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# Assessing Gender Sensitivity in Uganda's Extractive Industry

*A case of Hoima, Buliisa and Mubende Districts*

GRA- June 2017

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# LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACHPR	African Commission on Human and People's Rights.
ASGM	Artisanal Small Scale Gold Mining.
CCFU	Cross Cultural Foundation Uganda.
CDO	Community Development Officer.
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women.
CNOOC	China National Offshore Oil Corporation.
CRED	Civic Response on Environment and Development.
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations.
EI	Extractives Industry.
FGD	Focus Group Discussion.
GRA	Global Rights Alert.
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach.
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
LACWADO	Lake Albert Children Women Advocacy and Development Organisation.
LC	Local Council.
LEU	Living Earth Uganda.
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals.
MEMD	Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development.
MGLSD	Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development.
NDP	National Development Plan
SCDO	Senior Community Development Officer.
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals.
SIGMA	Singo Gold Miners' Association.
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
UHRC	Uganda Human Rights Commission.

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# Executive summary

Global Rights Alert (GRA) undertook a rapid assessment in the oil rich districts of Hoima and Buliisa, as well as in the Mining district of Mubende to assess gender sensitivity in programming by government and investors operating in Uganda's extractive sector. The results from this assessment will contribute to informing appropriate interventions to ensure that women are not excluded from participating and shaping the sector and its development priorities.

The assessment identified a number of barriers that limit access to information and participation by both men and women with regard to EI programmes. In a number of instances, Local government leadership has been bypassed by central government when undertaking sensitisation and consultative meetings in rural communities in the oil region. Both men and women do not receive adequate information on a number of issues, even when they demand for the same. For women however, the situation is worse because of the gender roles and expectations from their communities. Meetings on oil are organised in morning hours when the women are supposed to be working on their gardens, yet these meetings are sometimes on important issues such as land acquisition that women depend on for livelihoods and family support. When men attend these meetings and access information, they rarely pass it to the women. When women access information, they rarely act on it, because in patriarchal societies, decision-making making is a reserve for men.

The artisanal gold miners in Mubende are operating illegally as the current law does not recognise them. Majority of workers in the mines are women, who work with no protective gears and face numerous human rights violations including non payment and unfair dismissal from work. There is limited knowledge about human rights and

government agencies are not enforcing any sanitation or labour standards.

Government has the primary mandate to ensure that the benefits from the extractives sector are shared equally by women and men. Generating and disseminating adequate information is important to enable frontline communities to participate fully and to make informed decisions. Availability of information, its accuracy and relevancy or the lack of it will greatly determine participation. When men and women hear information regarding oil mining, they shape their participation based on the same. In the absence of accurate information, communities will find it difficult to engage either government or oil companies. This is a catalyst for speculation and exploitation hence disenfranchisement.

In order to strengthen gender inclusiveness in natural resource governance, government needs to consider a bottom up communication strategy to complement the existing top down through which government plans and community interventions are communicated. This will reduce community dissatisfaction with government modus operandi in implementation of its projects.

As government disseminates information regarding the extractive sector, it is important to consider what the most effective media or channel is that will reach both men and women in the communities at the same time or with equal effectiveness. This is important to guard against distortions. Government needs to create a gender task force at the different district levels as a way to ensure and enforce gender mainstreaming and as an accountability mechanism and learning platform on issues of gender. Government needs to identify the bias between men and women in relation to the extractive industry and define strategies to address them to ensure equitable benefits.

**Winfred Ngabiirwe**

**Winfred Ngabiirwe**  
Executive Director - Global Rights Alert

## 2. Introduction

The Extractive Industries (EI) sector in Uganda has been identified as an important segment of the economy towards the transformation of the country. The flagship Vision 2040 has earmarked oil, gas and mineral resources as critical in changing "the country from a predominantly low income to a competitive upper middle income country within 30 years with a per capita income of USD 9,500."

