be realised if women play an enhanced role.

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<sup>14</sup> Southern African Development Community (SADC). 2016. SADC Gender and Development Monitor 2016 <https://enb.iisd.org/events/13th-annual-general-meeting-agm-intergovernmental-forum-mining-minerals-metals-and-summary>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.



## SECTION TWO: THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENTS

In principle, all the countries which were researched are committed to gender equality in the mining industry and this commitment has played a role in ensuring some progress towards this goal – participation by women in mining has improved in quantity and quality in all five countries. But, in all, progress has been limited and government action falls short of the promise created by stated commitments to end discrimination against women.

Government commitment to addressing gender equality comes in a variety of forms. These include legislative provisions, which are often implementing stipulations in the national constitution requiring gender equality; the adoption of international treaties which require gender equality; and the adoption of policies and programmes which aim to enhance gender equality.

### Legislative Commitments

While the governments of all the countries studied are obliged by their constitutions to pursue gender equality, there is a crucial difference between them. While some have translated this commitment into legislation which specifically governs the mining industry, most have not – their legislative commitments are contained in general laws or programmes which obviously apply to mining as well as all other activities, but there is no dedicated focus on the mining industry and their mining laws have nothing to say about this question.

The DRC is the clearest example of a country in which there is a broad commitment to equality but no legislation focused on mining. Article 14 of the Congolese Constitution of 18 February 2006 stipulates that public authorities must eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and guarantee the protection and promotion of their rights. They must take all appropriate measures to ensure women's total development and participation in the nation's

development. They must also take steps to combat all forms of violence against women in public and private life – Article 15 of the Constitution obliges the state to ensure the elimination of sexual violence.

To implement these requirements, a Ministry of Gender, Family and Children has been established in the national government whose primary mission is to promote women's rights – the current minister is a woman. Provincial gender ministries have also been established. Parliamentary Committees have been established to monitor government policies on gender and to ensure that they conform to the constitution, international legal commitments, and the laws of the DRC. Provincial Assemblies also have Gender Commissions.

The DRC national legislature has passed a Gender Implementation Act which provides that economic development policies and programmes should be formulated and implemented from a gender perspective. They must ensure that all citizens have equal access to resources and benefits, and the law obliges the private sector to promote women's participation in decision-making bodies. A law on gender parity requires that measures to achieve gender equality must be included in all laws – presumably this means all to which the relative status of men and women would be relevant.

But the provision that gender equity must be built into all relevant laws is yet to be implemented in mining law. The only mention of women in the labour code which governs relations between mining employers and employees – and in mining law as a whole – is a provision banning pregnant women from accessing artisanal mining sites,<sup>17</sup> a measure which is justified by the government as a protection designed to preserve women's health. The law does not impose any obligation on holders of mining rights to promote gender

equality. This anomaly – a general commitment to end discrimination against women but no provisions to enforce this on the mines – has prompted proposals that mining rules be changed to incorporate gender concerns. There is no indication yet that this change will be made.

Zimbabwe's response has been similar. Despite constitutional provisions mandating gender equality, the Mines and Minerals Act of 1961 (the main law governing mining and mining development) has not been updated since it was created. Because there was no pressure to address gender equity when the law was passed, it ignored the issue and the absence of amendments ensures that this is still the reality.

Mozambique also lacks specific laws on this question but the Mining Law does open one avenue for champions of women's' rights. Mining companies are required to engage with local communities in the areas where they operate and to respect their rights, including the right to participate in the management and benefits of mining activities. Women are included in the groups which must be consulted. For the rest, however, the Mozambican government relies not on law but on programmes and policy initiatives which will be discussed below.

The polar opposite is South Africa, which has a comprehensive gender legal and policy framework. Besides provisions in the constitution which, like similar documents in the other countries studied, outlaw discrimination on grounds of gender, there are eight laws which outlaw gender discrimination on the mines – while not all are specifically focused on the mines, all can be used to enforce women's rights in mining activity. The country has also adopted other instruments to promote gender

equality including a Commission for Gender Equality which was created by the constitution. A mining charter, which was negotiated between the government, employers and trade unions and is binding on all three, mandates a minimum of 10 per cent women's participation in the industry and provides for skills development training for women.

This charter is one of several measures which aim to correct imbalances created by the apartheid system which reigned until 1994. In order to do business with the government, companies must comply with the mining charter and with laws promoting the economic participation of previously excluded groups, including women. While the chief purpose of these 'affirmative action' measures is to undo the racial effects of minority rule which denied the black majority economic and professional opportunities, they also benefit women – largely as a result of effective lobbying and campaigning by groups who champion women's rights. Thus national legislation mandates operating mining companies and their suppliers to adhere to preferential procurement processes that prioritise women as well as black people, both of whom are designated by South African law as 'historically disadvantaged' groups.

Zambia has legislated measures which can be used to seek gender equality in mining. Its constitution, like those of the other countries, does mandate gender equality but it also has laws which seek to implement International Labour Standards and the International Labour Organisation's Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (FPRW). These include the Employment Code Act of 2019 and other legal frameworks related to FPRW rights – freedom of association and collective bargaining, prohibition of forced and child labour, and non-discrimination. The Industrial and Labour Relations Act (ILRA) obliges the government,

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<sup>17</sup> Article 5 of the Mining Code.

employers, and workers' organisations to uphold the FPRW, including the provisions which address gender inequality. Non-discrimination clauses protect women as well as people living with HIV and AIDS, migrant workers, and people with disabilities. Laws which apply beyond the mines but are also applicable to them are the Gender Equity and Equality Act of 2015 and the Anti-Gender Based Violence Act of 2011.

### International Treaties

At least in theory, women in the region are protected by international treaties which their governments have ratified. But these have not always resulted in specific steps to address discrimination against women.

All the countries researched in this study have signed or ratified international treaties which seek to promote gender equality. South Africa has not only signed but also ratified at least 11 international conventions, declarations or protocols which address gender issues and the protection of women. Five of these cover the entire globe and are usually initiated by the United Nations while six are regional or continental, initiated by SADC or the African Union.<sup>18</sup> Mozambique is bound by SADC protocols promoting gender equality and women's empowerment and has also ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action. Zambia is party to at least three African or Southern African and three international instruments. Zimbabwe is party to both international and regional instruments while

the DRC has signed CEDAW.

None of these documents focus specifically on the mining industry, but most do impact on it since they apply to all forms of human activity. All the countries studied, with the exception of the DRC, are parties to the SADC Mining Protocol. Its aim is to develop and harmonise the region's mineral sector legislation, and one of its explicit concerns is that member states must promote the 'economic empowerment of the historically disadvantaged' in mining, which includes women. While the protocol's gender dimension is probably not the chief reason why countries have adopted it, it does require a focus on inequalities between men and women.

The documents which countries have signed seek to bind governments to implement them and so are meant to have the same effect as legislation, but they are discussed here separately from legislation because they do not automatically enjoy the same status as laws. The fact that a country has ratified a treaty does mean that it is bound by its terms in international law, which means in its dealings with other states. But it does not necessarily mean that, by ratifying an instrument, a country makes it a part of its domestic law. The treaty or protocol's legal status in the ratifying country is decided by each country's domestic laws and practices – states are, in effect, free to decide whether or how the requirements of an international treaty become part of domestic law. South African law (and, it appears, that of the other countries studied too) does not consider the terms of a treaty to be part of domestic law unless its national legislature

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<sup>18</sup> The international instruments ratified by South Africa are: Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, ratified in 1995); The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1996); Beijing Platform for Action (1995); Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals (2000); Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime. The regional instruments are: Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights of Women in Africa (2004); SADC Protocol on Gender and Development (2008); Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2004) <https://cge.org.za/challenges-facing-the-south-africa-in-relation-to-gender-equality/>

enacts laws which give effect to the instrument which has been ratified.

