

African Women in Artisanal and Small-scale Mining

Many studies into the mining sector have described how masculine the industry is. However, this Special Report highlights the significant, yet chronically underreported major role African women play in the sector, more so in artisanal and small scale mining (ASM). In Africa, the ASM workforce comprises no less than 40-50% women; this report highlights a selection of them in Ghana, Guinea and Tanzania, and reveals the key challenges that women face in the sector and what can be done to make it more gender-responsive.



Call to harness huge potential Mining must be gender-inclusive

The media coverage of the recent South African miners' strike at Northam Platinum reinforced the belief that mining is a man's business. This is, however, very far from the truth, writes Thokozile Ruzvidzo as she explains how gender-related challenges hamper the progression of women in the sector – more so in artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM).

NE KEY COMPONENT OF the mining sector – artisanal and small-scale mining – has a huge female workforce, estimated at between 40-50% in Africa, according to the 2014 report *Encyclopedia of Gender and Mining: Key Initiatives, Best Practices and Actors*, produced by the German Federal Enterprise for International Cooperation (GIZ).

The World Bank in its *Gender Dimensions of Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining: A Rapid Assessment Toolkit*, says that some African countries, such as the Ghana and Malawi, have more than 50% of women making up the artisanal and small-scale mining workforce. Conservative estimates indicate the presence of more than eight million artisanal miners in Africa (according to the UNECA and the African Union Commission), although it is important to note that there is a huge paucity of data on artisanal mining, since some of it is secretive and clandestinely undertaken, to avoid detection by governments. This is so because in most countries artisanal mining is considered illegal. Nevertheless, these figures are a clear demonstration that women in Africa typically play a much larger role in artisanal mining as compared to large-scale mining.

Despite the significant involvement and contribution of women to the artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) sector, a growing body of evidence reveals that women are differently and more negatively impacted by their engagement in ASM in their communities. This is usually a reflection of existing gender inequalities (division of labour and cultural norms that lower the status and authority of women relative to men), which are compounded by the stratification and social, environmental and economic pressures the industry can create.

It is for this reason that the African Mining Vision (AMV) clearly articulates the need for a mining sector that is safe, healthy, gender and ethnically-inclusive, environmentally friendly and socially responsible. The AMV plan of action calls for the harnessing of the potential of ASM to improve rural livelihoods, to stimulate entrepreneurship in a socially-responsible manner, to promote local and integrated national development as well as regional cooperation.

In response to this, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)'s African Centre for Gender in collaboration with the African Minerals Development Centre of UNECA and UN Women Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office undertook a five country research project in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Guinea, Tanzania and Zambia of women in ASM.

The findings of the research clearly highlight a number of key gender-related challenges that women face in the sector. These include: critical inaccessibility of capital and financing for the mining operations from mainstream financial facilities; the lack of appropriate machinery and technology (such as the use of the very hazardous mercury for amalgamation of gold); lack of access to information on availability of mining claims; extreme difficulty in acquiring mining licences; lack of geological information on the output capacity of



their mines due to a lack of finances for the employment of surveyors/geologists; lack of technical know-how of the sector due to unavailability of capacity building opportunities; lack of information on the market dynamics including tax incentives; labour-intensive unpaid care work in the home that takes up time that could have otherwise been utilised in productive mining activities; and prevailing patriarchal ideologies that mining is a man's job, thereby obstructing crucial information from trickling down to the women miners.

Some of the key recommendations proposed by the women in artisanal and small-scale mining in the project countries include, but are not limited to: the need for the provision of financing from both the public and private sector to make their operations profitable and commercially viable; provision of appropriate technology and machinery (particularly for gold mining) to avert the hazardous side-effects of the use of mercury and cyanide; institution of a clear information dissemination framework that reaches the grassroots women when claims/concessions become available; the need for training and capacity-building initiatives targeting the women miners to equip them with technical know-how in the sector to avoid the all-too-common cases of swindling affecting women; the need for market information and the establishment of mechanisms that connect women to ready markets; and targeted sensitisation of the communities to dispel the patriarchal ideologies that pervade the sector.

