

## **Executive Summary:**

### The Gender Dimensions of Tin, Tantalum and Tungsten Mining in the Great Lakes Region

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***The desk study report can be downloaded at  
[www.kit.nl/grf/publications](http://www.kit.nl/grf/publications)***

## Acronyms

3Ts	Tin, tantalum and tungsten minerals
3TGs	3Ts and gold
AMCV	<i>Association de Mamans Chercheuses de la Vie</i>
AMDC	African Mining Development Center
AMOPEMIKAN	Association of Women Mineral Operators in Kalimbe, Nyabibwe
ARM	Alliance for Responsible Mining
ASM	Artisanal and small scale mining
BGR	German Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources
CBO	Community-based organization
CTC	Certified Trading Chains
DFA	Dodd Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act
DGM	Department of Geology and Mines, Rwanda
DGSM	Directorate of Geological Survey and Mines, Uganda
DMFA	Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs
DRASPAC	Development Research and Social Policy Analysis Centre
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EITI	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
FARDC	<i>Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo</i>
FDLR	<i>Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda</i>
GiZ	<i>Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit</i>
GLR	Great Lakes Region of Africa
GRF	Gender Resource Facility
ICGLR	International Conference on the Great Lakes Region
ILO	International Labour Organizations
IPEC	International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour
IPIS	International Peace Information Service
ITRI	International Tin Research Institute
ITSCi	ITRI Tin Supply Chain Initiative
MEMD	Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development, Uganda
MINIRENA	Ministry of Natural Resources, Rwanda
MONUSCO	<i>Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation en République Démocratique du Congo</i>
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OECD DDG	OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas
OHADA	<i>Organisation pour l'Harmonisation en Afrique de Droit des Affaires</i>
PAC	Partnership Africa Canada
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
RCM	ICGLR Regional Certification Mechanism
RINR	Regional Initiative Against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources
SAESSCAM	<i>Service d'Assistance et Encadrement d'Artisanal et Small-scale Mining, DRC</i>
SGBV	Sexual and gender based violence
TIC	Tantalum-Niobium International Study Centre
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UN Women ESARO	United Nations Agency for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, Eastern and Southern African Regional Office
UPDF	Uganda People's Defence Force
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VSLA	Village savings and loan association
ZEA	<i>Zone d'Exploitation Artisanale (Artisanal Mining Zone)</i>

## Executive Summary

Mining of tin, tantalum, tungsten and gold (3TGs) in the Great Lakes Region (GLR) of Africa holds much promise to lead to economic, social and political transformation although its development potential is yet to be realized. 3TGs in the GLR are mainly produced via artisanal and small scale mining (ASM), an activity that provides a crucial source of livelihood and catalyst for economic development yet is often informal, highly manual and characterized by dire occupational, environmental and social risks. Over 300,000 men and women, adults, youth and children, produce 3TGs in the GLR, mainly driven to ASM by economic vulnerability or drawn by economic opportunity.



**Photo 1: Transporting rock.**  
A woman in northern Uganda hauls a stone for crushing (Photo: J. Hinton)

Justifiable international outrage in response to violence and conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has prompted efforts to extract 3TGs from financial flows of armed groups through trade regulations. These have had far reaching impacts on tens of thousands of miners, their families and economies with most significant impacts in countries at the centre of 3TG production, namely DRC, Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda. Women and girls constitute notable proportions of the ASM workforce (ca. 10-15% in 3T sites and 25-50% in gold sites) and - despite economic opportunities afforded by ASM and a growing number of efforts to formalize and improve its performance - gender inequalities in terms of income, control over resources, agency and voice, among many others, plague the sector and impede development.

Building upon impressive achievements in establishing ca. 1,500 conflict free mine sites and ensuring traceability of ca. 90% of 3T supply chains in the GLR, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DMFA) is providing support to the NGO Pact for the *Scaling Up Minerals Traceability Project*. The project aims to advance formalization of 3T ASM and its trading chains, strengthen good governance and transparency of conflict minerals and enhance both security and economic empowerment outcomes in DRC, Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda.

In light of progressive commitments of the Government of the Netherlands to prioritize gender equality in its foreign policy, DMFA requested assistance of the Gender Resource Facility (GRF) to: provide insight into the multiple gender dimensions of 3T production and trade in the GLR; augment and identify key gaps within the discourse on ASM and gender; and inform concrete recommendations for the *Scaling Up Project* and other mining platforms. This study reframes the discourse spanning the nexus of ASM, gender and conflict in the GLR and other countries along four dimensions of gender relations: gender division of labour, access to and control over resources, decision-making power and norms, beliefs and values. In doing so, it seeks to better understand how gender inequalities are manifested, produced, reproduced and challenged while informing directions for future research and intervention.

