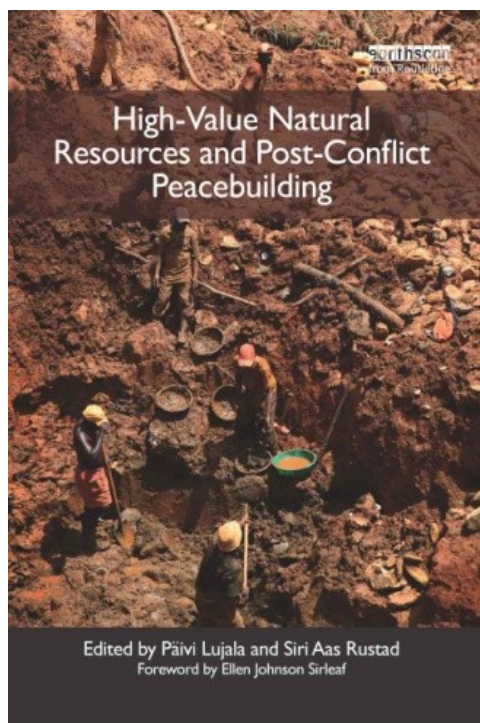


This chapter first appeared in *High-Value Natural Resources and Peacebuilding*, edited by P. Lujala and S.A. Rustad. It is one of 6 edited books on Post-Conflict Peacebuilding and Natural Resource Management (for more information, see www.environmentalpeacebuilding.org). The full book can be ordered from Routledge at <http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9781849712309/>.

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Women in the artisanal and small-scale mining sector of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

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Online publication date: June 2012

Suggested citation: K. Hayes, R. Perks. 2012. Women in the artisanal and small-scale mining sector of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In *High-Value Natural Resources and Peacebuilding*, ed. P. Lujala and S. A. Rustad. London: Earthscan.

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Women in the artisanal and small-scale mining sector of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Karen Hayes and Rachel Perks

This chapter focuses on women who work and live in the diverse, complex, and often-neglected artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) communities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). ASM encompasses both the manual extraction and processing of minerals and their subsequent trade. Much of ASM is informal, and it is often characterized by dangerous practices and harmful social and environmental impacts.¹ Although many ASM communities have existed for years or even centuries, other communities have begun to engage in mining relatively recently, mostly as a result of poverty.

Although women throughout the DRC continue to be affected by protracted conflict and the aftermath of war, there are several reasons to focus on women in ASM. First, ASM supports 16 to 20 percent of the population of the DRC and is a critical economic driver in the country's move out of war (World Bank 2008). Because women make up as much as 50 percent of the ASM labor force and are often their families' principal providers (Hinton, Veiga, and Beinhoff 2003), what happens in the ASM sector has tremendous economic implications for the country as a whole. As ASM transitions from an informal and unregulated sector—historically associated with war and corruption—into a more efficient and formal labor economy, it will face massive challenges. To the extent that women can play an equal role in that transition, they have the opportunity not only to achieve greater empowerment and participation in social and political life, but to help

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¹ In the DRC, ASM is legal under the conditions defined in the 2002 Mining Code and in the ASM Code of Conduct, which is included in the 2003 Mining Regulations. For ASM to be legal, a miner must operate only within officially designated artisanal mining zones; hold a valid artisanal miner's license; be over eighteen years of age; respect environmental standards; and not use mercury or explosives. Since there is only one legal artisanal mining zone in the entire country, virtually all ASM occurs outside the law.

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Note: The DRC Constitution, which was ratified in 2005 and came into effect in 2006, mandates that within three years the eleven provinces be redivided into twenty-six. As of June 2011, the redivision had not yet taken place.

move the country forward. Second, because of complex historical and cultural factors, the DRC is currently suffering from an epidemic of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), which includes not only rape, but also precocious marriage and forced prostitution. During the war, rape was used as a weapon, but the practice did not end with the war. The legacy of SGBV is being perpetuated in ASM communities; it therefore makes sense, from a practical perspective, to emphasize the prevention and reduction of SGBV in those communities.

