



Supporting Inclusive Resource Development (SIRD) East Africa

Gender and Health and Safety in the workplace- Uganda perspective
Lynn Gitu- Program Leader, IMPACT-Transforming Natural Resource Manage



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Gender, Labour and Occupational Health & Safety

- ❑ Recognising diversity, including gender differences, in the workforce is vital in ensuring the safety and health of both men and women workers. Whilst some progress has been made in this area, more can and should be done.
- ❑ Gender differences should be considered in the development of occupational safety and health (OSH) policies and prevention strategies. This approach acknowledges and makes visible the differences that exist between men and women workers in order to identify OSH risks and implement effective solutions.
- ❑ A gender sensitive approach recognises that because of the different jobs women and men do, their different societal roles, the expectations and responsibilities they have, women and men may be exposed to different physical and psychological risks at the workplace, thus requiring differing control measures.
- ❑ This approach also improves the understanding that the sexual division of labour, biological differences, employment patterns, social roles and social structures all contribute to gender-specific patterns of occupational hazards and risks. For OSH policies and prevention strategies to be effective for both women and men this dimension needs to be taken into account and such policies must be based on more accurate information about the relationship between health and gender roles.



Gender ,Labour and Health & Safety in the Extractives Sector

- ❑ In the past 15 years, women have become almost 50% of the workforce in many countries. While women are entering occupations previously closed to them, especially in the extractives sector, the labour force is still highly segregated on the basis of gender.
- ❑ The Petroleum Equipment and Services Association reports only 15% of the current oil and gas workforce is female, a number that drops in half when it comes to higher-paying technical jobs.
- ❑ Only 9% of fulltime workers in the mining industry are women, who hold less than 1% of board or executive management positions, according to a survey by the New South Wales, Australia Minerals Council. Further, the survey found that over 30% of women in mining, the largest proportion, are employed as machinery operators or drivers.
- ❑ Health hazards of women workers have been traditionally under-estimated because occupational safety and health standards and exposure limits to hazardous substances are based on studies of male populations and laboratory tests done with males.
- ❑ Research shows that most of the personal protective equipment (PPE) and tools used worldwide are designed based on male populations from Germany and the United States. This presents a challenge for women employees who have to wear PPE and ill fitting PPE has been known to contribute to accidents and injury to women.
- ❑ Also, women are more likely than men to face sexual harassment at the workplace-more so in the extractives sector where numbers of female employees are still considerably low.



Experiences of women in the mining sector: a case study from ASM Gold and Tin Mines

- ❑ Although the health risks of mining are similar for both sexes, there can be additional hazards for women miners especially if they come in contact with chemicals that present a health risk to foetuses or breast feeding infants.
- ❑ No PPE for women panning gold with mercury resulting in some women complaining of increased heart palpitations and hand tremors. One woman in Mubende claimed to have had two miscarriages that she was persuaded were linked to her handling mercury.
- ❑ Menstruating women are not allowed at the mines as they are considered, unclean and bad luck.
- ❑ Women from both mines reported sexual exploitation by their fellow miners and even other men visiting the mines.
- ❑ Women are concentrated on the lowest paying aspects of the ASM sector and are completely excluded from salaried positions as well as positions of leadership on ASM associations or such other decision making bodies.



Thank You!

