



**IGF**

INTERGOVERNMENTAL FORUM  
on Mining, Minerals, Metals and  
Sustainable Development

## IGF CASE STUDY

# Skills Building for Women in Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining



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Photo: Chikomeni Manda, ASMTC Secretary

## INTRODUCTION

Women play a crucial role in artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM). While their challenges in the sector have been studied extensively, increased effort is needed to create a more widespread understanding of their importance to ASM. Though interventions address challenges and promote active and equal participation of women in ASM, the level of impact is typically short-term, at a very limited scope and scale, or insignificant. Key questions therefore remain, including: how stakeholders can jointly develop an enabling environment for women's active and successful participation in mining; what policy and enforcement mechanisms can ensure women are treated equally and incentivized to undertake mining activities successfully; what interventions can ensure gender-polarized norms are reformed and women's voices are adequately accounted for in major decision making; and how women's leadership skills can be enhanced to sufficiently represent and influence women while improving policy and practice.

This case study focuses on women and ASM, drawn from Mongolia, Zambia and Zimbabwe, highlighting how to empower women's meaningful participation in the sector through the building of skills and institutional capacities. An analysis is undertaken on the key elements required of initiatives around building skills and institutional capacity, to ensure realistic and high-impact interventions. This analysis is guided by the notion that with the right support

mechanisms women have the potential to spearhead a transformative process in ASM to achieving sustainable livelihoods. Governments in particular have an important role to play in enabling the realization of this potential, as do development partners and practitioners; the cases include relevant recommendations on how these roles can be best fulfilled.

This case study is parts of our series on women in ASM, including our report entitled [\*Women in Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining: Challenges and opportunities for greater participation\*](#) and our case study [\*Women in Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining: Interventions for Greater Participation\*](#).

### MONGOLIA - SKILLS TRAINING

A strong partnership between the Sustainable Artisanal Mining (SAM) project and the Mongolian government played a crucial role in formalizing the largely illegal ASM operators known as "Ninja," turning many into successful entrepreneurs. One of the key interventions was capacity building for women in various skill areas. This case study highlights the impact of government support in enabling an environment in which leadership and managerial skills training for women in ASM bears fruit, leading to environmental rehabilitation, employment and revenue generation. The change in approach from the government reflects its increased understanding of the challenges faced by the



ASM sector and the economic potential of ASM; the move toward formalization was further aided by champions from various stakeholder groups, who helped empower miners in understanding the law and exercising their rights.

## ZAMBIA - SKILLS TRAINING

The case of Zambia demonstrates the participation of civil society organizations (CSOs) in promoting the role of women in ASM, using as an example the work of the Extractives Industry Transparency Alliance (EITA), and how it provided various skills training for women in the ASM of development minerals. EITA set up a program in Mansa District focused on enhancing skills in the management of small-scale mining and strengthening the ability to hold government accountable for the enforcement of policies and regulations regarding natural resources management. It also sought to strengthen the institutional and administration systems of cooperatives and governance structures.

The initial training activities focusing on business skills and governance were a first step to help identify key barriers that women face, to provide preliminary guidance on the identified skill areas, and to lay the foundation for continued knowledge and skills development through forming structures such as committees. The case demonstrates that success could be more pronounced if local CSOs are involved in the process, since their work is informed by local realities, and they can help to ensure that initiatives are locally owned and sustainable.

## ZIMBABWE - ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING

Fully capacitated women, working in associations and recognized and empowered by their governments, can play an integral role in the formalization of ASM. This case study presents an initiative in Zimbabwe aimed at building the organizational, management and governance capacities of the country's miners' associations. Pact Zimbabwe's Accountability and Artisanal Mining Program (ZAAMP) focused on strengthening the internal systems of mining