Women in ASM communities are doubly at risk—as residents of rural or peri-urban areas that are emerging from war or suffering from reduced livelihood opportunities, and as informal workers subject to precarious social, economic, and environmental conditions. Nevertheless, ASM represents a tangible—and, in the short term, valuable—economic opportunity for both men and women in the DRC. ASM needs little advance investment or lead time, and therefore has significant potential to provide quick economic returns. If the sector’s association with conflict and abuse could be removed, its potential to generate peace dividends could be great. But for such a transition to occur, a deliberate and comprehensive recognition of the current and potential role of women who work in ASM is required.

Although the DRC has technically been at peace since 2002, when the transitional government was put in place, security remains fragile, particularly in the east. DDR (demilitarization, demobilization, and reintegration) has been fraught with problems, and the pillars of local governance, economic opportunity, and social cohesion are being rebuilt at an alarmingly slow pace. Moreover, as is often the case in a society emerging from conflict, the structures and norms that once guided social practice have lost some of their potency. In ASM communities in particular, the traditional leadership has often been replaced, corrupted, or coerced by the new hierarchy of mine control;² in this void, certain behaviors flourish, particularly among men: survivalism, a sense of impunity, and a tendency to escape through drug and alcohol abuse. Women, meanwhile, remain extremely vulnerable, which curtails their impact on the peacebuilding process.

People who have suffered through protracted conflicts tend to gauge the value of peace by the social, economic, and political benefits they derive from it. Though such benefits are often judged on the basis of essential social services (e.g., education, health care, clean water), the “peace dividend” must also include the ability to go about daily activities without experiencing serious physical or psychological threats, and to actively participate in economic and political decision making.

Though many Congolese women would argue that prewar social practice did not promote respect or equal opportunity for women, they would nevertheless agree that before the conflict, traditional structures provided some positive influence and some degree of security. In the DRC, peacebuilding at the local level requires reestablishing the security of communities where men and women play equally important, though perhaps different, roles. Security is not limited to physical protection but includes all aspects of life—most notably economic opportunity, health and well-being, and participation in community governance.

In the spirit of UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820,³ which reaffirm the central role of women in peacebuilding, this chapter focuses on the intersection of high-value resources and gender roles in the post-conflict setting. Specifically, it draws on efforts to address the needs of women working in the

² This hierarchy may include the mine owners, the investors who finance the activity, the traders who purchase the material, official and unofficial security forces, the police, the army, rebel soldiers, and predatory officials who take advantage of lack of knowledge of the law to assign themselves self-designed roles.

³ Security Council Resolution 1325, adopted unanimously on October 31, 2000, created a political framework that makes women—and a gender-based perspective—relevant to negotiating peace agreements, planning refugee camps and peacekeeping operations, and reconstructing war-torn societies (UNSC 2000). Security Council Resolution 1820, adopted June 19, 2008, demands that parties to armed conflict adopt concrete measures to end sexual violence, including training troops, enforcing military discipline, and upholding responsibility along the chain of command. It also asserts the importance of women’s participation in all processes, including peace talks, that are related to ending sexual violence in the context of conflict (UNSC 2008c).

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copper and cobalt mines of Katanga Province and in the gold mines of Ituri District, in Orientale Province.

The chapter is divided into five major sections: (1) background on the relationship between ASM and conflict; (2) a discussion of gender roles in the post-conflict environment of the DRC; (3) a description of two programs that have been used to empower women in ASM communities; (4) a list of recommendations for the future; and (5) a brief conclusion.

