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THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN MINING

By

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The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect
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BACKGROUND

- Started in the **18th century**, during the **Industrial Revolution** (women working in coal mines)*
- **Feminism, 3 era**
Main objectives:
 - 19th century – early 20; eradicate legal inequalities
 - 1960 – 1980; focus on cultural inequalities, gender norms and role of women in society
 - 1990 – 2000; range of diverse feminist activities

*Source: Celina Bland (1995)



TRENDS (1)

- **International context:**
 - Women in Mining Organizations (nationwide organizations for professionals within mining, including men);
 - Focus on: education (including community, youngsters, etc.), professional development, promoting and enhancing awareness towards mining as income generator.
- **Regional context**
 - Mujer Minera Programme (Chile);
 - Increasing numbers of female miners, formation of cooperatives and government involvement (Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina) to increase the number of female miners;



TRENDS (2)

- **Regional context (Cont'd)**
 - TAWOMA (Tanzania) and SAWIMA (South Africa).
- **Local context**
 - Increasing numbers of females within mining;
 - No formal organization;
 - No special regulation, although most mining companies comply to international regulations;
 - Women are represented in different positions except for CEO-related positions.



FEMALE LEADERSHIP

- Leadership is per definition not masculine;
- Women's unique abilities create a balance between "soft empathic character" and "hard action-related character";
- Direct participation of women in mining varies within the world. Asia <10%, Latin America 10% – 20%, Africa 40% – 50% (*);
- The driver to "seek" a job within mining varies: in South Africa e.g., it's poverty driven, whereas in Zambia and Indonesia women act as mine owners and mine workers (operators) (*);
- In Kenya, women have been working as miners for generations due to their more honest behavior compared to men (*).

*Source: J. Hinton, et. al. (2003), Women and Artisanal Mining: Gender Roles and the Road Ahead



ROLE OF WOMEN IN ASM (1)

- **Positive effects:**
 - Within ASM, 30% women; occupational roles vary from labor intensive mining method to processing methods (laborers) to providers of good and services;
 - Women have a critical role within mineral production as well as in the development of sustainable communities; enhancing their role can help in the positive transformation of ASM;
 - Contribution to productivity; women in ASM communities are critical to community stability, cohesiveness, moral and general well-being and can initiate positive change.



ROLE OF WOMEN IN ASM (2)

- **Positive effects (Cont'd):**
 - Stimulation of small entrepreneurship through the creation of different entrepreneurial businesses, such as shops, hotels, restaurants;
 - Especially in Suriname, most academic research is executed by female researchers;
 - Women play a more active role during training and awareness campaigns.



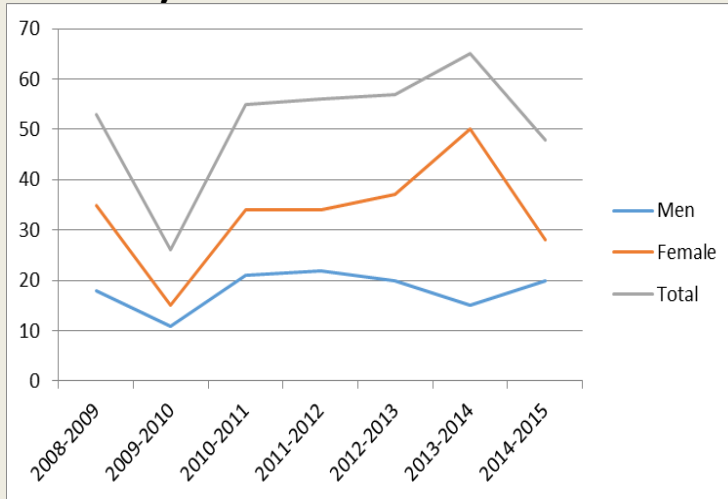
ROLE OF WOMEN IN ASM (3)

- **Negative effects:**
 - Human trafficking and prostitution;
 - Absence of sustainable entrepreneurial activities due to the mostly illegal mining practices;
 - Health issues as a result of e.g. mercury misuse and poor sanitary;
 - Less educational development for the women;
 - Negative spiral of less educated children due to the education level of the mother;
 - Social disruption due to long periods of absence of mothers and/or wives



SURINAMESE PERSPECTIVE

- **Education Level AdeKUS (Mining Stream)**



- **Nationality ASM:** 20% local, 70% Brazilians, 10% other nationalities
- **Position of women in ASM:** service providers, prostitutes, owners of machinery, researchers, concession holders)
- **Ratio men/female in ASM:** 8/1

- **Job Position:** public 1%, private 30%, civil society 40%-50%



CHALLENGES

- Cultural beliefs preclude women from working in some sections of the mine;
- Entrepreneurial drive of women is not always acknowledged and seen as common work;
- Traditional gender roles keep women in roles, such as service providers;
- Over the years, policy and laws on mining are not gender bias.



OPPORTUNITIES

- Awareness at primary levels;
- Increasing numbers of well-educated females;
- Organizing and increased networking of females associated with the mining sector;
- Regulation of gender equality within national mining companies;
- Empowerment of females through different organizations, such as social and cultural existing organizations;
- Strengthening of women networks.



Thank you!

