
Inclusive Growth in Mining Contexts

Lessons Learned from Four NGO Projects in the Mining Context

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Executive Summary

This report highlights different strategies five Canadian non-profits have taken to promote gender equity in the mining context. The objective of this report is to identify lessons learned for policy makers, other non-profit organizations and the private sector in their efforts to support gender equity in the mining context. This report was completed by Suzanne Belliveau for the Devonshire Initiative. Lessons learned were identified through a literature review and interviews with program leaders from the participating non-profits. Community participants or partners were not interviewed for this project, which presents an opportunity to discuss and validate the lessons learned from this report.

The study identified common approaches that non-profits in their programs. The study also identifies the following key takeaways for non-profits, policy makers and the private sector.

1. **Work with local governments.** Local authorities (including community leaders or customary authorities) can engage communities in planning. Support initiatives that are included in the local development plans that reflect community priorities. If necessary, invite NGOs to support local governments to carry out participatory planning process that engage women and youth.
2. **Participate in multi-stakeholder dialogue tables.** The dialogue tables or forums are an effective space to exchange information on the community's needs and expectations and the company's opportunities and requirements. It's also an important place to build relationships and trust between sectors.
3. **Engage local training institutes early.** Work with training institutes (preferably early on in the mine life cycle) to develop and deliver courses that will allow women and youth to access employment and procurement opportunities. Support recruitment campaigns that target women.
4. **Supporting women-led businesses is a win-win.** There are reputational and operational advantages for companies to procure from local women-led SMEs. At the same time, women SME operators not only benefit, but they are more likely to hire or support other women in the community. Support SMEs both within the mining supply chain and other prioritized economic sectors.
5. **Build gender-based violence prevention into workplace safety.** Understand the local context, gender dynamics and power relations to assess the effect of the company's policies, presence, shiftwork on women and girls in the community. Create safe spaces for dialogue about GBV and establish policies that reduce harassment in the workplace or on the mine site.
6. **Buy products from small-scale and artisanal miners.** Support the programs that help the miners formalize and enter the international market. Buy their products to create the incentive to continue operating legally.
7. **Evaluate the impact.** Sourcing responsibly does not guarantee a positive contribution on women or women miners. Similarly, community agreements or other contributions may not have equitable benefits. Go a step further and measure the impact.

As we move to a low carbon economy, it is imperative that we promote gender equity to meet the demand for metals and minerals and support resilient, sustainable and responsible supply chains. We hope this reports provides people with practical examples that will inform their work.

Introduction

Mining activity can be a major economic driver for countries. However, these benefits are not always felt at the local level, and they are not experienced equally. Men often have greater access to opportunities, in terms of employment and income, while women tend to be disproportionately affected by the social and environmental impacts. Mechanisms exist to increase local benefits, such as through agreements between companies and communities (Community Benefit Agreements, Local Cooperation Agreements), or through a fund that transfers a portion of mining royalties to communities (Minerals Development Funds, *Canon Minero*). However, women are not often part of the decision-making processes related to these agreements or funds. Women-owned businesses also face greater challenges to entering the mining supply chain than their male counterparts.

Over the past decade, Canadian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been implementing international development projects in various countries in the mining context. The projects, funded by Global Affairs Canada (GAC), aim to enable local actors and communities to maximize socio-economic benefits from mining activity. During the implementation of the projects, GAC introduced its Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) in 2017 to focus its international assistance on efforts that put women and girls at the centre of development and address the root causes of poverty. The FIAP provides a framework for NGOs to enhance their focus on gender equality and women’s empowerment in their projects.

The GAC-funded projects offer a unique opportunity to demonstrate how gender equality and women’s empowerment can be enhanced in mining contexts. This case study provides lessons learned from four projects implemented in different mining contexts by five NGOs: Canadian Executive Service Organization (CESO), World University Service of Canada (WUSC), Center for International Studies and Cooperation (CECI), IMPACT (previously Partnership Africa Canada), and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM). These projects began before the introduction of the FIAP and provide insight into how organizations and companies can incorporate a greater focus on gender equality and women’s empowerment in mining contexts.