BACKGROUND: ASM AND CONFLICT

The DRC has one of the greatest mineral resource endowments of any country in the world, including gold, diamonds, copper, cobalt, tin, tantalum, tungsten, uranium, and semiprecious gemstones. From the 1880s to 1960, when the country was under colonial rule, industrial mining flourished; even when production deteriorated, under Mobutu's rule (1965–1997), mining still accounted for 70 to 80 percent of export earnings and about 8 percent of gross domestic product. Since the early 1990s, however, industrial mining has declined substantially; extraction is now dominated by ASM, which accounts for 90 percent of all mineral production and provides full-time, seasonal, or supplementary livelihoods for roughly two million people (World Bank 2008). ASM occurs in every province of the country, but it is most concentrated in the diamond fields of the Kasai provinces and in the provinces along the eastern frontier (Orientale, Nord Kivu, Sud Kivu, Maniema, and Katanga).

ASM is characterized by basic, manual mining techniques. It is largely unregulated, and miners are exposed to a wide range of physical hazards. It is also associated with a number of social and economic problems, including diversion of livelihoods from more sustainable activities; squalid camp conditions, where substance abuse and sexual promiscuity create health risks; child labor; environmental damage and localized inflation. Nevertheless, ASM makes possible the exploitation of ore bodies that are too small or too remote to justify the investment required for large-scale, commercial mining—and thus has an important role to play in the mining sector. As currently practiced in the DRC, however, ASM is inefficient because the technical skills required to identify, plan, develop, and exploit mines to their full potential are lacking. As a consequence, ASM ends up degrading the overall value of the ore body while simultaneously consuming or contaminating other resources—such as wood, land, and water—which could be essential to livelihoods once the ore is exhausted. As currently conducted, ASM may deliver short-term financial gains to the miners and traders who are directly involved, but it may also exacerbate local poverty in the long term.

In the DRC, ASM has been associated with, and at times directly linked to, conflict. In what became known as Africa's World War (1996–2002), foreign armies, local militias, and foreign, nonstate armed groups sought control of mining sites throughout the country, both for their long-term value and as a means of financing the war effort (Hartung and Moix 2000). Minerals extracted

by artisanal workers were used, in part, to purchase arms and fund other costs associated with the conflict.⁴

The broader conflicts surrounding resource extraction are complicated, and ASM does play a role in those conflicts. But it should not be assumed that all ASM communities are rife with armed groups and are directly involved in violent conflict. Outside of the mines that are controlled by the Congolese army and by Congolese and foreign militias in the eastern provinces, conflicts are often localized, and tend to be linked to pricing at the point of sale, competition over access to mineral deposits, and corrupt government entities that are benefiting at the expense of artisanal miners. But whatever conflicts are occurring at either the macro or the micro level, one form of conflict is pervasive in the DRC: the exploitation and abuse of women.

WOMEN IN ASM

During and after conflict, societies adapt, and the roles of men and women may change to buffer socioeconomic shocks and stresses. For example, when men are away at war, women most often remain at home to provide for their families. Although such shifts in gender roles may be temporary or permanent, they are likely to continue if DDR and post-conflict reconstruction are largely unsuccessful. Even when families are not directly affected by conflict, the economic impacts of war reverberate throughout society, typically producing unemployment in the formal economy. The result, in many African countries, is that both men and women seek informal livelihood sources. The effects of such livelihood adaptations are visible in ASM communities across the DRC.

A lack of documentation and research makes it difficult to determine how women's involvement in ASM has evolved over the years. In several mineral-rich countries, shifts toward artisanal mining (and away from other rural livelihoods, such as farming) are known to have occurred since the 1980s (Hilson 2010); however, a fuller understanding of the drivers of women's involvement in ASM in the DRC, in particular, warrants further research. Field research undertaken in Kolwezi, a town hosting thirty thousand artisanal miners in the copper belt of southern Katanga Province, shows that during the years after the conflict, women's involvement in ASM increased as a consequence of two factors: a general economic downturn and decreased livelihood opportunities in traditional sectors, such as agriculture. The research also found that women's involvement in ASM was primarily poverty driven: 75 percent of the women interviewed in 2007 had been mining for less than two years, and 70 percent were their families' sole earners (Pact 2007).

