

Women in Mining and the Responsible Gold Mining Principles

A guide to best practice

Introduction

Despite significant progress in recent years, mining is still male dominated. According to research done by S&P¹, women make up just 14.9% of mining companies' executive ranks and 18.1% of the industry's board positions. It is likely that women's participation in the industry as a whole is as low as 10%². This reflects

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Responsible Gold Mining Principle 6.6

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both a legacy of out-dated social attitudes and the fact that in some countries, until relatively recently, women were prohibited from working in certain roles, especially underground. Remedying this historic imbalance requires companies to be pro-active in their approach in attracting women to their ranks, ensuring that they are supported and fairly treated and that barriers to advancement are removed.

The Responsible Gold Mining Principles (RGMPs) explicitly address the need to support women in mining and women in communities around mine sites. The inclusion of these Principles represents widespread external stakeholder input that gender is an important issue for the gold mining sector, where further action is required. A growing number of companies have made significant progress in recent years, although much still remains to be done.

This guide is intended to share some of the learnings and best practices in the hope that this will further encourage greater participation and engagement with women at gold mining operations and in the communities that support these operations.



The Responsible Gold Mining Principles

Gold mining companies are eager to do more to improve gender diversity. That is why the RGMPs, which set a new benchmark for ESG standards in the gold industry, include several requirements aimed at addressing the underlying challenges with the advancement and empowerment of women. These requirements can be categorised under two headings: 1) Mining and women in the workplace and 2) Mining and women in communities.

1. Mining and Women in the Workplace

Principle 6.6: Women in Mining (workforce)

“We are committed to identifying and resolving barriers to the advancement and fair treatment of women in our workplaces.”

Principle 6.5 Diversity

“We will implement policies and practices to promote diversity at all levels of the company...”

Why is this important for a business?³

- Gender diversity at the board level is associated with improved financial performance⁴ and linked with better risk-management practices⁵, fewer instances of corruption and bribery⁶, and higher CSR ratings⁷
- More diverse and inclusive recruitment can broaden the talent pool, reduce the likelihood of ‘group think’, improve staff retention, promote innovation, and increase productivity⁸
- Discrimination, harassment and bullying can lead to absenteeism, low productivity and high employee turnover in the workplace. Any form of gender-based violence should be unacceptable to business on the grounds it is a human rights violation, not to mention the potential reputational and legal consequences.⁹

What can mining companies do?

- Put in place a strong company-wide gender equity policy and review other existing policies to identify any risk of them creating a bias against women
- Make a firm commitment to gender equity in relation to wages and benefits
- Ensure the provision of gender-appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Provide appropriate health and sanitation facilities, including, sanitary disposal receptacles
- Enhance awareness of forms of harassment, discrimination and violence through codes of conduct and training

- Ensure protections for female employees against harassment and discrimination
- Ensure employees know their legal rights and have access to robust, confidential, and independent reporting mechanisms and support services
- Adopt a zero-tolerance policy regarding gender-based violence in the workplace
- Undertake education, training, internship and mentoring programmes, with special attention to STEM skills, to encourage women and girls to explore careers in mining
- Encourage male employees to play an active role in creating a gender-sensitive workplace environment
- Adopt family friendly policies that allow women and men to work flexibly during key periods of family/caring responsibility
- Set ambitious targets for female representation at all levels and incentivise managers to deliver against them
- Adopt a multi-stakeholder approach to encourage the attraction and participation of women including through working with trade union representatives
- Develop metrics and collect data to monitor the success of programmes to recruit, retain and advance women
- Create inclusive workplaces and set a tone from the top through the recruitment of women to Boards and C-Suite positions.

Examples of good practice

- [Newmont Achieves Gender Parity for Non-Executive Directors](#)
- [B2Gold 2019 Sustainability Report – Gender Diversity at the Mine: Women at Fekola Leading the Way](#)
- [Endeavour Mining 2019 Sustainability Report: Diversity and Equal Opportunities](#)
- [Newcrest launches partnership with WORK180.](#)

Other key references

- [Women in Mining: A guide to integrating women into the workforce \(IFC\)](#)
- [50 ways to fight bias \(IWIM\)](#)
- [Gender Equity in Mining Works \(Mining Industry Human Resources Council\)](#)
- [Breaking Barriers: Unconscious gender bias in the workplace \(ILO Research Note\).](#)