Organization	Project	Year	Geographic Scope	Mining Context
CESO & WUSC	Mongolia: Enhancing Resource Management through Institutional Transformation (MERIT)	2016-2024	Mongolia	Mining (coal, copper) and petroleum sectors
WUSC & CESI	West Africa Governance & Economic Sustainability in Extractive Areas (WAGES)	2016-2022	Guinea Burkina Faso Ghana	Industrial and artisanal mining
IMPACT	Building Responsible Mineral Supply Chains for Development in Africa	2015-2021	Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Kenya	Artisanal and small-scale gold Tin, tantalum, tungsten
FCM	Sustainable and Inclusive Communities in Latin America (CISAL)	2014-2020	Colombia Peru	Gold, Coal, Salt Gold, Copper

Shifting Focus

The NGOs had already incorporated gender into the project design to varying degrees. The introduction of the FIAP provided the opportunity for the NGOs to incorporate a more deliberate focus on gender, better articulate their gender strategies, and bring the work with women and girls to the forefront. To align their projects with the FIAP, most of the NGOs went through a process of adjustment, specifically relating to Human Resources or Project Management.

Human Resources

- Educate all staff on the FIAP and its six action areas.
- Engage gender advisors to work directly with the project team.
- Engage a consultant to update strategies and refine the approach.
- Hire local gender specialists in project countries.
- Train local staff on gender and the FIAP.

Project Management

- Identify connections between the FIAP action areas and the mining context.
- Update the project's gender strategies to align with FIAP.
- Adapt the Performance Measurement Framework (PMF) and Logic Model to include more gender language and add gender-specific indicators.
- Add activities and allocate budget to activities that contribute to FIAP action areas.
- Update or carry out a gender analysis in the project locations with local partners.
- Find linkages with national gender policies/strategies of implementing countries.
- Track resources invested in gender using a Value for Money framework.
- Adjust criteria for small funds/grants to favour women beneficiaries.

FIAP Action Areas

1. Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls
2. Human dignity
3. Growth that works for everyone
4. Environment and climate action
5. Inclusive governance
6. Peace and security

Successful Strategies

The projects most readily aligned with the FIAP action areas *1) Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, 3) Growth the works for everyone, and 5) Inclusive governance*. This section highlights good practices from each of the projects in relation to priorities within the action areas of the FIAP.

1. Help governments address the differential needs of women and men

The projects worked with governments at national, sub-national and local levels to increase awareness and capacity on gender to be able to create policies and plans that respond to the differential needs of women and men.

- Translate the **Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+)** training and adapt it to the local context. Train public servants at a national level in Ministries related to mining and other sectors.

- Provide **Gender-Responsive Budgeting** (GRB) training to assess the impact of public revenue and expenditure on women, girls, men, and boys.
- Support Ministries to carry out a participatory **Gender Audit**, to assess the institutionalization of gender equality throughout the organization.
- Support the development of **gender-responsive policies** in the mining sector.
- Train local governments on inclusive planning, participatory budgeting, GRB, gender equality, and public participation.
- Support local governments to carry out inclusive, participatory processes to integrate the needs of women (and youth) in local development plans, local economic development plans, Community Benefit Agreements, and the Mineral Development Fund.
- Integrate inclusive, participatory consultations into the mine closure planning process.
- Create the role of **Gender Desk** within the local/district government offices with the responsibility to integrate gender in all aspects of work.
- Develop **Gender Assessment** tools to integrate gender and human rights in mineral laws, policies, and projects, including the Toolkit: [Gender Impact Assessment for Projects and Policies related to Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining](#).

Through the **MERIT project**, more than 6,000 public servants (65% women) have been trained in a version of GBA+ adapted to the Mongolian context. The GBA+ and participation in the gender community of practice and gender budgeting strengthened local public official's capacity to identify solutions to the barriers women face in accessing loans. They adjusted the criteria to access provincial government low-interest loans, by recognizing that the husband and wife are equal owners of household assets, such as land titles, used as collateral to obtain the loan. The GBA+ is institutionalized by the National Academy of Governance and is a mandatory training for public servants to graduate.

The Ministry of Mines and Heavy Industry (MMHI) conducted a sector-wide Gender Impact Assessment. This led to the development of The Geology, Mining, Petroleum and Heavy Industry Sector Gender Responsive Policy (2019-2026) and its Action Plan which created interest and buy-in for a participatory gender audit (2020) at the Ministry.

MERIT adapted international norms for responsible extraction through a Mine Closure Planning pilot project which will set a standard for mine closure in Mongolia. The pilot puts guidelines into practice through a collaborative effort with a state-owned mine, the regulators, local government, community leaders and local consultants. A precedent setting process of participatory stakeholder consultation was carried out to create an open space for civic discourse and ensured that women's voices were heard and reflected. Over a series of seven meetings, the stakeholders came to a consensus on the goals and objectives for the mine closure plan.

2. Support meaningful participation

The projects worked with women and youth to be better prepared to have meaningful participation in the participatory processes led by local governments.