associations within the Zimbabwe Miners Federation (ZMF), concentrating on good project and financial management, corporate governance, a sound policy framework, effective advocacy and resource mobilization. ZAAMP has been implemented in at least four miners' associations, operating from three mining districts.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. Donor-driven initiatives to empower women through education, skills and institution building must involve governments and local practitioners as active partners.
  - Governments need to actively participate in the design and implementation of programs designed to empower women to ensure alignment with national priorities and for the programs to have direct influence on policy reform.
  - Programs should include a capacity-building component to ensure efficient government involvement. Programs need to also involve women groups, first building their capacities and then enabling them to inform programs based on the realities of women in ASM. Programs should foster local ownership through capacitating local practitioners and training trainers to ensure the sustainability of programs. Government should also work to find ways and resources to support local organizations tasked with continuing empowerment programs, to ensure their sustainability over time.
  - Donors and practitioners, working with governments and women's associations or groups, need to collaborate to ensure efficient systems and technology are introduced, used and tested.
  - Similarly, women in ASM need to be connected with global networks for learning.



- As part of a donor or other program’s exit strategy, there needs to be a clear transfer of expertise to the women in ASM and local government personnel.
2. Governments should support and actively seek donor and financial institutions’ help in strengthening those women miners’ associations that have the potential to be the bedrock for successful initiatives aimed at empowering women.
- Donor-initiated programs should have sufficient focus on leadership and managerial training of association members, such that members can develop, grow and sustain a vibrant collective that effectively supports and represents women miners with government and other stakeholders.
  - Establish and support trust fund governance, designed to help promote savings and self-financing.
  - Encourage and support local organizations, and actively strengthen their management capacities. In addition, ensure miners and their associations are active and involved partners in donor-initiated programs for impact.
  - Learning manuals need to be developed and used for training other women in ASM. Similarly,
- communication materials such as information pamphlets, story handbooks, and media access such as radios, television and social media can supplement capacity building, benefits of the association and broader gender equality promotion.
- Foster networking and transfer of knowledge and technology through the involvement of women miners’ associations in empowerment programs or partnerships with international institutions. Skills training provided for members of associations on an ad hoc basis needs to be scrutinized making it more useful for the collective association’s purposes rather than individual benefit. It would be best if such training initiatives are made to align with functions of associations to utilize learning and train while also educating others.
  - Women miners’ associations should have direct links and collaboration with the training centres to be established or upgraded. Associations will serve as bridges encouraging women miners to access training services provided by the centres.



## CASE STUDY 1: SKILLS TRAINING IN MONGOLIA

Training and knowledge transfer targeting women is often initiated by international development organizations or global practitioners. Whether specific skills training or awareness raising, the training is mainly determined by the funding resources dedicated, and by concepts and strategies developed in global discourses. The level of involvement of local government entities tends to vary across different initiatives.

The Sustainable Artisanal Mining (SAM) project demonstrates how government involvement as a partner in the process has been crucial to its success, in a number of areas including women's capacitation. This case study of two Mongolian women working in ASM shows the value of government support in enabling an environment in which leadership and managerial skills training bears fruit. Thanks to these skills, these women have led their respective women miners' organizations, turning them into formalized and responsible operations that improved women's livelihoods while contributing to the collective good through environmental rehabilitation, employment and revenue generation.

### FROM NINJA MINERS TO ENTREPRENEURS

Large-scale mining operations often make the headlines in Mongolia. However, according to the Asia Foundation there are an estimated 100,000 independent small-scale artisanal miners working in the country, who make up nearly 20 per cent of Mongolia's rural workforce (Stacey, 2014). However, due to perceptions around the negative impact that their mining activities have on the environment, they are often marginalized from society, further preventing them from achieving their full economic potential and, crucially, from developing more environmentally sustainable mining practices.

Recently, however, improved recognition from both government and the public of the large role artisanal miners play in society has meant that this perception is slowly changing. As a result, Mongolia's artisanal miners are gradually becoming more formalized and recognized as important contributors to the economy. In order to maintain and scale up this progress toward greater formalization, the artisanal mining sector needs to improve its environmental performance.

Mongolia legally recognized ASM in 2010, but failed to provide effective regulatory tools to ensure environmental performance with respect to the effective rehabilitation of degraded land.