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“This is a historic step for the mining industry. It is the first time a framework of responsible mining principles explicitly focuses on the role of women within the industry and acknowledges the need for more action to improve the representation and empowerment of women, both in the workplace as well as the communities surrounding mining operations”

Alex Buck, WIM UK’s Managing Director

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2. Mining and women in the community

While gender issues are relevant to many of the Responsible Gold Mining Principles, including in relation to Impact assessments (2.4), Stakeholder identification and engagement (2.2), Local procurement (3.2) and Human rights (Principle 5), Principles 6.6 and 7.2 are of particular significance:

Principle 6.6: Women in Mining (communities)

“Through our employment, supply chain, training and community investment programmes, we will aim to contribute to the socio-economic empowerment of women in the communities associated with our operations.”

Principle 7.2 Understanding communities

“We will ensure that we engage with communities, including traditional leaders, in a culturally appropriate manner... We will be alert to the dangers of causing differentially negative impacts on women... We will ensure that the voices of these groups are heard and that this knowledge is integrated into how we do business”.

Why is this important for a business?

- Mining can alter people’s livelihoods, ways of life, cultural traits, political systems and community structures – and these changes affect women and men differently. New mining communities may also attract a disproportionate influx of single men, bringing with them risks of prostitution and gender-based violence. The right policies and practices can ensure that mining doesn’t foster gender inequality and discrimination but rather supports women in sharing the benefits and opportunities that the sector can provide¹⁰
- It is important that companies recognise that their presence can marginalise women, through for example unmitigated impacts to traditional livelihoods or the disruption of cultural norms and decision making roles in the community. This can be exacerbated if women are also excluded from employment or small business opportunities. If unaddressed, these unmitigated impacts will likely form a significant threat to a company’s social license to operate
- It is essential that in undertaking impact assessment, gender issues are identified and that consultative mechanisms ensure that women’s voices are heard and acted upon.

What can mining companies do?

- Ensure that community consultation mechanisms do not exclude or marginalise women
- Design social and environmental impact assessments to identify gender specific elements including in relation to livelihoods, access to land, human rights and health
- Be pro-active in involving women in trust-building activities such as participatory monitoring initiatives
- Ensure that women are included in education and training initiatives for providing access to jobs and for starting their own businesses to supply the mine
- Ensure that women have influence in the selection of community investment projects
- Design interactions with artisanal mining groups to divert them from the use of mercury (women are often prominent in processing ore and mercury fumes can have disastrous health impacts) and to offer either access to safer technologies and/or alternative livelihoods
- Ensure that grievance mechanisms are culturally appropriate and inclusive so that women find them accessible
- When consulting around changes to access to land or resettlement for communities whose livelihoods are natural-resource or land-based, best practice would suggest a bias towards ‘land for land’ compensation as opposed to one-off cash handouts that can leave families destitute if the compensation is not used wisely.

Examples of good practice

- [Newcrest: Meri farmers program continues to grow](#)
- [AngloGold Ashanti: Geita Economic Development Programme](#)
- [Sibanye Stillwater: Celebrating Women’s Month.](#)

Other key references

- [Towards gender responsive implementation of extractive industries projects \(Danish Institute for Human Rights\)](#)
- [Gender Diversity and Inclusion: A Guide for Explorers \(PDAC\)](#)
- [Disaggregated Data: The foundation of gendered impact assessments \(IGF Article\).](#)



Impact of Covid-19 on gender equality

The Covid-19 global pandemic has created unprecedented disruption in the lives of virtually every person on the planet. But in many cases women have been disproportionately impacted. Studies show that women are over-represented in sectors which have been most heavily hit by the pandemic, such as hospitality or the food services industries. Women represent 39% of the global workforce but accounted for 54% of job losses as of May 2020.¹¹ Based on experience, economic slowdowns also tend to be accompanied by a decrease in the focus on gender equality topics on governmental and corporate agendas.

Other concurrent societal changes, however, could lead to more optimism. Enhanced public and investor focus on inclusion and diversity offers the chance to accelerate action on gender equality. Evidence shows that companies

with a more diverse workforce and supply chain, and a more gender-sensitive approach to engaging with communities, will increase productivity, reduce costs, and strengthen social license to operate.¹² Redoubling efforts to improve gender equality can potentially help mitigate the negative impacts on women from the Covid-19 pandemic.

