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Tanzania: Women in the Mining Sector

The Government of Tanzania has, in recent years, focused on revitalizing its mining sector in order to attract foreign investment, with the goal of raising its contribution to Tanzania's GDP from 2.1 percent to at least 10 percent in the medium term. With support from the World Bank through the Mineral Sector Development Project (MSDP), the legal and fiscal regimes were revised and an environmental framework was put in place. Institutional capacity building is being promoted and the rationalization and improvement of the small scale mining sub-sector is being addressed.

The current situation

While there are still only a handful of large-scale mining operations in Tanzania, small-scale and artisan mining, primarily of gold and tanzanite, is an important economic activity. Undertaken in remote rural areas, it employs over 500,000 people directly and, combined with seasonal subsistence agriculture, is a significant source of income for the local population. It is recognized, however, that small-scale mining raises a number of social and environmental concerns. The environmental issues include potential for deforestation, soil ero-

sion and contamination of water bodies. The spread of small-scale mining activities in and adjacent to sensitive ecosystems such as the Serengeti and the Lake Victoria may, unless carefully addressed, have irreversible impacts on critical habitats and disrupt ecosystem services. The social issues include potential for conflicts between traditional users of the land, exposure to mercury and other hazardous substances and the spread of communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS. The increasing use of child labor is also a serious cause for concern, as is the number of and constraints suffered by women involved in mining as well as in spin-off industries and services.

As the growth of this sub-sector continues, so do the challenges, for both men and women. These include a general lack of support services, a lack of geological information, technical assistance in environmentally sustainable and safe mining and processing, lack of exposure to best practice in commercialization, as well as inefficient and unsafe equipment and practices.

The role of the government and the World Bank

The government is playing an important and proactive role in regu-

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larizing and improving small-scale mining as well as fostering its growth. Its present approach aims to enhance the social conditions of rural life with improved small-scale mining activities, conducted in a climate of gender equality under sound technical, environmental, legal and social terms. It recognizes that for small-scale mining to emerge as a vigorous rural industry gender contributions must be duly integrated. These criteria are reflected in the ongoing MSDP.

This project aims to establish much-needed support systems for small-scale miners. This support will take the form of regular extension services to small-scale mines, advice on mining methods, mineral processing, environment, safety and health matters, as well as market access. Pilot tests, demonstrations and dissemination of mining and processing equipment for small-scale miners are being initiated. In addition, the creation of cooperatives will be encouraged, including women miner cooperatives. The project aims to promote the development of women miners not only through the creation of these cooperatives but also through education, training and skills development, including promotional presentations at schools and targeted workshops on further aspects of mining practice, and relevant management practices.

Addressing issues in small-scale mining that involve economic, ecological and social conditions requires interventions that are long term, and are adaptive and integrated in nature. While the MSDP has set up the basic framework for promoting the mineral sector in the country on a sustainable footing, there is wide awareness among stakeholders that support to the

small scale mining sub-sector will need to be carried out as a longer-term effort. Additionally, there is wide recognition that continued support and technical assistance to both the public as well as the private sector are required to ensure that the benefits of mining are equitably shared; that gender inequities are eliminated; and that appropriate environmental and social safeguards are in place.

Women and mining

Mining is a demanding physical activity, which historically has been conducted with very little mechanization and has traditionally been a male activity. However, with advances in technology and increasing mechanization, women are increasingly participating in mining activities.

Tanzanian women miners are actively contributing to the national economy while improving their family's standard of living and the conditions in their villages. However, they face numerous obstacles to increased participation in this sector. Many lack a formal education, which hinders their ability to deal with formal lending institutions. An additional barrier to obtain credit is the requirement of property for collateral, as most property is under traditional joint ownership with spouses. Further, women may require their husbands' consent for loan applications. Time constraints are another adversity facing women, who generally bear the traditional triple burden of household chores, tending to children as well as being engaged in a livelihood. Traditional male and female roles may also discourage female participation in this sector.

Tanzania Women Miners Association (TAWOMA)

TAWOMA is a non-governmental and non-profit organization formed in 1997. With a current membership of 192 individuals, its mission is "to facilitate women miners to organize and access required financial, technical and marketing services so that they can carry out mining activities that are both economically and commercially viable and environmentally sustainable and thereby raise the standard of living for women miners and their families." Specifically, its goals are:

- to lobby for support and recognition of women in mining nationally, regionally and internationally
- to identify the training and technical needs of women miners and organize resources required to meet these needs
- to prove relevant market information and facilitate the marketing of mineral products
- to set up a revolving fund to enable women miners to access the necessary funding required for their operations
- to serve as an advocate for women in mining to the government on policy issues and constraints faced by women.

Through its committed leadership, the Association has established an initial portfolio of activities including the establishment of a gem-cutting unit and a resource and information center. TAWOMA also organizes training and participation in relevant forums. It networks with various private sector mining companies as well as with organizations such the Global Fund for Women and Unifem.

In the long term, TAWOMA would like to establish the following:

- a center for the rental and testing of mining equipment and tools
- a lapidary and jewelry production unit
- a skills training center in mining related fields such as environmentally sound, more efficient mining methods and mineral processing, gemology, health and safety aspects and the rehabilitation of ecologically sensitive mining areas.

For further information on TAWOMA, please contact them at: Tanzania Women Miners Association, tel. No. : 255 51 150496; fax no.: 255 51 114275. Postal address L PO Box 78464, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

For further information on the MSDP project, please email Lmaraboli@worldbank.org or Ihewawasam@worldbank.org.

For further information on World Bank gender and energy projects in Africa, please email Sroddis@worldbank.org

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