- Train women's groups and youth groups on mining codes, as well as on gender and skills for advocacy.
- Support the women and youth to advocate for their needs and participate in consultations about the use of the **Mineral Development Fund**.
- Provide training to women and community leaders on **Mine Life Cycle** to better understand the opportunities and challenges at different stages of mining.
- Train women to be part of local committees that provide oversight to the **Community Benefit Agreements**.
- Support women, youth, and marginalized groups to participate in a process to develop **Local Economic Plans** and identify priority value chains.
- Engage representatives of women's associations and indigenous groups in **multi-stakeholder dialogue groups**, together with local governments, mining companies, academic institutions, and other stakeholders.
- Train women artisanal miners in **mediation and negotiation**, among other topics, to participate in peace negotiations and the resolution of local conflicts.

The **WAGES project** worked with local governments and community members to increase women's and youth's participation. Women and youth association were trained in the Mining Codes to have a better understanding of the Mineral Development Fund, which allocates revenue from mining to local communities in its area of influence. They also received training in advocacy, negotiation, project formulation, environmental protection, and rights. The women and youth participated in dialogue meetings with local governments to have their needs and priorities incorporated into Local Development Plans and the use of the Mineral Development Fund. In Guinea, the support to women and youth to participate in local governance allowed them to successfully advocate for 40% of the Mining Development Fund go towards economic development projects for women and youth. Women and youth representatives took part in monitoring committees to provide oversight and ensure that the 40% allocation was achieved in the municipalities' budgets.

3. Support women's leadership and decision-making

Special efforts were made in the projects to support women in leadership and decision-making roles to share knowledge, be more effective, and foster mutual support.

- Establish a **Gender Community of Practice (CoP)** in the public service, bringing together national and local level public servants on a monthly basis to share tools, and experiences, and support each other.

- Hold monthly **Women in Leadership** meetings for female leaders from private and public sectors relating to mining to share their stories.
- Provide **leadership training** and coaching to female municipal councillors. Establish networks of women councillors and support them to lead projects that respond to the needs of women in their communities.
- Establish the **Network for the Empowerment of Women in Mining Communities (RAEFECOM)**, to represent the interests of women artisanal miners and promote women's rights.

IMPACT's Just Gold project in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) supported the empowerment and equality of women artisanal miners. They worked with the women miners to help them identify barriers and what they wanted to do to overcome them. The women decided to establish the Network for the Empowerment of Women in Mining Communities (RAEFECOM), to represent the interests of women artisanal miners. It is the first formal association of women artisanal miners in the Ituri province. The group aims to improve living conditions for women, promote women's right to and increased access to social services, and reduce the barriers that limit their full participation in artisanal mining. One issue that they wanted to tackle was Gender-Based Violence. They mapped out security threats (e.g. previous attacks) and vulnerabilities (e.g. lack of lighting), and received training to accompany and refer survivors of sexual violence. Supporting women's leadership in the RAEFECOM has led to some members gaining positions on the executive board of the mining cooperative, CODEMA, bringing the needs and interests of women miners to the cooperative.

4. Improve economic and training opportunities

All of the projects support local women to improve their opportunities for employment, livelihoods or business development. This included both opportunities within mining sector and other priority sectors.

- Train women on **entrepreneurship**, business plan development, and financial literacy.
- Provide **coaching and mentorship** to women and youth entrepreneurs.
- Develop and deliver a course for women operators of a Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SME) on the financial, marketing, and business management skills required to connect to the **mining supply chain**. [The [course](#) was since adapted and adopted by Canada's Aurora College].
- Establish **working groups** led by the provincial government, that facilitate dialogue between local SME's and mining companies.
- Provide women access to information on opportunities and impacts during the mine life cycle.
- Incorporate opportunities for **women's employment and procurement** from women-led SMEs into Local Cooperation Agreements.
- Establish criteria of at least 50% women participating in training, and scheduling training at times and locations that are convenient for women considering their family commitments.

- Prioritize support to value chains that have a high participation of women.
- Support women to **formalize their business** and perform proper invoicing and record keeping.
- Provide **small funds** to women to improve a business to be able to access opportunities in the mining supply chain and other priority value chains.
- Work with academic institutes to create **training programs** to access employment in the mining sector or related sectors.
- Encourage participation of women in [master craft training](#) to help women enter traditionally male-dominated trades.