In bringing these issues home, the following stories of women artisanal miners – from diverse countries – adequately capture their first-hand experiences in the sector, bringing to the fore their various successes and challenges on their journeys in artisanal and small-scale mining, previously viewed as a man's job.

The results of the research will be used to influence government policy, planning and actions to address the challenges women artisanal and small-scale miners face. This will also help to position women miners to better contribute to a sector that is critical for Africa's transformation and development.

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Women & Mining: Breaking the cycle



THE AFRICAN UNION ASSEMBLY of Heads of State and Government made a historic commitment at its 23rd Ordinary Session in June 2014, in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, to dedicate 2015 as the Year of Women's Empowerment and Development towards Africa's Agenda 2063. This decision was a key affirmation that the other half of humanity – women – are critical to the achievement of the Agenda's vision for a continent that is integrated, peaceful, prosperous, people-centered and representing a dynamic force in the global arena. One crucial tenet of the Agenda is the need for a strategy to optimise the use of Africa's resources for the benefit of all Africans.

In line with this, Africa's rich human and natural resource base is poised to play a critical role in the industrialisation and structural transformation of the continent. According to the UNECA 2013 *Economic Report for Africa* the continent owns about 12% of the world's oil reserves, 42% of its gold, 80-90% of chromium and platinum group metals, and 60% of arable land, in addition to vast timber resources.

However, this dominance of the extractive industries in many African countries coexists with an excessive focus on capital-intensive growth sectors, fragile institutions and unequal redistribution policies that result in the exclusion of large swathes of populations – particularly women and youth – from reaping the benefits of growth and development.

It is important to note that the benefits and risks of mining in general (including artisanal and small-scale mining) are often measured broadly at the community level, but often fail to distinguish the differential impact on men and women. Gender bias exists in the distribution of risks and benefits in mining projects, with significant cost implications for the industry, according to a report by Oxfam Australia. As a result of gender-based inequalities in communities,

The women in artisanal and small-scale mining who tell their stories in this issue portray a vivid image of the key issues that operators and communities face within the sector. This is a special year for the African woman and their say should be a call to action to upscale and transform this crucial industry, writes **Takyiwaa Manuh** – Director, Social Development Policy Division, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

men and women often do not have equal ownership or rights over resources.

Women are also often not involved in decision-making or consulted during negotiations preceding project implementation; and are overlooked in the payment of compensation and royalties. They are also not prioritised in employment and training opportunities in mining, says the same report. Additionally, women have highly precarious or non-existent rights in a large majority of resource-rich African countries. This gender bias is compounded by limited access to resources such as credit, education and technology; seldom enforced legal protection; and restricted influence in decision-making spheres. Thus women often lose critical livelihood and economic opportunities, access to land, face exclusion from resource management and are affected disproportionately by land degradation arising from mining operations, according to a UN Women report in 2013.

In light of these issues, several strategies need to be put in place to ensure that initiatives to upscale artisanal and small-scale mining in Africa are transformative in the lives of women and girls in the sector. A starting point is the insertion of women in small and medium-scale mining operations into national, regional and global value chains; with all the attendant requirements such as training and capacity-building.

In addition, the creation and promotion of forward, backward and side-stream linkages within and outside the mining sector would pull more women into the decent jobs bracket, thereby transforming their lives, those of their families, as well as the community as a whole, and will be a major boost for the women in the sector. This requires innovative financing for the sector.

The resultant transformative economic empowerment that would occur would provide women with agency and voice and the multiplier effect of this economic transformation will be visible in the education, health, and nutrition of their families – particularly child nutrition – as well as open up opportunities for women's economic and political engagement. In addition, critical partnerships and collaboration that could be fostered with research institutions and academia working in the sector would provide support to operators through the production of geological reports, the undertaking of gender assessments and socio-economic impacts of the mining.

The introduction of tailored training and capacity building initiatives targeting women on issues such as effective business-practices in the sector, as well as a technical know-how requirement will also boost the engagement of women in the sector. Moreover, collaboration between large-scale mining corporations (LSM) and the artisanal and small-scale (ASM) sector in the form of production sharing or royalty payments, technical support to the ASM through the provision of appropriate technology such as the Free Gold Technology, will greatly safeguard women's health in the sector while at the same time making them more productive.