No laws have been passed in any of the countries studied which explicitly enact provisions of an international treaty. The countries that have passed laws seeking to correct gender discrimination might argue that by doing this they are, in effect, translating the instrument into local law. But there is no evidence that any of the countries have enacted laws on gender because they were seeking to implement a treaty or document which they have ratified. The absence of these specific laws suggests that the ratification of international treaties is irrelevant to whether a country's government is willing to address gender inequities.

Scepticism about assuming that countries are expressing a serious desire to address a problem when they sign international treaties is well founded. As anyone who has studied the record of international climate conferences will know, the gap between what signatories say they will do and what they actually do is large. Signing onto and ratifying commitments enables a country to signal that it wants to be a member of the international community and to show a willingness to address issues which are of global concern. The diplomatic benefits this brings – or is believed to bring – are often primary; meeting the commitments is secondary at best.

This does not, however, mean that the fact that countries have ratified treaties is irrelevant. Where countries' courts are empowered to scrutinise and, if necessary, to overturn laws which infringe citizens' rights, the fact that a country has signed a treaty is one of the factors which the court must consider. This creates an opportunity for people who believe that their rights have been infringed to seek to persuade the court that the government should be held to the commitments it has made by signing the treaty. The fact that a country has ratified treaties can also be an important resource for advocacy work or lobbying on gender equality

since it is always easier to seek to persuade a government to act if it has already made a commitment to address a problem.

It is important to note here that, even when countries enact laws to address issues which give effect to human rights, the fact that the law exists very rarely ensures that action will automatically be taken to address the practices which the law seeks to curb. The law is, in effect, a potential instrument in the hands of lobbies or campaigns for change, who can use it to ensure that their concerns are addressed. This obviously applies even more clearly to international treaties – the fact that governments have signed them offers a resource to campaigners for change which they need to use if they are to achieve their goals.

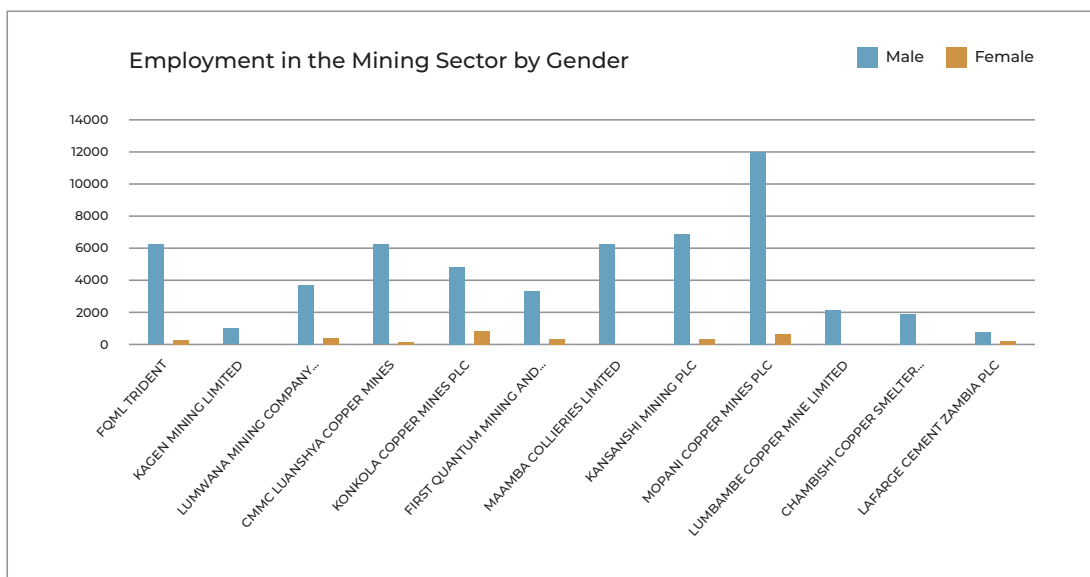
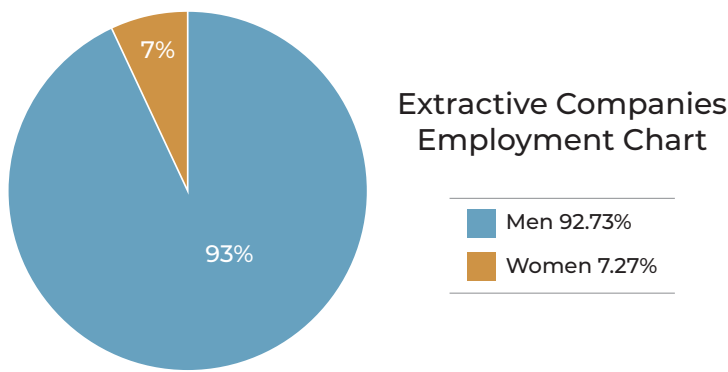
While the failure to enact any of the international instruments into domestic law suggests that governments do not see the need to address gender inequality as a priority, the fact that the treaties have been signed or ratified does offer a resource to groups and individuals seeking greater equity.

## Government Programmes

The previous section suggested that governments' commitment to gender equality may be largely rhetorical. But, while they could certainly do much more to act on their stated concerns than they are currently doing, it is inaccurate to claim that they are not willing to do anything to translate stated intentions into action. The fact that governments have adopted programmes to promote gender equality is evidence of this.

As a previous section indicated, some countries have acted on their commitment by setting up government ministries or institutions which are meant to address gender inequality. The DRC's national and provincial gender ministries are a case in point. DRC's Minister of Mines has endorsed a greater role for women in mining,

**Figure 1: Employment Profile: Mining in Zambia**



Source: Author's Computations

despite the absence of legislation which would allow the ministry to act on this. South Africa has a ministry which addresses the needs of women, children, and people with disabilities but it has played no role in addressing gender issues on the mines – that task has been assigned to the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE). This department's Programmes and Projects Management Office (The DMRE Programmes Office). is mandated to lead the mineral and energy sector's gender equality efforts acting on the mandate of the National Framework on Gender-Responsive Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring, Evaluation and Auditing (GRPBMEA), which is closely aligned to the UN's gender equality objectives. Zambia's government also has a gender department which has been moved to the office of the president.

The DRC gender ministry is seen as largely

ineffective – an administrative structure rather than an active agent seeking to improve the status of women. This, and the fact that the South African women's ministry does not address gender issues on the mines, raises questions about the role of government ministries in ensuring greater equality to which this report will return.

Both South Africa's and Zimbabwe's constitutions mandate the establishment of a permanent commission to deal with gender equity. South Africa's Commission for Gender Equality produced a report in 2016 on 'gender mainstreaming' in the mining industry, which found that there was a lack of commitment to change in the sector.<sup>19</sup> Zimbabwe's National Gender Commission has, like its South African equivalent, the power to monitor progress towards equality and to investigate violations of rights. Both also have the power



to conduct research and to recommend action – Zimbabwe’s commission can recommend prosecutions where gender laws have allegedly been broken and can also ‘secure appropriate redress’ where rights have been violated.

Neither commission, however, has the power to act to effect change or to halt abuses – both have purely advisory powers. They can ask other arms of government or the state to do this but have no power to ensure action. This has predictably been a source of criticism. While this obviously is a constraint, it need not be unsurmountable. One example is the role of the public protector, an ombud established by the South African constitution. A previous incumbent in the role, during a period in which she was seeking to combat national government corruption, marshalled both public opinion and the courts in her support. This played an important role in ensuring that her rulings were implemented. While public support for anti-corruption work is probably easier to harness than equivalent backing for gender equality, the example does show that the absence of formal powers may not prevent commissions from making a difference. In the event, neither of the gender commissions have sought to use this platform to work strenuously to achieve greater equality and so the fact that they have been established has had only a limited impact.

More generally, government programmes aimed at securing greater equality are uneven in the region in the sense that some countries have a range of programmes and others little or none.