⁴ See UNSC (2003, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2007a, 2007b, 2008a, 2008b, 2009a, 2009b, 2010).

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Artisanal mining has become an important source of livelihood for women in the DRC because of its relative ease of entry in comparison to other sectors: it requires virtually no formal education or skills, and little or no capital. Thus, ASM provides women with economic opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable. Nevertheless, ASM is not without serious impacts on individual and family well-being.

Women assume a variety of roles in ASM; they may be directly involved in mining and trading or may work in the subsidiary businesses (such as bars, hotels, and restaurants) that support mining communities. Women and young girls may also be part of the sex trade.⁵ Because of the transient nature of ASM communities, the presence of many young men who are without their families, the daily flow of cash, and the high rates of alcohol and substance abuse, prostitution is part and parcel of mining life. Women in the sex trade often migrate alongside artisanal workers who are in search of new prospects in other parts of the country; they may enter the trade when a mine is set up near their home; or they may travel to a mine to engage in prostitution temporarily, before returning to school or to home. But once a woman is known to have been involved in the sex trade, the shame attached to prostitution may make it difficult for her to reintegrate into her family or community, or to attract or retain a husband.

Among the women who work in the mines, gender discrimination is common—a pattern that is consistent with the findings of several studies on women in ASM in other parts of Africa, and in Asia and the Americas.⁶ Despite similar working hours and levels of effort, women are often paid only a fraction of what men receive. Moreover, women tend to work at the lower ends of the production chain, performing tasks such as washing, sorting, or transporting; because they have only limited presence in the higher levels of production and trade, they are often excluded from the decisions that determine the level of payment for various services and the organization of the mining teams. Being excluded from key aspects of economic governance profoundly undermines women's well-being and economic standing, and is particularly damaging in light of their increasing role as principal breadwinners.

Gender-based discrimination is usually cultural in origin, reflecting longstanding traditions and taboos. In the diamond mines of Kasai Oriental Province, for instance, women are required to surrender any high-value stones to the male mine owners or diggers and are permitted to keep only low-grade stones. In the copper mines of southern Katanga Province and the gold mines of northern

⁵ The destructive effect of this vicious cycle on traditional Congolese society is vividly illustrated by the fact that women and young girls from as far away as Kasai Oriental Province or northern Katanga Province can be found working as prostitutes in artisanal areas along the DRC's southern border with Zambia.

⁶ For more information on women in ASM in Asia, see Lahiri-Dutt (2008). On Suriname, see Heemskerck (2003). For an overview of the situation in Africa, see Hinton, Veiga, and Beinhoff (2003).

Oriental Province, women are not even permitted to enter the mines, for fear that their presence will make the minerals “disappear”; thus, they are excluded from the tasks performed in mines, which often reap the highest wages. (Though a woman’s presence may be blamed if a mine “goes bust,” taking a girl’s virginity is believed to increase a male miner’s chances of striking it rich. Taboo and myth are thus finely manipulated to support both discrimination against and violation of women in artisanal communities.)⁷

In the DRC, because of the lack of other child care options, women are often compelled to bring their children to the mines. This affects the children’s well-being in several ways: (1) they are exposed to contamination from minerals, unsafe water, and poor sanitary conditions; (2) they may be forced to forgo education in order to work in the mines; (3) because it is difficult for such children to resume their education in later years, they may lack the requisite skills to enter other labor markets and may be forced to remain in mining permanently.

Young children begin by performing whatever tasks they are capable of doing around the mine, and may eventually begin mining when they are physically able to do so. In Kolwezi, it is estimated that around 24 percent of child miners work alongside their mothers (the rest work independently or on teams); it also appears that having been brought to the mines by their mothers led the children to work in the mines (Pact 2007).

Despite the disadvantages noted, it would be inaccurate to imply that women are always in subordinate positions in ASM in the DRC. The authors have witnessed cases in which the women managers of artisanal mines have prohibited child labor; women traders who are more successful than their male counterparts because they are believed to be more fair; and diamond-sorting sites where only women are allowed to handle the stones because the site managers regard them as more honest. Although such examples are rare, they provide potential models for improving the circumstances of women in ASM.