The EI sector gained prominence in 2006 when the government announced the discovery of vast deposits of crude oil that were commercially viable to extract. Since then it has made strenuous efforts to establish the requisite legal and administrative infrastructure to enable it produce so far about 1.4 billion barrels estimated to be recoverable out of the total estimated 6.5 billion barrels that have been discovered to date. Although less talked about, Uganda has discovered over 100 billion cubic feet of gas. A total of 111 exploration and appraisal wells have been drilled in the country since 2006, out of which 99 wells encountered oil and/or gas in the subsurface. This represents a success rate of over 89 percent, which is among the highest globally. Mining, too, has attracted renewed interest as seen with a review of existing legislation, which is aimed to better guide its current rapid growth and development. Despite the lack of data on the gold quantities that are produced in Uganda, it is estimated that in 2016 Uganda's exports grew by 1 per cent on account of the increase in gold exports. In 2016 Uganda exported gold worth \$339M up from the \$7.82 that was exported in 2012.

Government has put a lot of emphasis on attracting private investment in mineral resources exploration and development through the provision of geo-scientific information on minerals, and management of equitable and secure titles systems for the mining industry. Six key minerals are earmarked for exploitation and value addition. These are: Iron ore, Limestone/Marble, Copper/Cobalt, Phosphates, Dimension stones and Uranium. Key investments in this area will include: Development of geological surveys; investment in more survey and exploration; faster acquisition of land; construction of pipelines to transport crude oil to Tanga; refined products to Kampala, Mombasa and Kigali, and Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) to Kampala and Gulu; construction of an oil and gas refinery; and increased prospecting and processing of the selected minerals.

Artisanal and Small scale Mining (ASM) in Uganda provides a source of livelihood for almost 200,000 women and men, over half of which are engaged in production of industrial minerals to serve the construction demands of the country's rapidly growing population. At least 20,000 of these miners are engaged in gold mining via ASGM, which has become a relatively important economic activity, mostly in the regions of Namayingo and Karamoja in the East and North east as well as in the Kigezi, Mubende and Buhweju gold fields across the West and Southwest of the country.

Anticipation of economic activities and their transformative capabilities has begun to grow again since government is pushing to begin especially oil production around 2020. Once production commences, it is expected to tentatively last up to 30 years and generate revenue to the tune of more than USD3bn annually for at least 20 years. This renewed excitement in the sector and the period of time production is expected to remain active makes it imperative to focus interest on the effects extractive work inevitably has on the economy, society and environment.

## 3. Gender and the Extractive Industries

Gender is defined as the relations between men and women, both perceptual and material. Gender is not determined biologically, as a result of sexual characteristics of either men or women, but it is constructed socially. It is a central organising principle of societies and often governs the processes of production and reproduction, consumption and distribution. Gender issues focus on women and on the relationship between men and women, access to and control over resources, division of labour, interests and needs. Gender relations affect household security, family well-being, planning, production and many other aspects of life.

In the study by Scott et al. (2013) of three communities directly affected by oil and gas development, oil revenues were perceived by the general public to have deepened existing inequalities in their societies. Mukeba's (2015) study in Congo concludes that "land, extractive industry and gender inequality are inextricably linked". These studies highlight the need to promote activities to address existing and constructed inequalities, including gender inequalities, within extractive industries.

Evidence from natural resource rich African countries demonstrates the sector has an uneven impact across gender. Whereas men often reap its benefits such as employment and compensation, women bear the brunt of all its costs which include family and social disruption and environmental degradation. This effectively corrodes the transformative potential often associated with the sector because not only does it leave the majority of the population in a much worse off situation, it also creates or amplifies existing vulnerabilities.

An equitable share of the benefits and risks in extractive projects is key to enable women not only to leverage their untapped potential in increasing growth, reducing poverty and fostering positive conditions for sustainable development, but also to contribute to improving the development effectiveness of oil, gas and mining operations for communities and countries as a whole. Without equity, women cannot assure their own development nor contribute to the development of their families and communities.

Ensuring active participation of women in development and community decision making is good for them, their families and business. The success of extractive industries depends not only on natural resource deposits but also on the relationship extractive companies have with the communities in which they operate. Indeed, where companies solicit the input and participation of women, their approval and social license may be viewed as a litmus test for the success of a company's employment, environmental, social, community consultation and gender related policies and activities.