Mozambique has been particularly active in initiating a range of government initiatives which address gender inequality. It has adopted a Gender and Development Strategy which is

based on the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development and a National Action Plan for the Advancement of Women which focuses on concrete actions to advance women’s participation in the mining sector, such as promoting women’s participation in decision-making, enhancing women’s access to credit, and improving women’s working conditions. The National Action Plan was approved by the country’s council of ministers in 2011, replacing two earlier plans with the same goal. It is meant to involve all sectors of government and society in promoting gender equality. Since 2004, the National Council for the Promotion of Women (CNAM) has acted as a consultative body for the co-ordination of government gender plans and programmes. It is headed by the Minister of Women and Social Action and comprises seven government ministers, two non-governmental organisations, two religious groups, and one representative each of the workers’ union and the private sector.<sup>20</sup>

The Mozambican Ministry of Mineral Resources and Energy (MIREME) has its own gender policy which promotes equal opportunity in employment, the prevention of sexual harassment, and providing support and training for women. The government’s Women in Mining Strategy has similar goals and aims to enhance women’s representation in leadership positions in the industry. Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa have also initiated gender programmes, some of which target the mines specifically.

Zambia adopted a national gender policy in 2014, which lists the strategy and actions to be implemented by government ministries and agencies in 15 different fields, but has no formal commitments expressed in indicators and annual budgets. The government adopted a revised Mineral Resources Development Policy

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<sup>19</sup> Talking the Talk, Not Walking the Walk: Assessing Gender Main-streaming in South Africa’s Mining Sector 2016 was compiled by the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) ISBN: 978-1-920308-65-0



in 2022, which acknowledged that women are still minority players in the mining industry.

Zambia's other commitments stem from the country's participation in international initiatives. Zambia is party to the African Union's Africa Mining Vision (AMV) which commits participating states to initiate women's empowerment by integrating gender equity into mining policies, laws, regulations, standards, and codes. It has also signed up to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), a British government-initiated project in which countries agree to subject aspects of their mining industry to scrutiny. EITI countries agree, in effect, to work towards a set of goals set by the initiative and to allow critical examination of the degree to which they are achieving these goals. Zambia has established a multi-stakeholder group (MSG) to oversee this. Among the MSG's tasks are to document progress on gender equity, to promote greater participation by women in its work, to identify the data needed to understand progress in

achieving gender equity, and to ensure that government and company disclosures are comprehensible, actively promoted, publicly accessible and contribute to public debate. It is also meant to develop communications plans and outreach activities.

Like several of the other countries, Zimbabwe has adopted a National Gender Policy. It seeks to eliminate economic, social, and cultural practices which impede the equality of the sexes. This policy is meant to inform all government work. It also has a programme to promote Women in Mining, including ASM, which focuses on training, support, and networking opportunities for women.

In South Africa, besides the legislation mentioned earlier, the DMRE (the ministry responsible for promoting women's role in mining) has a Programmes Office which promotes the participation of women, young people, and people with disabilities in energy and mining. Since it was established in 2014,

**Table 2: Gender in Mining: South Africa, 2019**

Mineral	Number of Women Employees	% of Women Employees
PGMs	19 694	12
Gold	11 271	12
Coal	13 059	14
Chrome	3 387	17
Iron Ore	2 916	15
Diamond	2 229	15
Cement, lime aggregate and sand	1 385	14
Manganese	1,7113	14
Other Minerals	1,037	17

Source: Department of Mineral Resources and Energy

Note: These figures are Minerals Council estimates for 2019

<sup>20</sup> <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/mosambik/13026.pdf>

R97.7 billion has been spent on this mandate. One of the DMRE's initiatives is the Women Diggers Programme, which aims to ignite the small-scale mining sector with a focus on women's participation. Launched in 2019, it seeks to increase the number of women with the skills needed for mining, specifically in small-scale mining. The DMRE has introduced measures such as small-scale mining permits and operational efficiency improvements to enable women to apply for and obtain permits.

### Evaluating Governments' Role

Despite all these initiatives, the realities discussed in the first section show that gender equality in mining remains a hope rather than a reality and that women's progress in the industry is still impeded. It would seem logical, therefore, to dismiss the measures discussed here as evidence that governments in the region are happy to talk about gender equality but are unwilling to do much about it.

Our research shows that there is a gap between governments' stated commitment to equality and their willingness to act to achieve it. There are many examples of this. They include the failure to translate the ratification of treaties into laws – or even, as in Zambia, into concrete gender programmes – and, in countries such as DRC and Zimbabwe, the fact that broad commitments to equality are not inserted in mining law. Country research found that governments have not allocated sufficient funding to women's programmes – while this is, as the Mozambique study notes, partly a result of constraints on government budgets, it also suggests that gender programmes may not enjoy the priority that constitutions and government policy give them. Programmes and policies are often not backed by clearly stated

targets. They often lack a clear implementation plan and monitoring framework, as well as political will to implement them effectively. In South Africa, where there are more laws and initiatives on gender than in the other countries, research reveals insufficient enterprise development and funding, restricted access to opportunities, the perpetuation of false narratives about women-led companies, and instances of corruption.

Governments also sometimes face a choice between promoting economic activity and ensuring gender equality – and their commitment to the latter suffers as a result. In South Africa, research shows that women-owned companies still need to be integrated into the local procurement value chain of large-scale mining (LSM) operations. One reason is that the local content legislative framework, which rewards companies for using locally produced goods and services, sets low thresholds for women's participation and allows mining companies to deviate from procurement requirements outlined in the Mining Charter<sup>21</sup> and the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act (BBBEE).<sup>22</sup> Companies are, therefore, able to avoid fulfilling gender equity targets when they are complying with local content requirements, But it would be neither fair nor accurate to dismiss the region's government initiatives as empty promises which bring gender equality no closer. Our country studies note that there has been progress in all the countries towards a greater role for women in all facets of the mining industry. In South Africa, both women's pay and access to jobs has improved significantly. From 2015 to 2020 there was an increase in the percentage of mining jobs held by women from 10 per cent to more than 17 per cent. More women and girls than men and

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<sup>21</sup> Broad -Based Socio- Economic Empowerment Charter for the Mining and Minerals Industry, 2018 (Mining Charter).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid at n 16.

boys are entering and completing community colleges, technical vocational education, training (TVET) colleges, and university studies in science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM) learning streams.

While similar data on trends is not available from the other country studies, all of them report progress in overall employment of women in mining and in the number of women employed in managerial or technical posts. How much of this is directly attributable to government action is unclear, but it is clear that at least some – and perhaps most of it – is. Even where enforcement of women's right to equality is weak and concrete programmes have very limited effect, the fact that governments have endorsed gender equality creates an environment which affects the actions of employers and of anyone else whose decisions determine whether women progress. They make it far less acceptable to discriminate – or, indeed, to do nothing about existing discrimination – and so they create a climate which makes movement to greater equality more likely.

But this progress does not mean that gender inequality in mining is receiving anything like the priority from governments which their commitment to the principle requires. The problem is not that governments are proclaiming principles in which they do not believe, an accusation which is often levelled, for example, at governments who proclaim their wish to reduce their carbon footprint while approving new projects which do the opposite. The governments studied here are not undermining gender equality while claiming to support it. It is rather that, in the main, gender equality in mining does not seem to be an urgent priority and more progress would be made if it was one.

## Conclusions

Despite established commitments to gender equality in mining through constitutions, international treaties, and policies, governments in the researched countries show uneven and often inadequate implementation. While some progress is visible, it is slow and insufficient to significantly alter the deep-rooted gender imbalances in the industry.

Key issues include the lack of mining-specific legislation, particularly in the DRC and Zimbabwe, and the gap between policy and enforcement, as seen in South Africa. Mere inclusion in consultative processes, like in Mozambique, falls short of genuinely empowering women in decision-making roles. Ratified international treaties have yet to lead to actionable laws or comprehensive gender programmes.