The **CISAL project** in Antioquia, Colombia supported local governments (LG) to create a participatory Local Economic Development plan, which identified mining as a priority value chain. A multi-stakeholder dialogue table was formed to facilitate a coordinated approach, bringing together women and men from producer associations, local businesses, a training institute, chamber of commerce, the Mining Company, and LGs. A study was carried out to identify the mining company's procurement needs and assess the readiness of local SMEs. An agreement was made between the LG, the mining company and the training institute to develop technical courses related to mining (e.g., environmental management, underground mining), and shorter courses in "alternative economies" for businesses in the supporting environment (e.g. cooking, hospitality). Local businesses received business development support and could access a small fund to improve their business. As a result, the mining company hired more than 1,000 local people (43% women) by the end of 2018, and 30 women-led business became local providers of goods, such as uniforms and coffee.

5. Promote financial inclusion and access to resources

A common barrier to women's economic empowerment is access to resources to set up an income-generating activity. The projects provided or facilitated women's access to financial resources.

- Facilitate **loans** for female beneficiaries through partnerships with local banks.
- Provide project-funded **grants** to women and small business owners to set up or improve a business.
- Provide direct support to women to develop a sound **business idea or plan** to access grants.
- Establish a **facilitation fund** to enable women's access to other sources of funding to finance their income-generating activities.
- Adjust the **regulations** to make it easier for women to access low-interest loans.
- Integrate a gender lens into the **business advisory centres** to provide support to women and youth entrepreneurs.
- Support artisanal miners (men and women) to establish [Village Savings and Loans Associations](#), where members regularly put money into the associations' savings and then loan the growing fund to members. Female members receive financial literacy training to undertake new entrepreneurial activities around the mine sites.

The **WAGES project** facilitated access for women and youth entrepreneurs to financial and non-financial business support services. The support services aimed to strengthen companies to seize business opportunities linked to the mining value chain, as well as other promising sectors like agriculture. In Ghana, Business Advisory Centres (BAC) were supported to provide training to women and youth entrepreneurs to formalize their businesses, improve financial management, and find innovative ways to access finance. WAGES facilitated women's access to loans through a partnership with local banks. A low-cost funding model allowed women to access loans without providing credit collateral, as they tend to lack assets to use as a guarantee for bank loans. The small grant initiative supported 157 entrepreneurs in two districts. It resulted in the local procurement of groundnut paste and sewing of mining workers' suits.

6. Address sexual and gender-based violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) was prevalent in many of the regions where the projects were implemented.

- Carry out a needs assessment or **gender study** to understand the root causes of GBV and how the mining activity has changed the dynamics.
- **Raise awareness** about GBV in the community through focus groups and campaigns.
- Awareness sessions in municipalities about **positive masculinities** and GBV.
- Support local initiatives to **reduce risks** and to assist women and girl survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.
- As part of traceability, establish **criteria** and support the local artisanal mining cooperative to verify that mine sites are conflict-free, and don't include human rights violations, such as child labour or systematic sexual and gender-based violence.

The **CISAL project** strengthened the role of female municipal councillors. Through leadership training, peer-to-peer coaching, and supporting a Network of Women Councillors, the councillors were able to identify and lead small development projects. In Cusco, women councillors from the District of Chumbivilcas created the *Political Agenda for the Chumbivilcan Woman*. One of the priorities identified was addressing gender-based violence due to the high rates of domestic violence in the District, and to build a women's shelter for women survivors of violence. Through their advocacy, a piece of land was donated by the municipality of Santo Tomas, but there were delays in construction. The CISAL project ended, but the women leaders persevered and raised the funds to build the shelter.

Lessons Learned

The projects were implemented in different geographical and mining contexts. The following highlight a few common lessons learned.

Supporting women and communities increases the local benefits from resource extraction: Natural resources will continue to be extracted by communities and companies. By supporting women, small-scale and artisanal miners, and vulnerable communities, resources can be extracted in a way that benefits communities, avoids exploitation and conflict, and results in equal benefit.

NGOs are well-placed to help communities seize opportunities: The projects demonstrated the important role of NGOs in mining settings. NGOs can build trusted relationships and have the flexibility to work with a variety of actors: government, academic institutes, communities, and companies. They can act as a bridge, facilitate dialogue, and create the conditions for women and vulnerable groups to take advantage of the opportunities offered by mining activities.

Promote gender equality at all levels: The promotion of gender equality was particularly effective when it was promoted at all levels, from policymakers to community members, and in various sectors from mining to finance. At the local level, the promotion of gender equality allowed women and youth to contribute to the development and monitoring of agreements and plans to make sure these reflect their needs.

Information facilitates local procurement from women-led SMEs. Companies were generally interested in buying local but lacked the necessary information to do so. Creating a database of the local businesses and the goods/services offered helped companies identify procurement opportunities. Similarly, by providing women with information about the company's needs, their requirements, the procurement process, and the mining life cycle, they were better able to access opportunities in the supply chain.