### Key Findings and Conclusions

Findings demonstrate how disparate gender relations within ASM sites and communities are legitimized and entrenched by social structures, norms, beliefs and values that both result in, and are reinforced by, the varying abilities of women, girls, men and boys to participate in decision making, to exercise agency and to benefit from different roles and resources. This is reflected by the following:

- **The majority of ASM communities in the GLR are comprised of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, including elderly and youth, many of whom are disenfranchised and sometimes landless or displaced.** Within these groups, women and girls face additional disadvantages mainly owing to discriminatory beliefs, impediments to their

agency and bargaining power, the undue burden of women's and girl's work, and lack of access to and control of key assets and benefits derived from them. These mutually reinforcing factors jointly: restrict women's and girl's access to skills, education and training; impede their freedom to participate and influence decisions that concern them; relegate the majority to lowest-paying, lowest-ranking jobs, thereby rendering their work largely invisible; and ultimately increase their vulnerability to insecurity, ill health, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and other dimensions of poverty.

- **SGBV is frequently used to operationalize harmful gender norms, beliefs, and values by reinforcing who is in control and who has the power.** This ranges from grievous incidents intended to terrorize, as found in areas under rebel control in DRC, to more insidious forms of SGBV, such as discrimination, exploitation or intimidation in secure regions of the GLR. Those with greater authority have excessive impunity in most ASM environments.
- **Where women and men work in 3T sites licenced under cooperatives, the majority of mineworkers are often *de facto* members with little voice or influence,** a situation exacerbated where women's work is invisible or afforded lesser value. Most cooperatives largely operate as companies but without corresponding commitments to the formal systems that provide important entry points to redress many gender issues identified herein.
- **From household heads to leaders of mining crews to traditional and mining authorities, men largely dominate positions of authority within the social hierarchies that form around mine sites.** Within their spheres of influence, authorities define the formal and informal rules of the game and thereby sustain and augment their power through allocation of resources (e.g. jobs, mining areas) and distribution of benefits (e.g. according to social ties, patronage, greed). The way resources and benefits are meted out is influenced by an authority's own beliefs concerning gender, rights and entitlements as well as prevailing laws, norms and values. Many in authority have proven to be important allies in advancing women's positions, including some government officers, local leaders and mine owners, but pervasive gender constraints nevertheless hinder many women from effectively engaging those in various positions of authority as a means to improve their own status.
- **Women's participation in ASM work generally decreases as ASM becomes more mechanized, formally organized and legally operating.** Such circumstances can bolster power of those in authority by further legitimizing their control over sites. This situation exacerbated when women's labour is rendered obsolete by equipment that, rather than reducing women's work burdens or increasing their incomes, largely benefits whoever is best positioned to control it.



**Photos 2 and 3: ASM ranges from highly manual to somewhat mechanized.**

*(Left)* A woman provides services pulverizing cassiterite ore using a mortar and pestle in South Kivu, DRC.

*(Right)* Men slow feed ore into vibrating screens at a wolfram mine in Rwanda. *(Photos: J. Hinton)*

As mines become mechanized, manual jobs formerly done by many women and men commonly go to a few men operating simple machines

- **Despite this, even under adverse conditions, women, girls and other vulnerable groups in ASM demonstrate remarkable resilience and ingenuity.** Participation in ASM and its economies has provided many women with increased incomes, agency, voice and bargaining power, thereby challenging prevailing norms, beliefs and values. Many examples affirm that women want training and financial support to increase benefits from mining, are self-organizing to demand access to mines and many are successfully changing mind sets of spouses, family and community members.
- **Unless gender is adequately considered, legal reforms and institutional actions to formalize ASM and its trading chains run the risk of exacerbating rather than redressing gender equalities.** Risks relate to measures that fortify the power of relative elites and those that render women’s work invisible or even obsolete by ignoring the gender implications of mechanization, organization and formalization, among others. This is compounded by protective legislation that purports to serve but has effectively undermined women’s interests and the tendency to aggregate women’s needs, priorities and interests with those of children, thereby further affirming harmful beliefs that women’s essential value and purpose is for procreation and childcare, rather than as individuals in their own right.