*To effectively foster gender equality in mining, a more forceful approach is needed. This should involve setting clear targets, implementing thorough monitoring, ensuring proper funding, and directing adequate resources towards gender equality initiatives to transform aspirational goals into actual achievements.*

## SECTION THREE: THE ROLE OF MINING COMPANIES

The formal mining companies who operate in the countries researched play a different but similar role to the governments discussed in the previous section.

Their role is different in the sense that they have, in the main, not made gender equality a firmly stated objective in the same way as the governments have – mining firms obviously do not sign international treaties committing themselves to gender equality. They are similar in the sense that they say they want to see more women participating in the industry, but do not see this as a core priority.

Assessing the role of companies is more difficult than judging the role of governments. Each country has, of course, only one government whose policies are meant to be applied evenly across the country. In each country, a range of mines and a range of companies operate and their approaches obviously differ. Policies and progress are, therefore, not uniform across countries. In fact, perhaps the only clear difference between countries is that companies in countries which require compliance with the law may be compelled to behave differently to those operating in states which do not require this. This section will not, therefore, distinguish between patterns in countries to the same degree as the two earlier sections.

It must also be stressed that the research relied mainly on interviews with or questionnaires administered to mining companies and there was limited scope for investigating the accuracy of the information which the companies supplied. Despite that, a critical examination of the information gathered from the different companies does offer some valuable insight into trends in formal mining enterprises.

It is perhaps predictable that all the companies which provided information insisted that they

favour enhanced participation by women in mining and are taking steps to achieve this. The already mentioned belief that mining is 'man's work' is long-standing and deeply entrenched but the climate of opinion has changed and so it is no longer acceptable to insist that the industry should be monopolised by men.

This does not mean that the traditional way of viewing the roles of men and women in the industry has disappeared. The fact that mining is still very far from affording full equality for women confirms that it has not. Gender equality is also obstructed by the fact that the industry's facilities and practices are designed for men. For example, washroom facilities may cater for men only and personal protective equipment is generally designed for the male physique. Since long-established ways of thinking do not vanish quickly when the practices they produce – such as blatant discrimination against women – become unacceptable, it would be a surprise if prejudices against women simply disappeared.

But nor does it mean that companies' stated commitment to addressing gender inequality is no more than a public relations exercise in which they pretend to embrace an enhanced role for women while continuing to think and act in the same way as they did in the past. Even if that is the intention – and there is no evidence that it is – the stated change in attitude would open new opportunities for women because companies would need to demonstrate that they are acting on their professed commitment to equality. When long-standing prejudices are abandoned, the process of embracing the new will not be quick or smooth; vestiges of the old approaches will survive because they are deeply embedded. Because mining has been dominated by men for so long, much will need to change before equality becomes a real possibility. This will require a concerted effort

by companies which is not yet evident.

If we want to assess companies' progress towards greater equality, we need to examine far more than whether they now recruit women employees. The question is whether their stated commitment has been given priority and is integrated into the company's daily operations. It is also whether their approach recognises that progress towards greater equality requires more than a decision not to discriminate, that it means concrete steps to promote the role of women which include a willingness to change practices that obstruct progress towards equality.

Companies can also play a role in reducing gender inequities outside their gates – by initiating or supporting, through corporate social investment programmes, initiatives which enable women to play a role in the industry as entrepreneurs and employers, not only as employees in formal mining companies. It was noted earlier that artisanal mining and other forms of economic activity outside the formal mining industry play an important role in opening mining to women. The more companies choose to assist this, the broader will women's participation become and the closer the industry will move towards gender equality.

The study gathered information from a range of companies in the countries studied. The

following section will extract from their replies policy and strategic approaches to gender equality and will identify company approaches which contribute towards greater gender equity in mining. The section after it will evaluate company approaches.

Women are also 20 per cent of the Board and 11 per cent of the executive management team, unchanged from 2019. Seven women were hired on the executive committee of directors, and a further 35 women at the mine are in positions of leadership and responsibility

The fact that women make up 20 per cent of the Board and 11 per cent of the executive management team, with these figures remaining constant since 2019, suggests that there is a stable presence of women in high-level positions. The inclusion of seven women on the executive committee of directors and 35 women in other leadership roles at the mine demonstrates a commitment to gender diversity in leadership, which is crucial for driving broader organisational changes and promoting gender equality within the industry.

This data reflects the efforts being made to increase female representation not only at the operational level but also in influential roles within the mining sector in Mozambique. It indicates progress towards gender equality in an industry traditionally dominated by men, especially in leadership positions.

**Table 3: Gender Profile: Kenmare Mine, Mozambique**

Historical Gender representation, Moma	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Female representation	4.8%	6.9%	7.7%	10.6%	12.5%
Male representation	95.2%	93.1%	92.3%	89.4%	87.5%

Source: Kenmare Sustainability Fact Book (2021)

**Table 4: Gender distribution across various functions: Moma Mine, Mozambique**

2021 Gender representation, Moma	Female	Male	Total
Senior Management	4	13	17
Middle Management	4	41	45
Professionals / Specialists	21	105	126
Junior Management	11	105	116
Artisans and Maintainers	45	419	464
Operators and Assistants	109	674	783
<b>Total</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>1357</b>	<b>1551</b>

Source: Kenmare Sustainability Fact Book (2021)

The table above shows the gender distribution within various roles at the Moma Mine in 2021, revealing notable gender disparities, especially in higher-ranking positions:

- Senior Management: The representation is significantly skewed with only 4 women compared to 13 men.
- Middle Management: A similar disparity is observed, with 4 women to 41 men.
- Professionals/Specialists: Here there is a slightly higher representation of women with 21 women to 105 men.
- Junior Management: The disparity continues with 11 women compared to 105 men.
- Artisans and Maintainers: The gender gap widens further in this category, with 45 women to 419 men.
- Operators and Assistants: The largest gap is seen here, with 109 women compared to 674 men.

In total, the workforce of 1551 employees consists of 194 women and 1357 men. This data underscores the significant challenges in achieving gender balance within the mining sector, particularly in senior and technical roles. While women are presented in the workforce, their proportion decreases in higher-level positions. This trend highlights the need for targeted initiatives to enhance gender equality and ensure fair representation of women, especially in leadership and technical roles in the mining industry.

**Table 5: Gender Salary Ratios within the company**

Female: Male salaries 2021, Mozambique	Female	Male	Ratio female / male salary*
Senior Management	4	13	0.9
Middle Management	4	41	0.9
Professionals / Specialists	21	105	0.8
Junior Management	11	105	0.9
Artisans and Maintainers	45	419	1.0
Operators and Assistants	109	674	0.9

\* male salary represented as ratio :1

Source: Kenmare Sustainability Fact Book (2021)



## Company Responses

The responses to our queries show a marked divergence in approaches.

One difference, suggested already, is whether companies believe that it is enough to signal that they do not discriminate between men and women or whether they recognise that actively promoting the participation of women is the only way to achieve greater equality. Most of the companies who responded say that they do actively seek to enhance women's role in the industry but there are some who insist that they are 'gender blind.' It is important to stress here that, if one group has been favoured ahead of another – particularly if this has been the reality for a long time – a policy which refuses to favour the excluded group is likely to continue exclusion because it does nothing to alter the deeply rooted arrangements which were designed for the favoured group.

Some companies profess a commitment to greater equality but have not adopted gender policies and so progress seems to depend purely on the goodwill of senior management. While a formal policy is not a panacea to assure greater progress, it does seem reasonable to insist that companies which feel strongly about gender equality will see the need to formulate a clear policy, and that the absence of such a policy can be seen as a sign of weaker commitment to working towards equality. Similarly, only a few companies have adopted targets by which their progress can be measured. Target-setting could be seen as an even clearer sign of commitment since it shows both that the company has set itself a goal to which it is working and that, equally importantly, it is willing to be held accountable to its commitments by others.