'Mining' their own business

Stories of women in Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining

All images in this Special Report are for illustration only and are not of the women profiled. Images are all from external sources.

Ghana

Esi Ahema

ESI AHEMA IS A 37-YEAR-OLD FEMALE ARTISANAL MINER AT the Ankafo Junction quarry site. Married with three children, she has been working there for 10 years since her debut in mining, joining her uncle to work at the site.

"I was a petty trader but the market was not good so I contacted my uncle who was in the quarry business as a digger and he introduced me to the quarry business," she says. "I used to crush the stones, sell them and invest the money made into my petty trading business. But it was still not going well, so I stopped the trading and now focus on the quarry business."

With no starting capital, Esi began by buying the rocks at GH¢1 – about US\$0.3. She crushed and sold them and then reinvested GH¢1 from the money earned to buy another rock to crush and sell. She continued this strategy until she had enough to buy a bigger quantity of rocks, but there were sometimes setbacks. "I used to buy the rocks from the men

who dig them, but sometimes we didn't get rocks to buy because we (the buyers) were many," she says.

According to Esi, it is not easy to start a quarry business these days. Previously, quarry stone buyers used to wait nearby to buy their products, but currently buyers sometimes don't appear for as long as three weeks. Hence, the money she makes from the stone business these days is not enough to take care of her family. She has never accessed technical support from any individual or organisations both local and international.

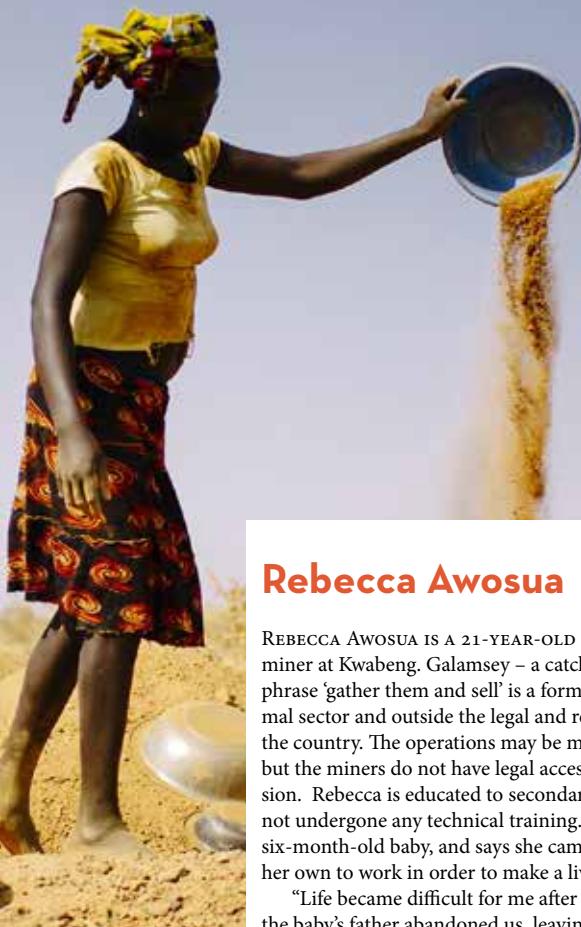
She adds: "I don't have many family members. My parents died quite early in my life leaving me nothing so I had to struggle to make a living. Hence nobody complained when I joined the quarry business. I used to look healthier and more beautiful before joining this business; I feel pain in my body as a result of sitting on the ground for long hours and the repetitive movement of my arms."

Her daily routine involves waking up as early as 5am to clean the compound, bathe her children, prepare breakfast for the family and get the children ready for school. She then prepares herself and leaves for quarry work by 8am. She usually departs the quarry at 4pm to prepare supper and to undertake other unpaid care work. She actively takes part in her local community and contributes money towards community infrastructure development and maintenance activities.

"I don't want the government to provide us with mechanised machines, but rather I would be glad if it mines the hard rock for us for free or gives me money to go into trading," she adds.