PACT’S APPROACHES

Pact, a nonprofit organization based in Washington, D.C., has been in the DRC since 2003. Pact’s DRC country program focuses solely on the responsible management of natural resources, which Pact regards as a fundamental requirement for sustaining peace and preventing further conflict. Pact works with private

⁷ A related and particularly serious problem is the belief, prevalent in the mining areas of Katanga, that having sex with a virgin or a very young child will prevent or cure HIV/AIDS. This belief allegedly originated with truck drivers from Southern Africa, where the rates of HIV infection are much higher than in the DRC, and where both the belief and the practice have been documented (Shell 2000). Because artisanal miners are highly mobile and because such beliefs are an important part of everyday life in the DRC, there is a grave risk that such stories will increase the incidence of SGBV in the ASM community.

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mining companies, local communities, and the national government, and is funded by a variety of partners.⁸

The next two sections describe Pact's efforts to address gender issues in ASM communities in the DRC. Economic development, through responsible and regulated natural resource extraction, is an important pillar of post-conflict recovery in the DRC; if one adds the staggering scale of employment in ASM, it is clear that recasting the roles of men and women in ASM is essential to peacebuilding.

Economic empowerment

In 2006, 150 women enrolled in a Pact program designed to support and empower women as they moved out of the most precarious forms of mine labor and into more permanent work in other small-scale economic activities. The program focused on helping participants to achieve literacy, establish village savings banks, obtain vocational training, and start small businesses. Although the initiative was based on WORTH, a Pact program designed for rural settings, it was modified to reflect the circumstances of artisanal women in a peri-urban mining town in southern Katanga Province.⁹

The women, who wished to leave the ASM sector and seek alternative livelihoods, were organized into literacy and support groups, each with about twenty members. Each group selected two "literacy days" each week; on those days, they learned to read and write under the guidance of a literacy volunteer—typically, an educated person from the community, such as a teacher or a member of the clergy—who was chosen by the group but was not a member. (The women were free to meet more than twice a week, but this was often difficult because of their household responsibilities.) One day a week, often on one of the literacy days, the women put a certain amount into a village savings bank; the women themselves determined the amount, and individual contributions could vary from one woman to the next. When the savings reached a certain level, the group could begin lending money to members who wished to undertake small business projects.

Village savings schemes are not unique to Pact or to the DRC. What made this model unique was the way in which literacy, numeracy, and group education functioned interdependently, building social capital among the members: for example, even the books used in the literacy component specifically addressed

⁸ Between 2006 and 2009, Pact entered into a three-year agreement that created the Extractive Industries Network, a partnership that also included four mining companies listed on international stock exchanges and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Working in Katanga and Orientale provinces, the network addressed a range of challenges in the ASM sector, including social development and security around mines.

⁹ WORTH was first developed and implemented by Pact in Nepal and has since been replicated in Cambodia, the DRC, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Zambia.

business and entrepreneurship, and were designed to focus on the savings-and-loan aspect of the program. Participants who had been involved in previous microsavings and credit schemes agreed that the emphasis on literacy—and the opportunity to meet regularly for purposes beyond evaluating the status of loans that had been made to members—strengthened solidarity and reduced the chance of default.¹⁰

In addition to increased literacy and access to economic opportunities, the women who participated in the program noted other benefits: social empowerment (because they are running their own small businesses); an increase in economic standing, both within their families and within the community; and the ability to participate more fully in community governance and decision making (because of increased literacy). Such outcomes—which are examples of peace dividends, broadly defined—help support the kinds of social and economic changes that are necessary for women to both benefit from, and participate in, post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding. For instance, the more long-standing WORTH groups have used their solidarity to strengthen security for women, addressing issues such as precocious marriage and the promotion of respect for the security of women and girls. In one village, a local WORTH group brought to the attention of Pact a spate of rapes in which artisanal miners (and young men influenced by the artisanal mining lifestyle) had victimized girls as young as three years of age. With Pact's assistance, the women reported these incidents to UNICEF and were able to access medical treatment, reporting services, and some initial counseling.