Precisely because setting targets indicates a

willingness to be held to account for progress, it is obviously appropriate to question whether targets revealed by the research are ambitious enough. Some companies' targets do seem to suggest a sense of urgency. Anglo American is committed to 33 per cent female representation at all management levels across the company by the end of 2023. In Zimbabwe, Implats has targeted 25 per cent women in management by the same deadline. In the same country, Zimplats has set a far more modest target of ensuring that 10 per cent of its workforce across all levels are women (no date is specified) while Bindura Nickel has set a target of 10 per cent women in its workforce by 2027. The great majority of companies who responded to queries do not seem to have set any targets at all.

An example of an approach which does recognise what is needed to address gender inequity is that which has been adopted by Kibali gold mine in the DRC. The focus on this mine does not mean that Kibali has developed an appropriate response and other companies have not – there are elements of Kibali's approach in other companies, but it does come closest to the sort of approach which would be most likely to address the challenge facing mining companies and so offers a useful benchmark.

Kibali reports that it has a gender promotion policy in hiring which gives priority to women where candidates are of equal competence. The company has a recruitment process designed to promote gender equality and which favours women, taking into account the nature of the work to be done. Some jobs are explicitly advertised for women. All Human Resources Department (HRD) employees are familiar with the recruitment process and know when to give priority to a woman. It has also adopted a charter which protects women's safety during

pregnancy, so ensuring that pregnancy is not a bar to continued employment. Women are encouraged to report sexual harassment and the penalty for anyone found guilty is dismissal. Employees received training aimed at assisting them to avoid sexual harassment. There is no pay discrimination between men and women. Kibali also actively seeks to ensure a safe working environment for women – although some women reported being treated rudely by men, particularly when pregnant or breast feeding.

While some of the provisions which the company adopts are stipulated in labour law – it stresses that it is obeying the law – the fact that it is committed to applying the law is significant. Across the region, employers do not automatically comply with the laws requiring gender equality. Kibali is also the only company which supplied information which says it is applying the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) guidelines on gender equality. This means that it is submitting itself to additional obligations beyond those required by the law.

An important feature of stated company policy is that women should enjoy power to make decisions. This is not an issue discussed much when gender equality in the industry is discussed, but it is crucial. We will return to the importance of this aspect, but one aspect of the mine's approach is that it believes it to be essential that there should be a women's organisation within the company that can speak on behalf of women. Although a trade union is active within the company, the union is predominantly male so it does not pay particular attention to women's rights. A Committee for the Promotion of Women's Rights was established – it deals with

complaints of gender bias and, at the time of data collection, had received 48 complaints; 32 were dealt with, while the rest were still under investigation. Some other companies have taken a similar step: Mozambique's Kenmare Mona mine, for example, has established the Kenmare Women's' Forum. While it does not appear to play a representative role, it does enable women to share experiences and perspectives. Anglo American reports establishing a 'global workforce advisory panel' in 2019 with 'representatives from each country where we have a significant presence'. This, it says, 'helps the Board better understand the views of our workforce.' But, while it mentions this as a contribution to gender equality, it does not say how many women participate in the panel (or how many of them are based in Southern Africa).

Other companies have also introduced innovations which aim to enhance progress towards gender equality. Some examples are offered here to demonstrate the options available to companies which seek to enhance the role of women in their operations:

- Kenmare has taken positive steps to ensure that women are employed in traditionally 'male' roles by introducing a policy that all future open positions for heavy mobile equipment (HME) operators must be filled by women, with 80 per cent of newly recruited HME operators being women. Kagem copper mine in Zambia has publicised its decision to employ four women as heavy-duty drivers.<sup>23</sup>
- Anglo American reports that it is working to address the structural barriers to the employment of women in mining, including physical and health issues, working culture, and workplace environment and facilities.

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<sup>23</sup> <https://fizambia.com/kagem-employs-its-first-female-heavy-equipment-operators/>

It also seeks to elicit support for women's role in the industry by appointing 'Women in mining' champions at several sites worldwide in an attempt to create positive role models. Anglo Coal in South Africa has selected female winners for each significant technical and management discipline.

- In March 2022, Anglo American also established a centre of excellence in South Africa dedicated to preventing and responding to bullying, victimisation, and harassment, including sexual harassment.

The Living with Dignity Hub operates as an independent office with the necessary resources to provide committed support to employees and contractors.<sup>24</sup>

- In Zimbabwe, Zimplats's gender policy is available to all employees for their reference. This makes it easier for employees to hold the company to its policy. It has also adopted sexual harassment and workplace diversity policies and has established a grievance management and redress mechanism to ensure that women whose rights are

**Table 6: Women's representation in some selected large-scale mining companies in Zimbabwe**

COMPANY	Level	MALE	FEMALE	SOURCE
<b>Bindura Nickel Corporation Limited</b>	All	-	Aspires for 10%	2022 Annual Report
<b>Caledonia (Blanket Mine)</b>	Board	89%	11 %	ESG Report 2021
	Management	63%	37%	
	All	98%	2%	
<b>Hwange Colliery Company Limited (HCCL)</b>		-	-	HCCL Annual Report 2021
<b>Mimosa *Covered under Implats</b>	ALL	88%	12%	Implats Annual Integrated report 2022
	Board	60%	40%	
<b>Murowa Diamonds</b>	All	83%	17%	Murowa 2018 Sustainable Report
<b>Premier African Minerals</b>	-	-	-	Premier African Minerals Annual Report 2021
<b>Unki Mine*Covered under AngloAmerican</b>	Management	67%	33%	AngloAmerican Sustainability Report 2022
	All	76%	24%	
<b>Zimbabwe Consolidated Diamond Company (ZCDC)</b>	All	90%	10%	ZCDC Annual Report 2021
<b>Zimplats</b>	All	90%	10%	Survey results

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.angloamerican.com/~media/Files/A/Anglo-American-Group-v5/PLC/investors/annual-reporting/2022/Sustainability-Report-2022.pdf>

violated have access to an effective system. Complaints received by the company typically centre on sexual harassment and abusive language used by supervisors. These complaints are dealt with through counselling and charging or cautioning the perpetrator, depending on the severity of the case. On average, the company receives one complaint per month.

- The company has also sought to help four female-led enterprises in 2022. Developing youth enterprises is crucial to Zimplats's inclusive procurement. It also monitors progress towards gender equality in the enterprises it supports – one, Combined Technical Services, reports employing women in 25 per cent of posts dealing with finance, safety, health, environment and quality, administration, and senior management roles.
- Caledonia (Blanket Mine) in Zimbabwe used its internship programme to encourage a new generation of women in the business. Currently, 35 per cent of the 26 students are women, and they are learning skills in engineering, metallurgy, geology, and finance. Anglo American runs a programme which focuses on empowering women to become effective leaders by providing them with the necessary tools, networks, and space.

The table presents gender representation in various large-scale mining companies in Zimbabwe, showing disparities in female representation at different levels within these companies. In the context of promoting gender equality within the mining industry in Zimbabwe, the data from various large-scale mining companies reveals a diverse picture of female representation:

- Bindura Nickel Corporation Limited: Targeting 10 per cent female representation across all levels shows a commitment to increasing gender diversity, although the aim is relatively modest.
- Caledonia (Blanket Mine): Board Level: A

low female representation of 11 per cent suggests room for improvement in top-level decision-making roles. Management Level: 37 per cent female representation is more encouraging, indicating progress in middle-tier leadership roles. Overall Workforce: The stark disparity with only 2 per cent female representation highlights a significant gender gap at the operational level.