This was a significant shortfall, and one that was necessary for formalization to address. Today, more than 7,000 miners have formalized (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation [SDC], 2018) including through Asia's first Fairmined ASM enterprise. Over the last 10 years, the SAM Project, a bilateral cooperation project between the SDC and the Government of Mongolia, has supported the creation of an enabling regulatory and policy environment in which Mongolia's artisanal miners are able to formalize. Operating in the formal sector has allowed these miners to build businesses, support their families, and advocate for (and access) their rights.

## STORIES OF WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP EMPOWERMENT

Both Myadagbadam Chilkhaa and Saruul Jargal had come from a poor background and endured hardships while trying to support their lives and those of their children. Beginning in 2009, they both benefited from training programs as part of the SAM Project. Training programs covered areas including ASM organization, understanding the ASM legal framework, occupational health and safety, and business development. One of the most important trainings was on leadership and personal changes, which empowered both women with leadership and management skills.

Myadagbadam was elected as leader and chair of an ASM organization named "Gazar Shoroo – Ard Tumonii Bayalag," which she and 239 other miners established in 2012. The capacities of the organization's members have improved since its establishment, leading to more organized, responsible and safe operations and payment of taxes. Today, it is one of the most successful and widely recognized ASM organizations operating in Mongolia. Since its inception, members have improved their livelihoods and contributed to government revenues, paying more than MNT 24 million (USD 12,000) in income taxes to local government, and over MNT 10 million (USD 5,000) for members' health and social insurance (SDC, n.d.). They further rehabilitated nearly 22 hectares of lands abandoned by other miners. Throughout this time, Myadagbadam

has continued to grow as a leader, and she was elected head of the ASM National Federation's Monitoring Committee.

Saruul Jargal was selected and now serves as an Executive Director of Bayanbumbugur, an ASM organization established in November 2008 that today has 60 members. Saruul believes the secret to successfully managing this big family is good planning, a skill that she learned through the SAM initiative. Uniting and organizing artisanal miners has enabled better enforcement of work safety rules, resulting in no accidents. There are now 38 women in the organization, around 65 per cent of the membership; 15 of these women are single mothers. Through her leadership, Saruul has strengthened Bayanbumbugur, improving the living conditions of her and her members. While managing efficient mining activities, she was able to sustain the organization's financial base through various income-generating activities. She notes that, "I have good computer skills that I use to write project proposals, and even got a grant for a small project through the SAM Project trainings. Thanks to it, my organization runs a small sewing workshop and employs three single mothers sewing uniforms for big mining companies." Three savings groups were established next to the NGO, to help secure the women's access to financing to do businesses.

Governments commonly believe their primary duty is to monitor, control and close down mines that are not compliant with the law. This is, in some cases, a reactionary enforcement approach; in others, it is a legitimate piece of a holistic approach to their mandate. When government agents expect ASM workers to simply comply with their duty to respect the rule of law, regardless of whether they have read the law, understand the law, or are able to comply with the law, they often simply punish the lawbreakers. This proves discouraging at best, and futile at worst. Instead, ASM workers can more reasonably be expected to respect the rule of law when the state first realizes its duty to provide an enabling and appropriate legal framework, and helping them to follow it.





In Mongolia, under the SAM Project, theory and perspective are becoming practice. Government agents are acting on their duty to deliver services to miners, enabling miners to understand and claim their rights. Agents are not simply doing this because ASM is to be seen as “good.” Rather, it is because the government recognizes it is expected (and able) to deliver services to the miners as citizens and rights holders.

It is not enough for government officers to be aware of what they ought to do. The miners must also become aware of what their own rights and duties are, and what they can expect the government to deliver to them. First and foremost, miners need to be empowered and given a voice. In Mongolia, this process began with identifying local champions from civil

society and politics, who helped to advocate for the miners while gradually building the miners’ own capacity to advocate for themselves.

In doing so, instead of feeling victimized by the government, the miners were recast as “rights holders” who learned how to claim and access their rights from the state. The miners became better able to organize and were more willing to engage with the government. This enabled structures and relationships of mutual accountability between government agents and miners, as well as other citizens, to be established.