Preventing SGBV

Although miners in and around ASM communities are not the sole perpetrators of SGBV—the presence of armed public security agents, militia members, and self-appointed security guards, many of whom are unpaid and uncontrolled, can also increase insecurity and the risk of SGBV—the incidence of SGBV in ASM communities should not be surprising; mining areas are characterized by a confluence of key factors:

- Traditional village authority that is weak or nonexistent.
- The limited presence of police and judicial authorities.
- A workforce that consists largely of men who are single or far from their families and wives.
- Cultural patterns that assign a socially inferior role to women, especially young women and girls (which, in turn, fosters a sense of impunity with regard to abuse).

¹⁰ An internal evaluation and the final program report, which were submitted to USAID in October 2009, include participants' testimonies (Pact 2009a, 2009b).

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- The perpetuation, by local witch doctors (*fétisheurs*), of beliefs and practices that encourage SGBV.
- The prevalence and acceptance of the sex trade, which places women at particular risk of abuse.

There are two key approaches to restoring reciprocity between men and women, in order to reestablish norms of mutual respect—and, hence, community security. One is to address ideas about what constitutes a man, and the other is to address the powerlessness of women. In the first approach, attributes of maleness other than raw power, such as those related to protection, fatherhood, responsibility, and support, need to be brought to the fore. In the second approach, women need first to be empowered, and second to be recognized (by men, by themselves, and by each other) for their familial, social, and economic roles; their leadership potential; and their capacity to contribute to community harmony. Both approaches need to be grounded in the everyday lives of community members—which, in the case of ASM, depend on natural resources.

As is the case with any effort to address inequality in gender roles, initiatives that are focused solely on women can alienate them from the broader society and make men even more resistant to change; such initiatives can even produce violent backlashes, which would only intensify women's insecurity. Thus, efforts to address gender issues in the ASM sector need to be undertaken within a broader framework for social change—and to address men, women, and the relationships between them.

The prevention of SGBV requires a broad-based approach that incorporates the following elements: strengthening the judicial system; promoting social (and judicial) recognition of rape as a serious crime; and redefining gender roles. In addition, victims of SGBV need physical and psychological treatment, as well as support for economic and social reintegration.

Working with mining companies, local women's groups, civil society organizations, and several UN partners, Pact piloted SGBV prevention models in artisanal mining areas of both Katanga Province and Ituri District, in Orientale Province. From an initial focus on educating communities about UN mechanisms for reporting and addressing SGBV, the pilots expanded to include literacy and savings programs, to build social and economic capital; public education campaigns, to familiarize communities with SGBV law and with the resources available for victims; and support for economic transition out of ASM. By encouraging the pursuit of economic opportunities that do not require migration or the prolonged absence of men from their homes, the pilots fostered opportunities for family reunification and eventual stabilization.

Sexual and gender-based violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: A brief overview

For peacebuilding to be inclusive and effective, all actors, both men and women, must have the opportunity to participate freely, without fear of reprisal or prejudice, and with the expectation of respect, understanding, and appreciation of their concerns, perspectives, and priorities. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), one factor that prevents such engagement is the prevalence of sexual violence and the impunity commonly granted to its perpetrators.

The effects of sexual violence include permanent bodily damage, infection with sexually transmitted diseases, mental trauma, family rejection, marital breakup, and loss of future opportunities. In the DRC, where torture during rape is commonplace, sexual violence is particularly damaging. In 2008, United Nations Under-Secretary-General John Holmes described the DRC as “the worst place in the world to be a woman or girl” and noted that “the levels and brutality of violence against women are almost unimaginable.” Writing in the *Los Angeles Times*, Holmes said that “despite many warnings, nothing quite prepared me for what I heard from survivors of a sexual violence so brutal it staggers the imagination and mocked my notions of human decency” (Holmes 2007).