- Hwange Colliery Company Limited (HCCL): The absence of specific gender data makes it difficult to assess their standing in terms of gender equality.
- Mimosa (Covered under Implats): Overall Workforce: 12 per cent female representation indicates a need for increased female participation. Board Level: A higher representation of 40 per cent females is a positive sign of gender diversity in governance.
- Murowa Diamonds: 17 per cent female representation in the workforce shows moderate progress towards gender inclusivity.
- Premier African Minerals: Lack of data prevents assessment of their gender representation.
- Unki Mine (Covered under Anglo American): Management Level: 33 per cent female representation indicates a relatively balanced leadership. Overall Workforce: 24 per cent female representation shows better inclusivity than some counterparts.
- Zimbabwe Consolidated Diamond Company (ZCDC): 10 per cent female representation in the workforce signifies a need for greater female inclusion.
- Zimplats: Overall Workforce: Similar to ZCDC, a 10 per cent female representation points to a significant gender gap. Board Level: 40 per cent female representation demonstrates stronger gender diversity in decision-making roles. Technical Departments: 9.7 per cent female representation shows a notable gender gap in technical roles. Management Level: 6.7 per cent female representation indicates

a need for more female leadership in management.

Overall, the data reflects a varied landscape of gender representation in Zimbabwe's mining sector. While some companies show promising figures in board and management levels, the overall workforce in many companies still displays a significant gender gap, especially in technical and operational roles. This indicates an ongoing challenge in the industry to achieve gender balance and highlights the need for targeted strategies to enhance female participation at all levels.

### Critically Evaluating the Responses

The responses listed here demonstrate that, to varying degrees, companies are seeking to address gender inequality and to enable women to play a fuller role in mining. However, the fact that there are important initiatives under way does not mean that the mining industry is firmly on the way to eliminating discrimination against women.

It is important to note that other studies which researched this issue have been sceptical about the progress achieved thus far. A study conducted by Southern Africa Resource Watch in 2019 found that compliance levels among Mozambican mining companies on gender equality and women's empowerment are generally low. It also found that women were often subjected to discrimination and harassment in the workplace. Many Mozambican mining companies, it reported, lack clear policies and guidelines on gender equality and women's empowerment. The World Bank's International Finance Corporation (IFC), in collaboration with Mozambique's Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Action, conducted a study of gender-sensitive policies and programmes in the mining sector published in 2023. It revealed a significant gap in implementing policies and programmes that address gender-related issues among mining companies. While these studies

were conducted in only one of the countries discussed here, they do indicate a gap between companies' assessment of their progress and that of independent researchers.

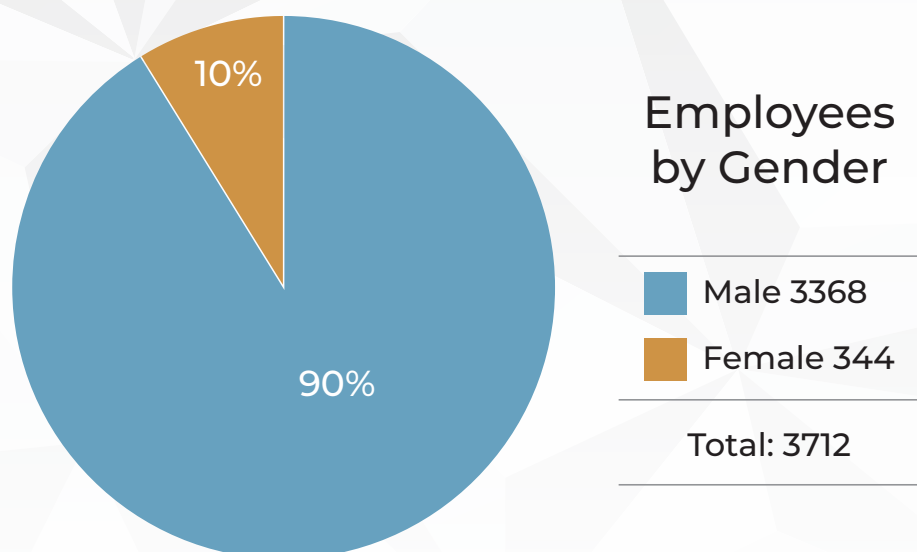
Research for this study indicated several shortcomings in company approaches to gender equality. Notably, the reluctance of companies to participate in the research could be indicative of a broader industry attitude. Despite reaching out to a dozen companies in each country, SARW received positive responses from only one or two. The research shows that some of the important initiatives discussed in the previous section are limited to only a few companies. Many do not have clear gender policies and targets available to employees, or representative channels for women to express their grievances and needs, or specialised programmes to combat sexual harassment, or policies which recognise the need to change the work environment to make it more hospitable to women, or programmes to support women entrepreneurs. The fact that some companies do adopt these approaches does not mean that they have become common practice throughout the industry.

Our Mozambique study noted that, where gender policies exist, they are often vague and do not commit the company to concrete action. It found that some company policies lack initiatives and targets that would be necessary to advance gender equality. Nor do they mention specific measures to address the gender pay gap or to promote gender diversity in leadership positions – or address the challenges facing women, such as unconscious bias, discrimination in pregnancy, or the disproportionate burden of caregiving responsibilities.

The DRC study found that companies need to recognise the specific challenges facing women in the organisation and the need to maintain safety and health conditions within the workplace. They also need stronger structures for retraining women to other



**Figure 3: Gender Profile: Zimplats Mine, Zimbabwe**



professions within the company. They are not adequately addressing the challenge of women's lack of technical and scientific skills by providing science and technology scholarships for women.

The South African study noted gaps in company accounts of their action against gender inequality such as a lack of assessments of the effectiveness of policies and actions, the company's level of commitment to the programmes, and the resources it had allocated to them. It also notes that companies lack adequate mechanisms for monitoring their progress.

The companies' approach to targets also tells a revealing story. It was noted earlier that a willingness to set a target indicates a greater seriousness about pursuing equality. This does not, however, alter the reality that the targets set by some companies show just how slow progress towards equality is on the mines. For example, a commitment to ensure that one in ten employees at all levels are women in four years' time is better than no commitment at all, but it does indicate a painfully slow rate of change.

While in many other industries, traditionally

excluded groups are more likely, initially, to be accommodated in the lowest positions, much the opposite is true in mining – because manual labour in the industry is seen as 'men's work,' it is easier to employ women in 'white collar' positions, particularly if those do not entail operational responsibility. Thus Caledonia/Blanket mine in Zimbabwe reports that 37 per cent of its senior management positions are occupied by women but that overall only 2 per cent of employees are women.

It may also be easier to appoint women as board members rather than as employees. Zimplats, for example, currently aims to appoint women to only one in ten posts throughout the organisation, but 40 per cent of its board – four out of ten members – are women. Where companies are seeking to include previously excluded groups such as women, the appointment of board members needs critical examination. On the one hand, it can be an important step forward because it includes women in decision-making, which is crucial if they are to reach their full potential in the industry. On the other, it can be a 'window dressing' exercise since board members have no operational role. Which of the two an appointment is obviously requires examination in each case.



Figure 3 depicts the gender distribution of employees at Zimplats mine: Male Employees: 3 368 males are employed, which represents 90 percent of the total workforce. Female Employees: 344 females are employed, making up 10 per cent of the workforce. The overall number of employees is 3 712. The accompanying pie chart visually reinforces this data, with a large majority of the chart coloured to represent male employees and a much smaller segment for female employees. This data demonstrates a significant gender disparity at Zimplats Mine, with a workforce heavily skewed towards male employees. Female representation is notably low, indicating that while there is some level of female participation, it remains substantially outweighed by male presence.

Lest we create the impression that privately owned firms are less committed to gender equality than the governments which adopt policies and pass laws championing equality, the case of Zambia's Mopani mine, which is currently government-owned, challenges this assumption. It has no stand-alone gender policy and our study found that, in the transition from private to public ownership, most of its useful policies in this area have been abandoned. The company does report initiatives that promote gender inclusion and equality and says that it is providing support to women's groups engaged in farming and village banking. So the point is not that the company is not interested in promoting gender equality, but that it is no more committed than private companies and, in some areas of focus, less committed than they are.