This process has proved to be empowering—even invigorating—for government agents. When given a mandate to be a public servant, to move from watchdog to duty bearer and enabler, people rise to the occasion.

## LEARNING LESSONS: INVOLVING LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

1. Involving local governments ensures initiatives are informed by local development policies and planning, while establishing trust between stakeholders. This leads to better engagement and smoother implementation, while increasing the opportunities for women to participate and have their voices heard in key decision and policy making. However, managing delays, ineffectiveness or biased outcomes due to bureaucracy, political pressure and lack of government personnel can be challenging.
2. Donor-driven initiatives tend to be well structured, with clear approaches to planning and implementation guided by international best practices. This leads to trained women having the opportunity to access global networks, foster peer learning and access international support. However, donor-driven training initiatives are often one-off, short-term trainings with insufficient opportunities for meaningful learning, which presents a challenge in influencing the status quo for women working in ASM.



Photo: Mwiya Mwandawande, National Coordinator, Extractives Industry Transparency Alliance

## CASE STUDY 2: SKILLS TRAINING IN ZAMBIA

Supporting skills development among women in ASM can in some cases involve participation of local civil society organizations (CSOs). The Extractives Industry Transparency Alliance (EITA) in Zambia played an active role in providing skills training for women involved in ASM in the extraction of various development minerals.

As in many other mineral-rich developing countries, a significant number of women in Zambia are involved in ASM, actively working as labourers, processors and traders. Most of these operations are characterized by the use of rudimentary equipment and unsafe practices. Unfortunately, existing associations of women involved in small-scale and industrial mining have largely lacked coordination and have been poorly governed.

Established in 2009, EITA is a network of NGOs, individuals, and academics advocating for improved transparency and accountability in the management of natural resources in Zambia for poverty reduction and national economic development. EITA has recently initiated a program aimed at mainstreaming gender and women's rights in natural resources governance in Zambia, with an emphasis on how mining can support social and economic development. The program focuses on enhancing skills in managing ASM and enhancing ability of miners to hold government accountable on the enforcement of policies and regulations on natural resources management. It is based out

of Mansa District, in the north of the country. The program also strengthened the institutional and administration systems of the cooperatives, as well as related governance structures.

### EITA'S SKILLS TRAINING ACTIVITIES FOR WOMEN IN ASM

EITA developed a business tool that was used to facilitate a five-day training workshop for women in industrial and small-scale mining. Fifteen women drawn from five wards in Mansa District received business and entrepreneurship training, and as a result, two women-led cooperatives have seen their governance and institutional development strengthened. EITA also trained women's associations in improved governance and local business development, including brick production and sand mining.

EITA also held training sessions for journalists in both the North-western Province and Lusaka. As part of the training, journalists were given the skills to carry out investigative journalism on mining of industrial and construction (development) minerals.

Further training was delivered focusing on developing capacities of communities to engage in mining industrial and development minerals. EITA provided training to 70 households in Kalumbila (50 per cent of which were female-headed) in local business development and mining of development





minerals, focusing on clay mining, brick making, quarrying and sand mining.

The initial training activities undertaken were a first step to help identify the key barriers women face in the ASM sector, to provide

preliminary guidance on the identified skill areas in need of strengthening, and to lay the foundation for continued knowledge exchange and skills development.

## LEARNING LESSONS: INVOLVING LOCAL CSOs

1. Local civil society organizations can ensure initiatives are informed by local realities and demands, resulting in the CSOs owning, sustaining and improving those initiatives once donor involvement phases out, as well as women's meaningful participation in decision and policy making.
2. Having a variety of training experts with various areas of expertise will ensure women with different areas of concerns or skills can make the most of the capacity-building resources. Having a training and education initiative focused on multiple skill areas provides an opportunity to address cross-subject areas at the same time, proving to be cost effective and efficient. This can result in a starting point for a centralized training centre that provides training and education on multiple areas of expertise with competency.