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) has become endemic in parts of the DRC, especially in Sud Kivu and Nord Kivu provinces. This has occurred in the wake of intense conflict, during which armed groups—both Congolese public security forces and foreign armed militias—used rape as a weapon of war. In Sud Kivu, for example, even after the 2006 peace agreement, estimates indicate that forty women were raped every day (Rodriguez 2007). Nevertheless, SGBV is not limited to the provinces traditionally regarded as conflict zones. In Katanga—a province that is often considered to be peaceful and lawful, and that has attracted significant foreign investment in recent years—2008 statistics indicate that as many as twenty women and girls may be raped each day (UNFPA 2008). Although most reports and estimates have focused on female victims, a March 2010 study conducted in Nord and Sud Kivu and Ituri District revealed that of all reported incidents of sexual violence, women were the victims in 39.7 percent of cases and men in 23.6 percent of cases (children were the victims in the remainder of the cases). The survey also revealed that women are increasingly reported as perpetrators—a pattern that indicates a need for more inclusive policies in efforts to address SGBV in the DRC (Johnson et al. 2010).

Although it is difficult to obtain an accurate picture of the prevalence of SGBV across the DRC, one thing is clear: SGBV cannot be reduced unless obstacles to reporting are overcome.* Historically, SGBV has been chronically underreported because (1) health and medical centers lack the capacity to provide data to national databases; (2) victims and their families are afraid of reprisal and are unfamiliar with reporting mechanisms; and (3) victims’ geographic isolation makes it difficult for them to reach the support services through which SGBV would be reported.

In addition to problems associated with reporting, a complex mix of interwoven—and mutually reinforcing—cultural, institutional, and political factors contribute to the problem of SGBV:

- A traditional failure to recognize women as equal citizens, which undermines their standing and legal rights in Congolese society.
- Repeated exposure to violence and abuse, which appears to have habituated both men and women to such behavior.
- Physical displacement, which has led to the breakdown of traditional authority and the deterioration of social cohesion.
- Failure to recognize rape as a serious crime.**
- Lack of capacity in the rural legal system (stemming from failure to pay the judiciary, lack of expertise with such cases, and the sheer volume of cases that would have to be addressed).
- A culture of impunity, which is fostered by the fact that those cases that are reported are rarely prosecuted or punished.
- A lack of political will and capacity on the part of the state, which prevents it from establishing a culture of “zero tolerance.”

* Some provinces report high rates, but in those that do not, the rates may reflect a paucity of information rather than a lower incidence of SGBV.

** In many cases, a family will settle a rape case for as little as a goat, which has an average market price of US\$50–60.

INTEGRATING ASM INTO THE PEACEBUILDING AGENDA: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Although the approaches described are certainly not unique to Pact, what sets the Pact model apart is its focus on ASM communities. Pact regards ASM areas as crucial to the overall peacebuilding agenda for DRC for the following reasons:

- ASM offers the potential for substantial economic dividends for both individuals and families—dividends that could be even more significant if ASM were properly organized and responsibly managed.
- Women working in ASM face significant social and health consequences whose long-term impact remains unknown. Increasing security for women and ensuring that ASM meets basic health and safety standards would help mitigate negative impacts and potentially increase women’s productivity in the sector.
- The ASM sector remains subject to resource governance conflicts that are pertinent to the DRC’s larger peacebuilding agenda. For example, several reports published by Pact and International Alert address the importance of improving governance to ensure more equitable remuneration for artisanal miners (Pact 2010; Spittaels 2010). Women’s concerns are intricately linked to this overall reform agenda.

Artisanal miners are among the most economically and socially vulnerable laborers in the country, and mining camps are precarious and dangerous environments, especially for women and young girls. ASM communities confront a range of sustainable livelihoods challenges, including those relating to gender discrimination and sexual exploitation, and it is therefore essential that they be integrated into the development agenda. If viable ways can be found to strengthen the role of women in these communities, the positive contribution to peacebuilding could be extremely significant. Unfortunately, artisanal mining is often beyond the vision or reach of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and aid agencies (Hayes 2008; Perks 2011).