PHOTO BY OLIVIER GIRARD FOR CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL FORESTRY RESEARCH (CIFOR)



Rebecca Awosua

REBECCA AWOSUA IS A 21-YEAR-OLD FEMALE GALAMSEY miner at Kwabeng. Galamsey – a catchy adulteration of the phrase ‘gather them and sell’ is a form of mining in the informal sector and outside the legal and regulatory framework of the country. The operations may be mechanised or artisanal but the miners do not have legal access to the mineral concession. Rebecca is educated to secondary school level, but has not undergone any technical training. She is single, with a six-month-old baby, and says she came to the mining site on her own to work in order to make a living.

“Life became difficult for me after delivering my baby, as the baby’s father abandoned us, leaving us with no financial support, so I started doing galamsey work to make ends meet,” she says. “My family members think the galamsey work is difficult but they cannot take care of me either so they do not say anything when I am out here working. I make between GH¢5 and GH¢20, a day and I use this money to take care of my baby and myself. I am better now than before.”

Amina Tahiru

UNLIKE THE TWO FEMALE MINERS above, 41-year-old Amina Tahiru is a small-scale miner who owns a number of alluvial gold concessions in the Eastern and Central Regions of Ghana. She has been in the business for 10 years and has 30 permanent staff (all of whom are men) and over 100 temporary workers or contractors. These people are paid based on the amount of gold they make. About 60% of the temporary workers are women, who basically carry and load ore into the washing plant and also work as scavengers. Amina pays salaries, Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT), and the medical bills of her permanent staff.

She says: “I started as a gold buyer because I saw it as very lucrative. A concession owner cheated me and I seized his land and mined it to get my money back. Following that I applied for and obtained a concession from the minerals commission and started my own small-scale mine.”

Concerning her mining licence, she adds: “I applied for a licence, which took a long time, but it finally came. I also did an environmental impact assessment of the site.”

The first time she mined, she did not engage the services of a surveyor because “I knew where he was getting the gold”. Still to date she does not engage the services of surveyors because she intuitively knows where the gold is located. Her concession at Kwabeng is 50 acres in size and has been evaluated by an exploration team from the village. According to the village exploration team, 40% of the 50 acre land

is minable and the mine has a projected life of two years. “I do not know the total resource,” Amina adds. “I mine it step by step depending on which farmer gives me the access.”

She has plans to increase her output: “I intend to add three more excavators to make four. I have two processing plants which are okay. If it becomes too big, management will be a problem.”

She has two other excavators at her other sites and has rented out another two. She also has other washing plants, shovels, pumps, shaking tables, trammel, sluice box and pans. She indicated that she has not accessed any technical or financial support during the life-cycle of her mining business. She further posits that she has never received any assistance from the Ghana government initiative and programmes or received assistance from any local or international donor-funded initiative or programmes.

Amina thinks that the government could help to improve or promote opportunities for women working in artisanal and small-scale mining by making it easier for them to acquire concessions. She added that the government could also help to organise women for training support and logistics after a needs assessment to ascertain the kind of technical skills required. As for the banks: “They do not even want to hear our stories. It is only when we earn the money that they want us to open an account”

Regarding collaboration with large-scale mines, she thinks they can give the female miners access to the lands that they do not need, which would be immensely beneficial to the women in artisanal and small-scale mining.

“It is still difficult, even more difficult to start a mining business now than it used to be,” she says. “Access to mineralised land is a problem, regulations are tighter and tax issues are becoming more difficult. Ten years ago, we were not paying tax. I have not seen any development since I first started being involved in the sector. More and more people are coming in without understanding the issues involved in mining. Politicians see it as a money-making area and they are making the place muddy by bringing in people who create pits and leave without reclamation. But they are seen as untouchable and they go free.”

With regard to what her family thinks of her as a female miner, she says the image is better now. However, more people also depend on her now and the demands are higher. She is able to sustain a living for herself and her family from the mining activities. About 80% of her income comes from mining. She has real estate investments, too.

