

Women and the Philippine Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Mining (ASGM) Sector



In general, most women in ASGM perform flexible and seasonal roles with little to no security. Their lack of access to adequate resources compounded with the view that women's work merely acts as support to the work that men fulfill in ASGM prevent them from earning as much as their male counterparts. They usually perform highly informal and individual tasks that often go unrecognized.

In 2021, the planetGOLD Philippines conducted a baseline study on the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and practices of small-scale miners in its project sites: Sagada, Mt. Province and Paracale, Camarines Norte. An assessment of the legal framework of the ASGM sector was also conducted through an independent consultancy firm. Both studies aimed to illustrate the current context and situation of the ASGM sector in the project sites. It sought to use the context as insight to build recommendations for the growth and development of the sector. Below are some of the findings of the studies that pertain to gender.



In Sagada and Paracale, women miners are heavily involved in the following activities:

- Kulipaw: Soliciting ore or share of profit from financiers and tunnel owners
- Mucking: Collecting waste ore from mining groups
- Gold processing (e.g. sluicing, washing, panning, etc)
- Auxiliary support to mining groups (e.g. processing papers for accreditation)
- Working as officers in mining associations
- Working in secondary economies of small-scale mining (e.g. selling food)
- Working as enforcers to ensure miners will follow the associations' rules and regulations especially on keeping the environment safe and clean

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Challenges of women in ASGM



Limited access to the resources and benefits

- More women compared to men think they are not earning enough to meet their families' needs.
- Most women cannot earn much from profit-sharing schemes of mining groups because they cannot work underground and have limited means to share capital.
- Only a few women are recorded and registered in mining associations or any formal organization which implies that they have limited access to protection and benefits offered by the government.

Poor working conditions

- Some women were also found to have lacked the necessary safety equipment and tools that should protect them from direct contact with mercury and other environmental hazards. If necessary, women only have access to tools that they can borrow from male workers.
- Due to the informal nature of their work, they are not protected by occupational health and safety and labor laws.

Unpaid care work

- Compared to men, women spend longer hours at home attending to the needs of their household, which makes most women unavailable for more secure, full-time employment.
- Women often take on informal, part-time, and/or seasonal work in the ASGM sector and receive less income than their male counterparts.
- Oftentimes, mothers bring their children to mining sites to juggle their care responsibilities and the need to earn an income for the day.

Violence against women

- Women's social inclusion entails maintaining their sexual purity. Any woman who experiences sexual advances is constantly under the threat of victimization.
- Husbands were found to splurge their income on their vices, leaving women desperate to find the resources to sustain their families' everyday needs.
- When income from ASGM increases, men often engage in extramarital affairs through prostitution which adds to the emotional distress of their wives.

Discrimination against women

- Some miners believe that women should not be allowed to enter the mining site to prevent prostitution.
- In Sagada and Paracale, women are believed to bring bad luck if they enter the tunnels during their menstruation period.
- Women face discrimination and are verbally abused because of what they wear and how they look.

Invisibility of women in ASGM

- Women in ASGM do not appear in government data and literature.
- Women in ASGM do not usually appear in the media; and when they do, they are usually perceived as just the extension of their husbands.
- There are no government programs, policies, or initiatives specifically designed to support women in ASGM.

Gender norms in ASGM Communities in Sagada and Paracale



LEADERSHIP AND EMPOWERMENT: Women in mining associations in the project sites take on leadership roles but are not given the space to make impactful decisions as these are still largely made by men.



(IN)VISIBILITY: Women take on many primary and secondary tasks in ASGM such as sluicing, panning, and cleaning. Their contributions are significant but remain invisible in media and government data, statistics, and literature.



PRODUCTIVE AND REPRODUCTIVE WORK: Gender norms on labor remain rigid in both project sites where men normally have more access to and take on more productive work. Reproductive work such as childcare and household work continue to be taken by women. However, women also seek ways to earn an income in the informal economy. Small-scale mining is one among other productive activities that they take on to support their families.

According to the miners in the project sites, women have limited tasks in ASGM because of the following reasons:



Cultural beliefs and gender norms



Physical limitations of women



Lack of safety measures in ASGM



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