The evidence suggests that, like governments, companies are interested in promoting gender equality and are making progress.

But it suggests too that progress is uneven and still well below what would be required to signal clearly that ending discrimination against women is a priority. Gender equality is seen as a desirable goal but does not receive the attention, the resources, or the company muscle to make sure that progress is swift and sure. We now turn to possible solutions which could make gender equality a priority for both governments and companies.

## Looking Towards Solutions

Given these observations, the next step is to explore potential solutions that could elevate gender equality to a priority status for both governments and companies. This requires not only a commitment in principle but also a dedicated allocation of resources and a strategic approach to ensure substantial and expedited progress in achieving gender equality in the mining sector.

Mining companies in the countries studied recognise the need for gender equality in the industry, yet their commitment often lacks the formality of government pledges. The diversity in company practices leads to uneven progress toward gender equality. While companies acknowledge the importance of female participation, this often doesn't translate into a central business priority, and traditional views of mining as a male-dominated field persist.

Efforts by companies extend beyond public relations, with some creating new opportunities for women. However, the shift from long-standing biases is slow and requires significant cultural changes in mining. The level of commitment varies; not all companies have clear policies or measurable targets for gender equality.

Examples like the Kibali gold mine in the DRC show a comprehensive approach, but overall, the industry's progress is limited. Companies face challenges between signaling non-discriminatory practices and actively promoting women's participation. Despite initiatives, gender equality in mining is more aspirational than actual, with ongoing obstacles to women's progress.

Mining companies have a critical but under-realised role in promoting gender equality. While there are progressive policies in place, the industry needs more comprehensive strategies and cultural shifts for equitable outcomes. While there are progressive policies in place, the industry needs more comprehensive strategies and cultural shifts for equitable outcomes. Holding both governments and companies accountable is essential for substantive progress in gender equality.

## Conclusions

While mining companies have begun to acknowledge the importance of gender equality within their ranks, it is evident that commitments vary significantly, and a 'gender-blind' approach falls short of the necessary transformation. The industry must take proactive, tangible steps beyond policy statements to create an environment where gender equality is a lived reality. This pivotal change calls for the bolstering of advocacy efforts and the empowerment of civil society organisations — leading us to recognise the indispensable role these organisations play in driving the agenda for equality and influencing the industry at large.

*While initiatives by mining companies are critical, the advocacy and determination of civil society movements are crucial in amplifying the voices of women in mining and ensuring their representation in policy development.*

As we turn our focus towards the crucial role of civil society movements, it is clear that their advocacy and determination are instrumental in amplifying women's voices within the mining sector. These organisations are more than just campaigners for rights; they are pivotal in shaping the policy landscape and partnering with industry stakeholders to ensure that commitments to gender equality are actualised in practice. The following section will delve deeper into the impact of civil society and the collaborative efforts required to turn the aspirations for gender equality in the mining sector into a tangible reality.

## SECTION FOUR: THE WAY AHEAD

### **What action is needed to make gender equality a priority issue for governments and mining companies in Southern Africa?**

Before seeking to answer this question, it is important to raise an issue which was mentioned repeatedly in the country studies – the need for more information on gender equality on the mines. Studies noted critical information gaps. Some could be filled with more research and so initiatives which enhance research on this topic are needed. But both governments and companies could and should do far more to provide information on these questions, and so allow public scrutiny of efforts to achieve greater equality between men and women.

Our Mozambican study identified a lack of gender-disaggregated data on employment and wages and urged mining companies to provide more data – a task which should be tackled by governments too. The Zimbabwe study found that the mining industry has impeded research on gender issues and women's involvement due to its closed-off nature, with only a few publicly listed companies providing data. A nationwide survey, it argues, is needed to accurately determine the percentage of women in the mining sector's formal labour force. The South African study urged that mining companies publish regular reports on the progress and results of their gender-related programmes. The reports should include relevant data and metrics. Independent monitoring and surveys could offer valuable insights into the experiences

and satisfaction levels of women in the mining industry.

A specific proposal which companies are beginning to adopt is the use of an instrument designed to promote company reporting on gender equality, the Bloomberg Gender-Equality Index (GEI). The GEI is an index which seeks to track the performance of public companies committed to transparency in gender-data reporting. It enables company practices to be documented and so offers pointers to other employers. For governments, it was noted earlier that the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) commits them to more transparent reporting – its provisions which are relevant to gender equality may need to be applied more vigorously.

*Beyond calling for more data, the country studies propose a range of remedies which aim to ensure that greater priority is given to gender equality.*

Governments, the research team argues, must do more to ensure that the law mandates mines to pursue gender equity and is specific about what is required of them. This applies particularly to countries which have not incorporated gender equality targets into their mining laws, but not only to them; the other countries need to look critically at whether

their laws are clear enough and are focused on requiring appropriate action. All countries need to examine how to ensure that the international instruments they have signed are incorporated into domestic law. More specifically, laws should require companies to give attention to ensuring that workplaces are friendly to women by ensuring that changing rooms, protective equipment and all other aspects of the environment recognise women's needs. The research notes that every aspect of the mining sector impacts women and men differently, a reality which must be integrated into gender equality law and policy.

But, while governments clearly need to be more assertive in mandating equality, they are likely to do this more effectively if they work with all interests with a stake in the mines. This can ensure that the measures government takes are supported by those who must abide by them or, if that is not possible, that they are willing to live with them. Governments always require the compliance of key actors to implement their laws and policies and engaging with private interests can achieve this. The Mozambican study thus urges greater collaboration between the government, mining companies, and civil society organisations to promote the effective implementation of a gender equality strategy.

Another key government tool, in use in South Africa, is procurement. It can be used to influence company behaviour by requiring companies seeking government business to comply with measures to enhance gender equality and to open opportunities to excluded groups. An International Finance Corporation report, *Unlocking Opportunities for Women*

*and Business: A Toolkit of Actions and Strategies for Oil, Gas, and Mining Companies*, which provides best practices and tools for extractive industry companies to be more inclusive,<sup>25</sup> reports that procurement is a viable and most effective vehicle to catalyse women's participation.

Government also have a role in addressing women's participation in artisanal mining. The aim here is to regulate the sector without penalising women. One proposal, offered by the DRC study, is publishing regulations which compel mining cooperatives working in the sector to enable effective participation of women and combat violence and sexual exploitation. Regulating informal activity is a challenge to governments since people often work in this sector because they want to avoid regulation. But, while governments should not overly formalise this sector, they can insist that it encourage participation by women and refrain from mistreating them when they do take part. More generally, governments need to recognise that formal mining is not the only arena for women's participation to promote mining entrepreneurship by women. The DRC study proposes that governments create a fund to support women's mining activities and obtain tax breaks and financing facilities for women.

An important but more challenging role for governments proposed by the studies is to combat the prejudices and stereotypes which exclude women from mining or impose hardship on them when they do take part. Governments are urged to organise awareness-raising campaigns against discrimination and exclusion of women in mines and artisanal

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<sup>25</sup> *Unlocking Opportunities for Women and Business* (ifc.org)

mining sites. They should also promote the abolition of cultural practices that restrict the types of work women can do, limit women's freedom of movement, and perpetuate gender-based and work-related discrimination, violence, or harassment. They will be better able to do this if they tackle the attitudes which allow these practices to persist. Organising awareness campaigns against discrimination and harmful cultural practices, and informing women of their rights are crucial steps.

This proposal is sure to prompt scepticism on the grounds that prejudices are very difficult to change, particularly when they are embedded in cultures. But this ignores the extent to which governments – and companies – can contribute to attitude change by encouraging people to abandon their prejudices. There is evidence that white opposition to racial changes in South Africa was reduced by government campaigns. Government messages promoting support for gender equality and women's rights would thus have a positive effect in softening prejudices. There is also a potential role for governments in adequately informing women of their rights and of the programmes and laws that seek to protect them.

