

The Southern Voices Network: Policy Brief

The artisanal mining sector employs nearly 8 million Africans across the continent and supports more than 45 million indirectly. Artisanal mining is a poverty-driven activity that frequently exists outside the law, which feeds conflict and disenfranchises miners, especially women. Women, who make up 40 to 50 percent of the artisanal mining workforce in Africa, undertake a variety of mining activities including digging, rock crushing, grinding, panning, washing, and sieving, all with rudimentary tools and methods. Because of the peripheral nature of the roles played by women in the artisanal mining sector, they seldom participate in the core operational decision-making of the mines, which limits their income opportunities.

Because of their limited participation in the sector, most women artisanal miners have insufficient technical knowledge of the mining market, lack adequate funding for business expansion, are not prioritized in employment

women by creating both forward and backward linkages between the mining sector and other productive sectors through beneficiation and value-added activities.

For instance, backward linkages can be promoted through the development of local clusters or industries that produce and supply services and specialized equipment such as hand tools used in artisanal mining. Forward linkages, meanwhile, would ensure the dependence of other sectors on the output and supplies of the mining sector. Together, these linkages would provide the opportunity to develop clusters of manufacturing activities around the extractive sector, create more productive jobs and competitive industries, and diversify the economy while providing other livelihoods for women.

3. For International Organizations, Policymakers, and Donors

a. Regulatory initiatives: Regulatory and conflict minerals initiatives such as the Kimberly Process, the Dodd-Frank Act's Section 1502, the OECD Due Diligence Guidance, and others could be strengthened with programs that enhance the capacity of women artisanal miners to contribute to the promotion of conflict-free mineral sourcing, enhancing their participation in peacebuilding. These initiatives and international donors can also impress on African governments the urgency of formalizing all artisanal mining activities. They could also support African governments in addressing the dimensions of legal and policy development, social and public engagement, and institutional strengthening needed to formalize the artisanal mining sector.

For an in-depth analysis of the role of women artisanal miners in development and peacebuilding, see the accompanying Africa Program Research Paper No. 13 by Maame Esi Eshun.



-
- 1 United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, "African Women in Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining," *African Development*, Issue 29 (February - March 2015): 63. Reprinted as a special report by the African Minerals Development Centre, 2015.
 - 2 Felix Hruschka and Cristina Echavarria, *Women's Empowerment and Artisanal Mining: A Review of Evidence*, ARM Series on Responsible ASM, No. 3 (Medellin, Colombia: Alliance for Responsible Mining, January 2011).
 - 3 United Nations Environment Programme, UN Women, United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office and United Nations Development Programme, *Women's Empowerment and Artisanal Mining: A Review of Evidence* (Nairobi: UNEP 2013): 48.
 - 4 Béatrice Labonne, "Artisanal mining: an economic stepping stone for women," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 20 No. 2 (1996): 117-122.
 - 5 Nina Collins and Lynda Lawson, *Artisanal Mining for Development: A Review of Evidence* (International Mining for Development Centre, July 2014). <http://im4dc.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Collins-ASM-FR-Completed-Report.pdf>
 - 6 UN Women, *Women's Empowerment and Artisanal Mining: A Review of Evidence* (New York: UN Women, 2016). https://www.empowerwomen.org/~/_media/files/un-women/knowledge-gateway/resources/2016/01/25/12/42/sharefair_on_gender_equality_in_the_extractive_industries_report.ashx

The Africa Program works to address the most critical issues facing Africa and U.S.-Africa relations, build mutually beneficial U.S.-Africa relations, and enhance understanding about Africa in the United States.

The Program achieves its mission through in-depth research and analyses, including our blog *Africa Up Close*, public discussion, working groups, and briefings that bring together policymakers, practitioners, and subject matter experts to analyze and offer practical options for tackling key challenges in Africa and in U.S.-Africa relations.

The Africa Program focuses on four core issues:

- i.