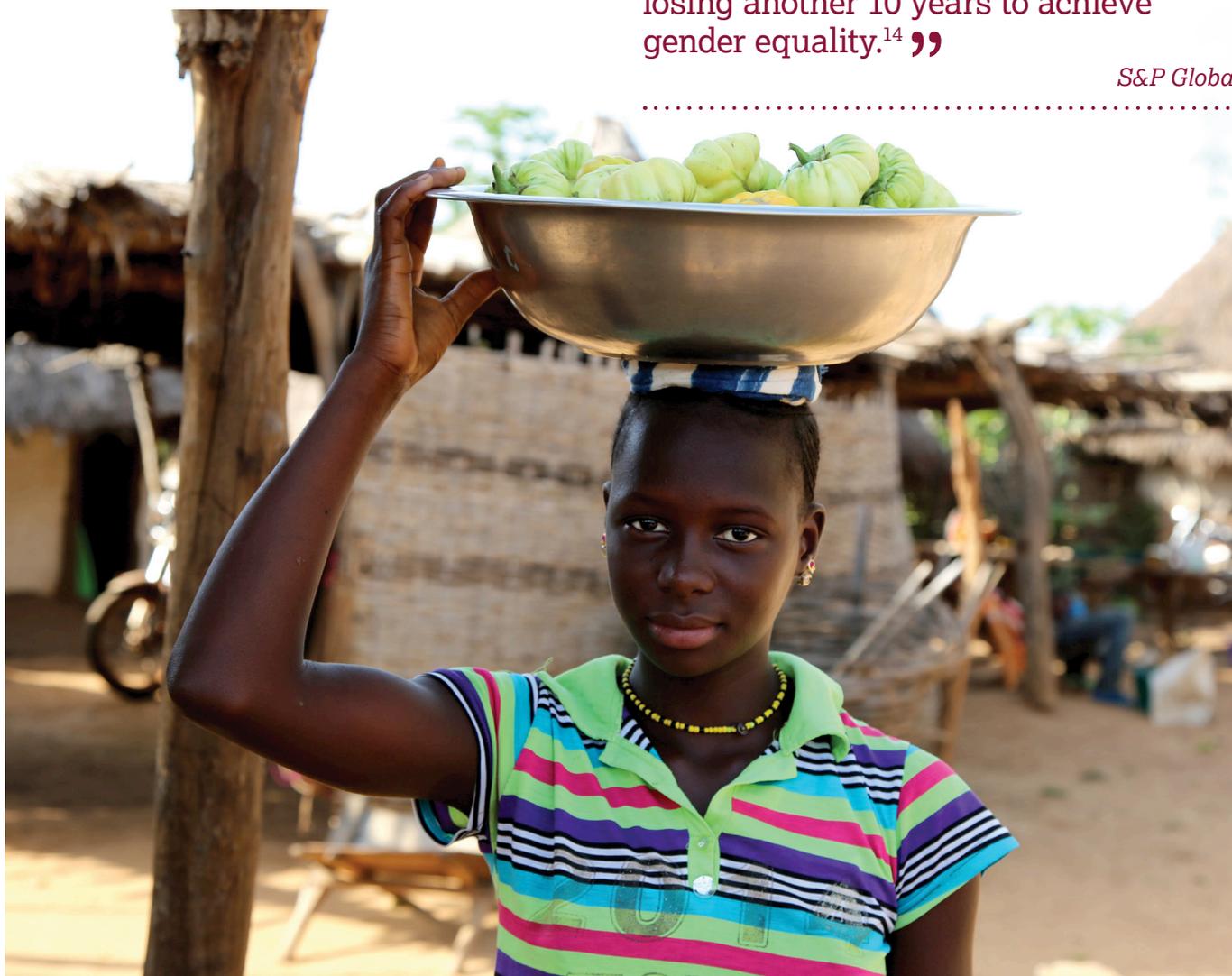
According to the World Bank¹³ at least 30% of artisanal miners are women. During the pandemic many responsible ASM groups have found that their supply chains were disrupted leaving them vulnerable to exploitation by criminal groups for the sale of their gold. It is important that constructive actors work together to help mitigate these negative impacts and support the operation of legitimate, responsible channels for gold refining and sales.