**Photos 4 and 5: Women Traders**  
 (Top) A woman trader weighs gold dust in Ethiopia (Photo: J. Hinton).  
 (Bottom) Women in Nyabibwe, DRC, buy material at different steps in the process and pay men to process it. (Photo: J. Hinton)

Several similarities and differences were observed between commodities, communities and countries studied (DRC, Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda). The successive conflicts that have devastated certain areas of eastern DRC have led to the most significant differences, marked by perpetuation of SGBV at astounding rates, widespread migration of women, men, boys and girls into ASM and women tackling non-traditional roles in household and commercial spheres. Women’s low participation in 3T ASM (ca. 10-15%) compared to gold (ca. 25-50%) was attributed to several factors, among which is the relative success in formalizing 3T ASM and its supply chains. Although the extent of traditional authorities’ control relative to decentralized institutions varies and, although culture both positively and negatively influences gender norms and beliefs, positive shifts in gender relations seem more pronounced in areas where the rule of law is more strictly followed.

## Recommendations

Formalization of ASM and its trading chains represents an important opportunity to transform the sector into an engine for local and national development and significant contributor to peace in the GLR. However, realizing this potential shall largely be determined by the extent to which the gender dimensions of ASM are recognized, valued and incorporated in policy, projects and programs concerning minerals, peace building and development in the GLR.

Recommendations have therefore been provided targeting key stakeholders with significant influence and/or interest in advancing gender equality in 3T mining in the GLR. These range from Ministries of Mines and their implementing agencies to key development partners, such as World Bank, DMFA, GiZ and UN Women to mining cooperatives, civil society and academia.



**Photos 6 and 7: Ground sluicing of 3T ore is common throughout the GLR**

(Left) Ground sluice operators are the highest paid members of teams at this cassiterite mine in Rwanda.

(Right) A woman operates a ground sluice in North Kivu, DRC, despite assertions by many that women are unable to do so. (Photos: J. Hinton)

## Research

Critical lines of research have been identified for prioritization by academia and supported by donors and governments seeking to advance the discourse. This includes rigorous qualitative and quantitative research to:

- Assess reasons for women's lower participation in 3Ts when compared to gold and different factors (e.g. technical/geological, hierarchies emerging, history of formalization processes) contributing to differences in gender dynamics and outcomes;
- Understand when, why and how women and girls currently and successfully navigate power and authority structures as a means to identify strategies to advance transformative change. This should include research on how risks of increasing SGBV due to backlash (i.e. where men's dominant positions may be challenged) are successfully mitigated, and;
- Develop, disseminate and broadly employ data collection instruments to counter the invisibility of women's and girls' work in ASM and ASM communities and highlight gender dimensions of economic contributions (and their multiplier effects) in order to enhance gender advocacy efforts, ideally while enabling more robust comparisons between different factors.

## Policy

International and national institutions engaged in formalization of ASM and its trading chains and/or the advancement of gender equality in the GLR are recommended to:

- Honour commitments made by ICGLR member states under the 2011 *Kampala Declaration on the Fight against Sexual and Gender Based Violence in the Great Lakes Region*, among which include obligations to mainstream gender in respective minerals policies. The ICGLR Secretariat should mainstream gender in the 6 tools of the Regional Initiative on Natural Resources (RINR), including those related to Tool #1: Regional Certification Mechanism and Tool #4: Formalization of ASM.
- Prioritize gender in current reforms of minerals policy, law, regulations and institutions in coordination with gender ministries and informed by gender analysis. A few entry points include:

specifications for how and by who ASM organizations (associations, cooperatives, small companies) are formed and operate; inclusion of gender within environmental and social impact assessment processes and provision of simplified guidelines for “artisanal” operations; multi-stakeholder assessments of implications of protective measures (e.g. ban on pregnant women) and actions to prevent and mitigate related harmful outcomes; inclusion of gender targets in emerging local content policies; and regulatory requirements to incorporate gender within company/cooperative reporting requirements, among others.