Amina’s success in a male-dominated sector does not exempt her from undertaking unpaid care work in her household as well as in the community. She is actively engaged in community development initiatives and is frequently referred to as the queen of development at Nyadua in the Asin Fosu District. She maintains feeder roads in the villages, pays teachers who are not on the government payroll, feeds schoolchildren and repairs boreholes and sanitation facilities such as the Kumasi Ventilated Improved Pits (KVIPs).

Amina’s work as a female small-scale miner often faces challenges that do no confront her male counterparts.

She says: “I have challenges with compensation, meeting chiefs and the communities. As a female, everyone looks down on you in the village and wants to cheat you. You are always seen as a threat so I have to keep proving myself capable.”

Amina is a member of the Ghana National Association of Small-Scale Miners (GNASSM), which offers help when there is a disaster, or when there are issues with the chiefs or galamsey operators. However, it is not able to help its members financially.

Tanzania

Sarah Boniface Lusambagula

SARAH BONIFACE LUSAMBAGULA IS A MINER OF TITANIUM in the Singida region in Central Tanzania. She is acknowledged as being the only female miner of titanium in Tanzania. Her achievements in the artisanal and small-scale mining sector as a woman have been due to '*kuthubutu*', [literal meaning in Swahili: to dare]. She is now the chairperson of the (licensed) Women Small-scale Miners in the Federation of Miners' Association of Tanzania (FEMATA) and the treasurer for the Njombe Region Miners Association (NJOREMA). Born in 1968, Sarah currently is the managing director of Mwisa Co Ltd. Her interest in mining was developed through working with her aunts who were mining in the Njombe region and who introduced her to mineral dealers buying products from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). She says: "I developed an interest in mining when I went to the DRC to buy minerals and realised that miners in the DRC diversified their goods and did not only deal with one product, e.g gold, but also with other minerals including silicon and titanium. Females were more into trading. I noticed that the environment where silicon and titanium was mined was similar to the one in Singida, but the miners in Singida discarded the titanium, not knowing its value. I immediately grabbed this opportunity and began mining titanium. This was in 2011." It was not until 2013 that she got her mining licence.

In April 2014, Sarah's was among 11 companies given a grant through the Sustainable Management of Mineral Resources (SMMRP) project managed by the Tanzania Investment Bank (TIB). "The grant was managed by TIB officials who processed the geological survey in seven out of my 15 plots in Singida at an area called Majengo Minyuge. This area is located 54 km from Singida town," she says.

Sarah practices surface mining, with quite shallow pits – which makes it conducive for her to physically supervise the operations. Her operations involve maintaining mine workers, buying water for processing and transportation of the product to Dar es Salaam for marketing.

Her initial attempts to market the product were met with many challenges, including the lack of preparedness by Mining Officers to deal with titanium, until the mining laboratories in Dodoma identified the material as titanium ore. Sorting titanium was also complicated. Sarah once secured 110 tonnes of titanium ore bearing material but could not process it easily. She had to resort to the use of sieves for sorting, as diamond miners do.

Because the marketing of minerals is challenging, many small-scale miners (SSM) depend on dealers. Early on, Sarah was swindled by a mineral dealer through an unsuspecting female agent based in Dar es Salaam. Some dealers also take minerals on credit and pay back in installments – making it an unprofitable business to the miner. This has made Sarah doubly skeptical of going through dealers and she has vowed to operate more professionally, with herself engaging with the production and the buyers.

Sarah plans to visit China this year to learn about mining and processing titanium, and to purchase processing machinery using a grant she has received. "I want to visit China myself to avoid being taken for a ride or given machinery not of my specifications," she says. "Titanium is sold at US\$6-7 per kg. With the right processing machinery I can reach a production rate of 70-100 tonnes a day, while manually I can only make 100 tonnes a month. Manual processing



is physically tiring, and the final product is not well refined, and hence the profits are also not good.

To upscale her profit margin, Sara realised that as a woman she needed education, information and fair, transparent market arrangements. She is now experienced in the identification and grading of rocks, and has joined hands with another female miner, who is knowledgeable in mine management issues.