A further, more long-term role for governments is to address some of the barriers to women's participation which do not originate within the mines. An obvious example here is education and professional and vocational training. The Zambian study, for example, notes that mines on the Copperbelt operate in areas where 60 per cent of women are illiterate, an obvious obstacle to women's participation. Addressing illiteracy and providing vocational training, especially in areas with high female illiteracy

rates, is vital.

More generally, it should go without saying that government ministries and departments responsible for gender equality programmes need resources and political support, and that they should be judged on whether they intervene effectively to change discriminatory practices and realities. Clear objectives and monitoring provisions which ensure that governments can measure their progress and correct ineffective programmes are also essential.

A debate on which opinions differ sharply is whether creating gender ministries helps or hinders progress towards greater equality. The argument for ministries is that they show that the government regards the issue as important. The argument against is that the treatment of around one half of the population should not be the responsibility of only one ministry. Rather, it should be integral to the operation of all government functions. The second view is supported by evidence that countries in Southern Africa which have established gender or youth ministries appear to do no better, and at times, worse, at advancing the interests of these groups than those which avoid ministries and rely on 'mainstreaming' the issue in all government functions.

Governments also have a duty to ensure that women play a greater role in the vehicles and instruments which are established to protect their rights and advance their interests. The DRC study reports that only some women have access to decision-making bodies which affect their activities, even though their participation is enshrined in the constitution. The Zimbabwean

study reports that in government departments which address gender equality on the mines, women leaders made up only 21 to 25 per cent of directors and deputy directors.<sup>26</sup> The ministry does face the challenge of recruiting the required number of women with the needed levels of qualifications, but the more women participate in these government functions, the more legitimacy they are likely to enjoy. There is also a continuing need to ensure that, where women are advantaged by programmes, the choice of beneficiaries is fair and impartial – the Zimbabwe study notes that ‘well-connected women’ have an advantage in accessing mining claims, whereas marginalised women struggle to participate fully.

Companies’ role has been partly addressed in the previous section. As an overriding principle, companies need to acknowledge that, because women have been largely excluded from mining for over a century, active measures are needed to ensure their inclusion. Simply proclaiming a ‘gender-blind’ policy will not bring greater equality – the industry is currently designed by and for men only, so much must change before gender equality is possible. Our research points out that men and women experience every aspect of mining in different ways and company programmes need to acknowledge this and develop suitable remedies. This may mean giving preference to women and it certainly will mean changing those arrangements which accommodate the needs of men only. And it will require policies which accommodate pregnancy and child-rearing activities, recognising that women can contribute much to companies even as they attend to these tasks.

One area in which a ‘gender-blind’ policy would be appropriate, however, is pay. Our research shows that equal pay for equal work is still not a reality for many women in the industry and it is therefore a priority for companies to ensure that men are not paid more than women simply because they are men.

Like governments, companies need to tackle gender equality with greater urgency. This means moving beyond statements of intent to concrete plans, clear targets, and active monitoring to assess progress and to correct initiatives that are not achieving their desired effect. The South African study proposes that companies conduct exit interviews among women employees who are leaving their jobs to evaluate the impacts of policies which, despite being ‘gender neutral’, may negatively affect women in the workplace. More generally, researchers who participated in this study point out that gender equality on the mines is not only a human rights issue, although it is that too. It is also a strategic imperative because, as noted earlier, companies which use the skills and energies of the entire population will perform better than those who rely on men only. This means that gender equality policies and programmes need to be treated as core concerns of the business which are no less pressing than operational issues.

One aspect of increasing urgency is to become more active in recruiting women and helping to ensure that there are enough women with the required skills available to occupy jobs in the industry. Specific proposals generated by the research are that companies grant scholarships to young women to pursue scientific and technical courses which equip

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<sup>26</sup> PACT (2016) A Golden Opportunity: Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining in Zimbabwe. Accessible on: <https://www.pactworld.org/library/golden-opportunity-artisanal-and-small-scale-gold-mining-zimbabwe>



them for mining work, and that they organise programmes to raise awareness of mining among young women and to encourage them to consider it as a career. Companies could, for example, organise open days at which young women could access information on mining.

Companies can also, like governments, play a role in shifting the prejudices which obstruct moves to greater equality. There is robust evidence to support the view that, when companies commit themselves to values and propagate them in the work environment, they play a positive role in changing how employees face their tasks. Our research shows that many of the assumptions which underpinned the male monopoly of the industry, starting with the belief that women are simply not physically equipped to work in mining, are still current, as are even more alarming beliefs such as the assumption that women can be violently assaulted or subjected to sexual harassment with impunity. Company programmes which encourage respect for women are needed to counter these beliefs.

It was also noted earlier that companies have a role in helping to influence the environment in which they work to open opportunities for women to contribute to mining without joining existing companies. This would obviously mean encouraging mining entrepreneurship among women. Since the research shows that support programmes may favour well-connected and better-off women, it is obviously essential that they choose beneficiaries most in need and most able to contribute positively, not those whose social status or links to decision-makers gives them an advantage.

*Our research has also identified the view that mining companies should ensure that their suppliers do not discriminate against women and are also pursuing gender equality. One company surveyed keeps a database which indicates suppliers' approach to gender equality.*

## The Need for Voice

All the proposals made thus far would speed progress to gender equality. But they all assume that it is already a priority for governments and companies. Yet the research indicates the opposite – that, despite good intentions, gender equality is not yet a priority.

This will not change unless and until women are heard more clearly on this issue than they have been until now. Whether decision-makers – in government or business – give priority to a social issue depends on the voices they hear. It is a truism that groups who are able to be heard by decision-makers will be taken more seriously by them. Which issues are important and which are not is always a subjective issue – in all societies, groups who want their concerns addressed will be able to achieve this only if they are able to be heard by decision-makers and to convince them that their reputations or their job prospects will be negatively affected if they do not respond favourably. It was noted earlier that effective lobbying by women in South Africa ensured that women benefited from policies which aim to redress past discrimination.

*It is no surprise that equality for women on the mines is not a priority because women are not organised into an effective lobby group and are not adequately represented in most of the forums which decide on industry plans and priorities.*

Given this reality, one of the most important proposals generated by the research makes the case for civil society organisations or movements championing women's rights in mining and acting as an advocacy vehicle for women in the industry. Experience in many societies shows that if such organisations existed, gender equality would enjoy much more priority than it does now. If women try to start organisations of this sort, they should be encouraged by everyone who supports gender equality in mining.

While governments and companies should welcome the emergence of these organisations, they should not establish them. Civil society organisations formed by government are not independent of them and so are unable to pursue the needs and priorities of their constituency free of government influence. And, since these organisations will need to engage with companies, they will be unable to play this role independently if they are initiated by companies. The role of both government and companies is, therefore, to recognise and to engage with any organisations that emerge and to ensure that they have the necessary freedom to do their work.

Both governments and companies can help to ensure that women's voices are heard in two related ways. The first is to recognise that they cannot effectively address gender equality unless all their efforts are undertaken with women, rather than for them. This can be achieved by ensuring that all gender equality policies and programmes are devised and implemented in consultation with a vehicle which will give women a substantial say in what is done and how it is done. The second, mentioned earlier, is that all vehicles which decide what is to be done should be comprised mainly or exclusively of women. It is also important that governments and companies do what they can to ensure that the women who do participate in these vehicles are as representative as possible of the differing views and interests among women in mining.

Much more could be said about this topic since it lies at the heart of efforts to end gender discrimination in mining. What is clear, however, is that the progress which has already been made towards gender equality will remain limited until women are able to play an active role in deciding what they need and how those needs are to be met.







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