- Develop guidelines, templates and regulatory requirements for companies and cooperatives to establish basic gender policies and embed gender within policies on occupational safety and health, labour and environmental management. Complexity should be adapted to the category of mining (i.e. artisanal-, small-, medium-, large- scale).
- Elaborate strategies to report, identify, address and monitor incidences of SGBV in mine sites and communities, which supports compliance with OECD Due Diligence Guidance requirements concerning “*serious abuses associated with mineral extraction transport and trade*”. Grievance mechanisms (in companies/cooperatives, communities, local monitoring committees, and others) warrant thoughtful, sensitive consideration. Given low reporting rates and potential repercussions for victims – including for more pervasive insidious forms of SGBV (e.g. discrimination, intimidation, threats) – deeper thinking of more holistic approaches to identify, track, audit and effectively respond to SGBV are warranted.
- Mining ministries should increase coordination with gender ministries and their decentralized offices to identify focal points for oversight of gender mainstreaming efforts, ensure staff receive requisite gender training at all levels and obtain gender guidance in policies, work programs, budgets and activities.
- Identify best practice policy examples demonstrating approaches to support women’s economic empowerment, promote conducive national policies and laws (such as Rwanda’s 2020 target of 30% women’s employment) and undertake gender benchmarking of minerals sector policy and law.
- Commit resources to support proactive engagement of key stakeholders in the gender and ASM discourse, including UN Women ESARO, AMDC and UNECA and international initiatives.

### Practice

Organizations implementing projects, programs and activities are recommended to:

- Conduct targeted training of government, implementing agencies (including NGOs and CSOs), donors, companies, cooperatives and other key actors with the intent of supporting transforming gender mind sets and commitments to action. Support for participation in emerging training courses (e.g. by UN Women, Carleton University) should also be provided.
- Subtly, systematically and repeatedly include gender issues via activities, scenarios and examples *used in a broad range of training and participatory processes* that prompt gender analysis by and increase women’s visibility to stakeholders involved. Entry points range from legal reform processes to technical training programs to environmental and child labour sensitization campaigns, among others. Through repeated inclusion, gender analysis would be normalized as common practice and stakeholders compelled to revisit their own beliefs and roles in perpetuating the status quo with no real cost implication.
- Advocate for and support companies and cooperatives to appoint women’s focal points, form women’s groups therein and establish clear communication mechanisms (across the management hierarchy), grievance mechanisms and regular meetings with management.
- Support pilot projects to develop simple, practical company/cooperative policies, procedures and systems for ASM operations. These should span occupational safety and health, environment, human rights, community engagement and development, traceability and reporting and explicitly account for gender and human rights dimensions therein. This would include corresponding codes of conduct, clear lines of responsibility and accountability through the management hierarchy to the mineworker level, internal grievance mechanisms, procedures to evaluate incidents (including related to SGBV) and clear consequences for infractions, as well as

basic training systems (e.g. induction, refresher) and communication systems to ensure awareness of policies and procedures at all levels

- Establish formal training programs in small scale mining (e.g. certificates, vocational training and education) with fixed targets (e.g. 30%) for women mine workers participation. Ministries of Education, Mining and supporting partners (e.g. companies) should be supported by donors to pilot and then roll out TVET programs.
- Support formation of associations, groups within and outside of mining entities and address critical training needs of women, girls and disenfranchised men and boys involved in mining. Gender responsive organization formation and strengthening should include capacity development in leadership and advocacy, numeracy, literacy and negotiation.
- Provide separate technical training targeting women in critical areas likely to support their economic empowerment, challenge harmful beliefs and reduce women's work burdens, such as in improved sluicing methods and prospecting and acquisition of mineral rights.
- Develop and disseminate guidance and materials on best practice in gender and ASM and support peer-to-peer learning targeting mainly women miners, some men miner leaders, cooperative and company leaders and government, via participation in related gender and mining dialogues and visits to good practice sites.

Finally, numerous organizations that are seeking to effectively account for gender within their respective thematic priorities at local, national and international levels hold tremendous promise. These include: governments undergoing mineral reform processes, UN Women's short courses on gender and extractives, UNEP's national action plans supported by the GEF Mercury Program, national gender action plans supported by the World Bank, and GLR-focused efforts of DMFA, GiZ, DFID and ICGLR among many others.

Multiple agencies are well positioned to provide the gender leadership needed to spearhead coordination and enhance knowledge sharing between these and sector stakeholders at all levels. Such leadership is urgently needed in order to create a "new normal" in the minerals sector, wherein gender considerations are systematically analysed and addressed as common practice, gender competence is a requisite at all levels and gender accountability underpins all action. Only then are real gains in women's empowerment and gender equality in the minerals sector likely to be achieved.



**Photo 8: Organization of women provides an important platform for change.**

Women in Katogota in South Kivu, DRC work under a woman-led cooperative and have formed VSLAs in groups according to their occupations (mineral traders, crushers, panners, transporters and restaurant/small business owners) (Photo: M. Mukwaka).