

Fact sheet

Women in artisanal mining in the DRC

- Artisanal mining accounts for over 80% of mined products exported by the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Mining and trade from the artisanal sector are largely informal;
- Workers in the mines are self-employed. They settle in camps, isolated from populated areas, and therefore removed from traditional social and economic safeguards;
- Artisanal mining sites, such as the ones covered by WILPF's research in the DRC province of Haut Katanga, are at the bottom of the supply chain, furthest from the corporations that produce the final goods;
- Low purchase prices imposed from corporations higher up the supply chain have a negative effect on the livelihoods, and therefore on the living and working conditions, of those working in the mines;
- The instability of the agricultural economy, for example poor harvests because of drought, leads many women to seek the higher revenues available in mining. Other reasons include lack of work in other sectors and loss of their small businesses due to being victims of fraud;
- There is a gendered division of labour in the mines. Women's roles are generally relegated to *droumage* (crushing, sorting and washing of minerals as well as processing waste), which are the most toxic mining activities, or to selling the minerals and other marginal support roles with minimal profitability;
- Women experience violations such as gender discrimination, slavery-like conditions, deterioration of reproductive health, violence, forced displacement, and sexual exploitation in (and because of) artisanal mines. They have no access to the justice system since it is too remote from the mines;
- 95% of the women and girls who work on the mining sites have a very low level of education. Many are illiterate;
- The destruction of farmland, deforestation, pollution of rivers and water sources, and soil erosion were among the environmental impacts of mining observed in WILPF's research;
- Suggestions from women in artisanal mines in the DRC to improve their circumstances include access to potable water, health centres, literacy programmes, training in mining practices, education for children, fertiliser and seed centres, and awareness raising on types of violations experienced by women.

A treaty on multinational corporations and women's human rights

- June 2011, the UN Human Rights Council endorses the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. However, these are non-binding;
- June 2014, the UN Human Rights Council adopts a resolution "to elaborate an international legally binding instrument to regulate, in international human rights law, the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises";

- The open-ended intergovernmental working group on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights is set up to develop a treaty. The working group will hold its second session on 24-28 October 2016;
- A gender perspective must be integrated throughout the treaty's drafting process. Gender is not a "discrete, separate issue that can be addressed once the 'main' issues surrounding business and human rights have been fleshed out" (Meyersfeld, 2013);
- The treaty should include specific principles relating to the protection of women, responding to the reality of sex and gender discrimination that characterises every society and country, to varying degrees (Meyersfeld, 2013).

What does gender analysis mean?

- Gender denotes a set of socially constructed ideas that attribute meaning to and differentiate between sexes. Gender intersects with age, race, ethnicity, sexuality, income levels, religion, disability, and geographic location, and "is the basis for persistent discrimination against women" (Meyersfeld, 2013);
- The differentiation between women and men – the allocation of gendered roles – continues to have a disproportionately negative impact on women. This manifests in fewer employment opportunities, social restrictions impeding economic independence, and the disproportionate representation of women in the informal and vulnerable employment, such as *droumage* (Meyersfeld, 2013);
- Gender analysis recognises this, and seeks to prevent and address negative gendered impacts by analysing the particular ways in which corporations may affect the rights of women, and identifying a response that is adapted to women's needs;
- Gender analysis operates on the basis of sex-disaggregated data, contextual awareness, and gendered needs assessment;
- Gender analysis promotes a gender strategy for corporations in the interest of gender equality and meeting women's practical needs (Oxfam, 2009);
- The meaningful participation of affected women in the drafting process is essential to making a treaty fully useful and useable for women;
- However, participation does not replace gender expertise. Understanding gendered power relations is key to building an effective response to corporate practices that exacerbate gendered harms.

For more information on the treaty development process, and publications and activities by the Treaty Alliance, visit <http://treatymovement.com/>.

Meyersfeld, B. (2013). "Business, human rights and gender: a legal approach to external and internal considerations" in Surya Deva and David Bilchitz (eds) *Human Rights Obligations of Business: Beyond the Corporate Responsibility to Respect?* Cambridge University Press: 193-217.

Oxfam Australia. (2009). *Women, communities and mining: The gender impacts of mining and the role of gender impact assessment*.