## CASE STUDY 3: ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING IN ZIMBABWE

It is widely acknowledged that associations of women in ASM can play a significant role in influencing better ASM policies and more responsible ASM, helping the sector contribute to sustainable livelihoods. However, most associations lack three key capacities needed to successfully undertake this role. The first relates to a lack of adequate resources: financial resources, material resources, transportation capacities, and office and communications facilities. This is a common constraint, though some women miners' associations have managed to survive, albeit barely. The second constraint relates to the lack of leadership and management capacities within the associations, which affects performance. The third missing institutional capacity is the lack of experience with mining-related issues and technical skills, such as geology, geotechnical engineering, mine sequencing, and marketing and the knowledge to teach and influence others. These capacities are crucial for the stability and long-term functionality of mining associations, and the realization of women's positive role in promoting responsible ASM that contributes to sustainable livelihoods.

Strong institutional capacity helps to determine the level of knowledge generated and how effectively it is communicated among ASM communities and with policy-makers. Knowledge

can cover a variety of areas, including: the policy and regulatory framework; safe, responsible and affordable mining practices; mining and marketing standards; technical and managerial skills that could improve productivity and value addition; support mechanisms and opportunities; and lessons and inspirations from ASM done well. Fully capacitated women, working in associations and recognized and empowered by their governments, can play an integral role in the formalization process. In addition, associations and governments can jointly help raise the level of education and awareness of women in ASM and shape related policy. This case study presents an initiative in Zimbabwe to build organizational, management and governance capacities of miners' associations.

### **BUILDING ORGANIZATIONAL, MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE CAPACITIES OF MINING ASSOCIATIONS**

An estimated 500,000 miners are involved in ASM in Zimbabwe, accounting for 53 per cent of all gold produced in the country in 2017 (Pact, 2019). Women account for a significant proportion of these miners, but they are often challenged by a lack of capabilities to address the gendered constraints they face, or to manage operations and increase productivity. The Zimbabwe Accountability and Artisanal Mining Program (ZAAMP)—a multi-year



ASM formalization program run by Pact with funding from UK Department for International Development (DFID)—attempted to address some of these challenges. Through this program, Pact partnered with the government to improve operational standards for ASM, to inform policy, and to increase collaboration between small-scale and industrial miners. One of ZAAMP's sustainability strategies is to strengthen the internal systems of those associations that make up the Zimbabwe Miners Federation (ZMF), improving their skills on good project and financial management, corporate governance, effective advocacy and resource mobilization. ZAAMP has been implemented in at four miners' associations operating in three mining districts.

As part of the project, four organizational capacity assessments were conducted, for Gwanda Youth in Mining, the Mthandazo Women in Mining Association, ZMF and the Shurugwi Association for People with Disabilities. Each association developed an Institutional Strengthening Plan (ISP), which identified weaknesses, actions to address

these weaknesses, and associated timelines for action. Pact and the associations have since embarked on an ongoing mentoring and coaching program aimed at building strong internal systems within the associations over a period of a year. This is followed by an Integrated Technical Organizational Assessment, a self-evaluation process with Pact facilitation that is conducted to assess whether there is improved organizational performance as a result of the project.

The project has seen multiple successes. Capacity development has been achieved through training programs; policy dialogues have created platforms for the associations to air their views and grievances to policy-makers in government; and conferences have been held to promote peer-to-peer learning and networking. Given that Pact's support through the program is time-bound, continued success and the sustained managerial and governance strength of associations will hinge on continued support from government and civil organizations.

## LEARNING LESSONS: INVOLVING LOCAL CSOs

1. Working with women miners' associations on training and education initiatives can help achieve significant impact in terms of reaching many women with multiplier effect and fostering an institutionalized and sustainable program. Although rare, initiatives that focus on leadership and management skills could strengthen women miners' associations. A well-structured program of capacity building that further empowers skilled, confident women can help them harness their potential not only as miners, but as leaders and mentors.
2. Training provided for members of women miners' associations does not have a strong train-the-trainer component due to financial constraints. Unless there is government and donor backing to strengthen associations and set up long-term capacity-building programs, the trained members are unable to utilize learning to train others with commitment and impact.





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### IGF

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