The following recommendations, based on Pact’s experience with women in ASM communities, could improve the overall peacebuilding agenda for natural resource management in the DRC:

- A coordinated policy framework that takes advantage of the skills and resources of all interested actors would maximize the impact of limited resources and increase the efficacy of initiatives. Gender mainstreaming—in which the opinions, needs, status, and role of women are viewed as equal to those of men—is integral to such a framework.¹¹ As things stand now, interventions in the ASM

¹¹ In July 1997, the UN Economic and Social Council defined *gender mainstreaming* as follows: “Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or

sector are ad hoc and are driven by the agendas, needs, or opportunities of individual organizations or sectors.

- Donor governments, NGOs, investors, and Congolese civil society should continue to lobby the DRC government and UN agencies to respond to the specific challenges faced by women in ASM communities and rural areas. For example, when broader development programming in the areas of HIV/AIDS and SGBV is being undertaken, outreach aimed specifically at women artisanal miners would help them access much-needed support and services.
- Public-private partnerships should be established with mining companies and their supply chains that (1) reflect global development objectives and standards,¹² and (2) are in line with the DRC government's national development plans. Even if companies do not wish to fund ASM reform (given the fact that most ASM is carried out illegally, and the risk of criticism if a company is perceived to be connected to conflict, child labor, the sex trade, etc.), companies can still find limited ways to participate, while remaining within their comfort zone.¹³ For media-wary companies, gender issues may be one of the less controversial points of entry.
- It is important to recognize that women may want to stay in ASM. Thus, livelihood initiatives should view regulated ASM as a viable economic opportunity for women as well as men, and should focus attention on supporting women to achieve greater equity and security in the sector.
- Small pilot opportunities for collaboration with UN agencies and other development organizations should be created. A strong component of such efforts could be to improve access to health and reproductive services for women artisanal miners; for example, local clinics could provide testing services and health education.
- The current resurgence of international interest in "conflict minerals" in eastern DRC should be used as an opportunity to emphasize UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820, which reaffirm the pivotal role of women in peacebuilding. The resolutions should be essential elements in any new initiatives that are proposed, funded, or implemented.

programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality." (ECOSOC 1997).

¹² One example of such standards is the due diligence guidelines developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development for mineral extraction in high-risk, conflict-affected areas; see OECD (2010).

¹³ Such efforts do work, as is clear from the accomplishments of the Extractive Industries Network. In this effort, which was carried out in Katanga and Orientale provinces, the companies focused primarily on social development, which was clearly within their purview. Through a partnership with USAID, however, they were also able to work on more challenging and contentious issues related to ASM and women's security.

CONCLUSION

One of the many questions facing the DRC is how to most efficiently transform the country's mineral resources into a driver of sustainable long-term development. Some ore bodies are deep and vast, and cannot be effectively exploited without industrial-scale mining (and foreign capital); others are more accessible and can be exploited through small-scale, semi-industrial mining; and still others cannot justify major investment and are suitable only for manual extraction through ASM, assuming that ASM could be undertaken safely and legally. Finding the right mix of approaches is crucial not only to economic recovery but also to securing safe and sustainable livelihoods for those who work in extractive industries.

The scale of change needed to build lasting peace in the DRC is enormous and will require many different approaches and actors working in myriad settings. Artisanal mines can be one such setting. In these mines, the risks women face are severe and their position is precarious—but, given the right mix of external factors and internal empowerment, the dynamics can change. Given its large scale and economic potential, and the mobility of its workers, ASM should be regarded as a social phenomenon and an opportunity rather than as a localized problem. Women acting as leaders, agents of social change, and peacebuilders in artisanal mining communities could act as catalysts for wider peace and stabilization initiatives in the DRC.

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