Collaboration with companies is beneficial: Engaging the company helped to understand their view of the barriers to working with governments and procuring locally, and to help identify solutions. Involving companies in dialogue about local economic development resulted in more local procurement and employment opportunities for women in the mining sector. The NGO skillset combined with the mining skillset brings innovation, and companies can contribute to the development process.

Small changes can have a big impact on gender equality. Gender equality does not necessarily require large investments in human or financial resources. With a greater awareness of gender equality among policymakers, practical actions can be taken to make policies or laws more equitable. Start with a Gender Impact Assessment and review policies with a gender lens to identify how women are directly/indirectly affected by policies, root causes of inequality and the changes that can make increase women's access to opportunities and resources.

Take a holistic perspective: Rather than addressing gender equality as a singular issue, look at it within the greater complex context. Get to know the women and their needs, but also the community. Particularly in the context of industrial or artisanal mining communities, look at the drivers of trade, the market, the environmental impact, and global issues that influence the market, and examine whether the proposed solutions are commercially viable and thus more sustainable.

The Way Forward

Mining is an important economic sector for Canada and many resource-rich countries. With the push to transition to cleaner energy, there is a growing demand for critical minerals, like cobalt, lithium, and graphite. The increased demand presents a great opportunity as well as the need for resilient, sustainable and responsible supply chains. The Canadian government has released three key guidance documents with respect to this: [Responsible Business Conduct Abroad: Canada's Strategy for the Future](#), [Advancing Canada's Feminist Approach to Natural Resources Governance and Management](#), and [NRCANs Critical Minerals Strategy](#). The guidance documents are influenced by Canada's feminist approach and commitment to Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+), and make reference to the following points:

1. Growing a diverse workforce and prosperous communities
2. Advancing Indigenous reconciliation
3. Improving women and girls' decision-making on how natural resources are managed.
4. Due diligence and mitigating risks associated with a company's activities (economic, health and safety, human rights).
5. Meaningful stakeholder engagement and multi-stakeholder dialogue, including a focus on diversity and inclusion.
6. Ensure the benefits are widely shared, including with under-represented groups such as women, Indigenous peoples, Black and Racialized persons, and SMEs.
7. Strengthen local ecosystems by working with local suppliers and hiring local workers.

The experience of the four GAC-funded projects provides direction for companies that are seeking to address any of these areas. A few key takeaways from the projects are:

- **Work with local governments.** Local authorities (including community leaders or customary authorities) can engage communities in planning. Support initiatives that are included in the local development plans that reflect community priorities. If necessary, invite NGOs to support local governments to carry out participatory planning process that engage women and youth.
- **Participate in multi-stakeholder dialogue tables.** The dialogue tables are a space to exchange information on the community's needs and expectations and the company's opportunities and requirements to collaborate on initiatives that benefit women and youth.
- **Engage local training institutes early.** Work with training institutes before the mine is open to develop and deliver courses that will allow women and youth to access employment and procurement opportunities. Support recruitment campaigns that target women.
- **Supporting women-led businesses is a win-win.** There are reputational and operational advantages for companies to procure from local women-led SMEs. At the same time, women SME operators not only benefit, but they are more likely to hire or support other women in the community. Support SMEs both within the mining supply chain and other prioritized economic sectors.

- **Build gender-based violence prevention into workplace safety.** Understand the local context, gender dynamics and power relations to assess the effect of the company's policies, presence, shiftwork on women and girls in the community. Create safe spaces for dialogue about GBV and establish policies that reduce harassment in the workplace or on the mine site.
- **Buy products from small-scale and artisanal miners.** Support the programs that help the miners formalize and enter the international market. Buy their products to create the incentive to continue operating legally.
- **Evaluate the impact.** Sourcing responsibly does not guarantee a positive contribution on women or women miners. Similarly, community agreements or other contributions may not have equitable benefits. Go a step further and measure the impact.

IMPACT's Just Gold project enables the successful traceability of conflict-free and legal artisanal gold from mine site to export. The project creates incentives for the legal sale of gold and work with miners, traders, and exporters to apply the Just Gold traceability and due diligence system. The project works with local authorities and the artisanal mining cooperative, working in mine sites which have been verified as conflict-free without presence of armed groups, no child labour, or systemic SGBV, and designated by the government as an artisanal mining zone. IMPACT integrated a gender perspective from the beginning, ensuring that there was a fair treatment of women. This included ensuring women are recognized equally as miners no matter what their role in the supply chain, that they receive the same compensation, and the same price for gold. This allowed women to sell gold themselves, at the same price, which they were not able to do before.

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