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“In the face of the Covid-19 pandemic and economic crisis, efforts will have to be doubled if we are to avoid losing another 10 years to achieve gender equality.¹⁴”

S&P Global

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Best Practice – Bloomberg Gender Equality Index (GEI)

The GEI is a modified market capitalization-weighted index that aims to track the performance of public companies committed to transparency in gender-data reporting. According to Peter Grauer, CEO of Bloomberg: *“Companies that provide an inclusive environment supporting work life balance and flexible work arrangements will eventually succeed in retaining a talented workforce and gain a competitive advantage in a business environment that has been significantly altered, possibly forever.”*¹⁵

Four World Gold Council members – AngloGold Ashanti, IAMGold, Newmont and Sibanye Stillwater – are included in the 2021 Bloomberg Gender Equality Index.

Engaging Men

The importance of engaging men in actively supporting the advancement of gender issues cannot be underestimated. *“Men have a critical role to play in creating inclusive workplaces. Yet too often men are an untapped resource in gender initiatives”*: Catalyst research demonstrates that the more men know about gender inequalities, the more likely they are to lead efforts to close the gender gap.¹⁶

There are a number of excellent resources which can be used to enlist men as allies in advancing gender equality such the International Women in Mining and Men Advocating Real Change (MARC).

Metrics and targets

Creating meaningful and measurable metrics for social change are notoriously difficult and tracking progress on gender issues is no different. However, even the most basic metrics on the representation of women at various levels within a company have the potential to create the necessary conversations and highlight the need for change. Setting targets related to gender diversity is something that most companies have shied away from although this is starting to change.

Gold mining companies are increasingly reporting gender disaggregated data in their social impact assessments, grievance information and workforce representation of women. A good example of disaggregated workforce data is from Kinross’s 2019 Sustainability Report (pages 67-72). Examples of metrics reported include:

- gender disaggregated data by position, employee type and region
- number of women in revenue-generating (operational/technical) positions
- male/female salary ratio by job category and region.

Additional Resources

- Gender and Mining library (International Women in Mining)
- Encyclopedia of Gender and mining (German Cooperation)
- Gender and Mining (Intergovernmental Forum).

About the World Gold Council

The World Gold Council is the market development organisation for the gold industry. Our purpose is to stimulate and sustain demand for gold, provide industry leadership, and be the global authority on the gold market.

We develop gold-backed solutions, services and products, based on authoritative market insight and we work with a range of partners to put our ideas into action. As a result, we create structural shifts in demand for gold across key market sectors. We provide insights into the international gold markets, helping people to understand the wealth preservation qualities of gold and its role in meeting the social and environmental needs of society.

Based in the UK, with operations in India, China, Singapore and the USA, the World Gold Council is an association whose members comprise the world's leading and most forward thinking gold mining companies.

For more information

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Photo on page 1 courtesy of Women in Mining UK.

Photo on page 3 courtesy of Kinross.

Photo on page 4 courtesy of Teranga Gold.

Photo on page 5 courtesy of Newmont Mining.

Footnotes

- <https://www.spglobal.com/marketintelligence/en/news-insights/latest-news-headlines/despite-diversification-efforts-fewer-than-1-in-5-mining-leaders-are-women-59101897>
- <https://www.pwc.co.uk/assets/pdf/women-in-mining-2015.pdf>
- www.commddev.org/pdf/publications/Gender%20Equity%20in%20MINING_FIN%20for%20WEB.pdf
- www.wsj.com/articles/companies-with-diverse-executive-teams-posted-bigger-profit-margins-study-shows-1516322484
- <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10551-014-2528-6>
- www.msci.com/documents/10199/04b6f646-d638-4878-9c61-4eb91748a82b
- www.catalyst.org/research/companies-behaving-responsibly-gender-diversity-on-boards/
- www.academia.edu/9767781/Putting_All_Our_Minds_to_Work_Harnessing_the_Gender_Dividend_The_Business_Case
- www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/topics_ext_content/ifc_external_corporate_site/gender+at+ifc/priorities/employment/sheworks+knowledge+report+putting+gender+smart+commitments+into+practice
- Intergovernmental Forum (EB reference?)
- www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/ten-things-to-know-about-gender-equality
- www.commddev.org/pdf/publications/Gender%20Equity%20in%20MINING_FIN%20for%20WEB.pdf
- <https://delvedatabase.org/>
- www.spglobal.com/esg/csa/yearbook/articles/gender-equality-workplace-going-beyond-women-on-the-board
- www.bloomberg.com/gei/letter-from-our-chairman/
- <https://internationalwim.org/resources/best-practice/male-champions-engaging-men/>