Sarah claims that patriarchy is still very present in ASM, and this should be challenged. Most men prefer working with fellow men to their own wives. For example they have a saying that for women in gold mining "*sauti ya dhahabu hawana kwa kukosa mitaji*" (literal meaning in Swahili: they do not have the power of gold because of lack of capital). This refers to the reality that many women in ASM end up operating at a loss or with minimal income because of paying back debts or loans taken as operating capital. Other people seek partners with capital to jointly operate mines. "Some women do not want to be involved or are prevented from getting involved in mine operations," adds Sarah. "Should the husband therefore die, the mining operation becomes a loss-making venture. Other women also depend on men to process the formal registration of their claims, ending up being swindled. In addition, if you make yourself visible and follow-up closely on mine operations you become blackmailed or hated. But you need to be vigilant over your property otherwise you lose."

Sarah says she is confident in her success because "thanks to the current leadership within the Ministry of Energy and Minerals (MEM), and their efforts to organise the ASM sector, miners are becoming more informed of opportunities to operate viable ventures, how to access geological information and sometimes capital or credit."

ball mills (karasha) for processing, which is costly and unfair." In 2007, through proceeds from retailing cooked food 'Mama Ntilie' she was able to purchase a compressor that has reduced the costs of hiring one for her pits.

"I am now a woman miner in a class of my own comparable to the male miners, some of whom look at me with disapproval, because I have been able to match up to them, but I will push on," she states. Leah indicates that, "owning technologies, having easier access to capital and information will be of highest benefit to women in ASM. Government support to the women in the sector would be through educating financial institutions on the operations of the ASM sector, whose income is not steady, and varies from time to time depending on mining success. This will open doors for financing the women in the sector."

Happiness Mabula

HAPPINESS MABULA IS A LONG-TIME SMALL-SCALE GOLD miner who currently operates a mine in Matundasi, Chunya District under the licence of two male colleagues. Why she is in this arrangement? She says that "a woman is often not given priority when applications for claims are tendered". She operates in both sesa surface mining and pans for gold in the nearby river, and maintains a workforce of two men, whom she pays TShs 300,000 (approx. US\$182) a month on top of maintenance costs.

She had previously lodged an application for a licence to mine an area where, after collecting random rock samples, she was informed of promising gold deposits. However, she was later informed that the area had already been allocated to someone else. Thereafter she devised a strategy of using her two male colleagues under an agreement in which she would come to legally own an area in Sangemba that they had annexed to their claims.

She says: "Some people in positions of power create too many obstacles for women to own mining claims, making them wait in hope or simply not giving them priority or information on time when such opportunities arise." This position was validated when an official of the Mbeya Regional Miners' Association (MBEREMA) mentioned that none of the 25 plots recently identified for small-scale mining (SSM) in the area had been allocated to a female miner.

Happiness is quite optimistic that she will achieve even more success now that she has acquired some skills in mining, in amalgamation and processing gold through burning the amalgam. "Women physically handling mercury is very common although we have been exposed to the use of retorts" to mitigate the hazardous health consequences of using mercury for amalgamation.

Happiness has recently successfully finished processing paperwork for ownership of her own mining licence. Although she says she cannot make accurate estimates of her mine production output because she has just begun keeping written records, she indicates that her mining operation is successful as she owns a saloon car, two ball mills (karasha) worth TShs 32m (approx. US\$19,394) and a motor-cycle, and furthermore, has raised her three children single-handedly. She also represents small-scale miners in the Federation of Miners' Associations of Tanzania (FEMATA), as the chairperson of the ethics and disputes committee for women, and the National Social Security Fund (NSSF). Her major wish is, "for the government to give more priority to women in ASM, especially in accessing capital with acceptable terms, and technologies."



Leah Kalua

LEAH KALUA IS A WIDOW WHO OWNS A PRIMARY MINING Licence (PML) and a company named Safari Mining Mbugani that operates in the Chunya gold mining zone. Her husband passed away in 2002. She recalls that although she was not incorporated in the running of the claim when her husband was alive, she watched and learnt on her own what it took to run such an operation. At that time, the mine was all they depended on to eke out a living.

Leah explains: "On his death, in 2003, I had to pull my socks up and went to oversee the operations. I would walk almost 4km daily to and from the mines at Mbugani to our home in Chunya town. My journey in mining began with processing the tailings that had been left over at the time of my husband's death. I hired a few youth for the work and from it got some income. In 2007, one person advised me to re-work some of the closed pits within the claim, which improved my profit margins. For example, I once got 70 sacks of gold-bearing ore for which I had to hire a truck to the mills for crushing."

Since then, Leah has been managing the operations by herself, maintaining the workforce and ensuring that shares from the proceeds are distributed accordingly. Another achievement was the successful renewal of the mining licence in her name.

Harmful traditional practices relating to inheritance also came into play, when she was forced to fight off her husband's relatives who had lodged claims for repossessing the mines with the claim that it was family property. Fearing dispossession, she sought the assistance of the Chunya District Resident Mining Office which assisted her in submitting an application to the headquarters of the Ministry of Energy and Mining. She finally got the licence put in her name in 2005.

Running the mining operations as a woman, she admits, is challenging: "Firstly, you cannot directly monitor the production in the pits because you cannot go down the deep shafts in long base mining. I have thus been swindled, and once I was informed of a big swindle by the mine workers which I confirmed after seeing them with new motorcycles. I was told they struck a good amount of gold in my pit. When I confronted them they abused me verbally."

She adds that "the lack of appropriate machinery and technologies makes you subservient to people owning major equipment. I had been depending on those with



Guinea

Fanta Kante

Fanta Kante is 49 years old and married with nine children. She didn't attend school and for the past 25 years has mined gold for a living, working in the artisanal and small-scale mines. Fanta's husband is unemployed and she does not have any relatives to help look after her children. She is the sole breadwinner who has to ensure that there is food on the table and enough money left over to pay for health care and her children's school fees.

When Fanta started working, her job was to pull the ropes and heave the gold up from the mine. To supplement her income, she also sold a local type of soap called "kabakoudou". Eventually she was able to save enough to buy a metal detector and a machine for cleaning and processing gold. Today, Fanta employs four people, with one woman among them. Her three male employees are in charge of digging and carrying out maintenance, while the woman pulls up the gold from the mine and cleans it.

Fanta says that working in the mining industry is easier nowadays thanks to new mining machinery and equipment for processing the gold. She has never heard of a mining permit or licence and has never received any technical or financial assistance.

Although 90% of Fanta's income comes from mining, during the rainy season she also does a bit of trading. She is neither engaged in any local community activities, nor does she belong to any associations or groups.

Fanta would like the State and the Société Aurifère de Guinée to help artisanal and small-scale gold miners by giving them equipment or other practical and technical assistance.

Saran Keita

Saran Keita is 19 years old and has never been to school. She has been working in the mining industry for three years. Her first job was to pull the ropes to bring up the ore from the pit. When her family saw that she was good at her job, they bought her a machine for washing ore and a generator. She does not have a mining permit and no one has ever asked her for one.

Saran employs five people, three of whom are women. During eight months of the year, the men dig and transport the ore, while the women pull it up from the pit and clean it. She, however, does not pay her workers a fixed wage; instead, she shares out the money made from selling the mineral ore. Saran indicates that her site has never been inspected, and she does not know what such an inspection would entail. She plans to increase production in the future by investing in more modern equipment. She further states that artisanal and small-scale gold mining is easier these days thanks to the advent of metal detectors and machines for cleaning and treating the ore.

Although Saran says that she has never received any technical or financial assistance, she is happy because mining accounts for over 70% of her income. She indicates that she is not an active member of her community and she does not belong to any official organizations.

Every morning before she goes to work, she undertakes the unpaid care work of the household which is time and labour intensive. Given the vital role that women play and the great responsibilities many shoulder, she would like the authorities to support women more by giving them appropriate mining equipment. She would also like to work with the large-scale mining companies operating in her area and hopes they will recruit more local workers.

The AMDC advocates for the enhanced use of geological and geospatial information to manage long-term developmental outcomes in African mining countries, as well as a well-governed African mining sector that is socially and environmentally accountable.



African Union