## 4. Focus of this assessment

GRA has undertaken several studies under its project *Extracting Equality in Uganda's Natural Resource Sector* and established that indeed women in oil and mineral rich communities face numerous challenges that if not addressed will push them (women) further into defranchisement. The focus of this assessment is not on promoting gender equality within the extractive industries but to assess gender sensitivity in programming by government and investors. The assessment ultimately seeks to ensure that women are not excluded from participating in shaping the sector and its development priorities. The assessment has concentrated on the epicentre of Uganda's extractives sector in the districts of Hoima, Mubende and Buliisa where different oil, minerals and gas sector activities are concentrated.

This current assessment focuses on gender sensitivity in Hoima, Buliisa and Mubende with regards to participation in decision making processes and access to information about the extractives sector. These two issues are very critical and indeed as the Uganda Human Rights Commission observed:

*"A major finding of the monitoring exercise was that generally there was inadequate information regarding the oil and gas industry at the national level. This inadequacy got worse at the district and community levels. The lack of information creates disempowerment and vulnerability; and this makes it a human rights concern. In such a situation, individuals, families and communities become prone to misinformation, speculation and deception thereby getting highly exposed to manipulation, violations and abuse. Information is power and is critical for people's active and effective participation in developing the sector."*

In broad terms, the results from this assessment will contribute to appropriate interventions which ensure that women are not excluded from participating and shaping the sector and its development priorities. It is hoped that these recommendations will go a long in aiding government, investors and development agencies such as NGOs in identifying the strategic interventions that address the needs of both men and women as well as give them opportunities to contribute to the development of the sector.

Working with partners, GRA will develop a gender response mechanism to address the challenges identified by the assessment. Our hope is that both men and women can truly benefit from the sector, now and in the future.

## 4. Methodology

The assessment is mainly qualitative in nature. It relies on face to face interviews and focus group discussions with a total of 318 people (164 women and 154 men) who were randomly selected in Hoima, Mubende and Buliisa districts. In Buliisa interviews were done separately for women and men to enable especially the women to freely express themselves without fear of reproach given that the communities are predominantly patriarchal. Key district leaders concerned with gender, community development as well as Local Council leadership were also identified and engaged with the help of a questionnaire guide. The assessment was further enriched with secondary information about the assessment areas contained in reports, researches and observation. This data was correlated with primary data to generate the analysis as well as the recommendations.

## 5. Note on Legal and Policy Framework

The Constitution of Uganda invests in government absolute power to protect and develop all natural resources on behalf of the citizens. But it equally affirms the citizens' right to participate in the affairs of government whether individually or through representation.

The involvement of citizens in public affairs including but not limited to managing natural resources is well served by the constitutional right of access to information. Indeed, regarding the extractives sector, the National Oil and Gas Policy states that:

*"Openness and access to information are fundamental rights in activities that may positively or negatively impact individuals, communities and states. It is important that information that will enable stakeholders to assess how their interests are being affected is disclosed."*

These national provisions are buttressed by a number of international instruments Uganda has signed onto. For instance, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) both emphasise the right of citizens to freely participate in the governance of their country. The existence of these provisions, however, has not resulted in greater participation. Women in particular have been held back by the patriarchal nature of Ugandan society. According to a study by International Alert on the impact of oil on livelihoods in the Albertine Graben,

*"Household decision making is mainly male dominated. For example, more men (47%) than women (22%) reported taking charge of buying assets for the household. In addition, fewer women (19%) than men (38%) reported making independent decisions in disposing of vital assets such as land. On most indicators of gender roles and practices, except repairing the house, more women than men reported that they 'do everything', indicating that women's workload is higher than that of men. This implies that, if the gender roles and practices do not change, women are less likely to benefit from the proceeds of oil exploration and exploitation."*

Meaningful participation, which is a key element of the Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) to development, enhances transparency and information sharing which are critical prerequisites in the effective management extractive industry. Denying people the right to participate in decisions, policies, processes and practices in the extractive industry would have far-reaching ramifications against the realisation of development goals of Uganda as it would negatively affect human rights.

According to officials from the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD), an existing gender policy looks at priority areas among which is the equitable access to key resources. It maps out roles and responsibilities of different actors, as well as coordination mechanism at the center to ensure its implementation. The gender equality and women empowerment, however, is constrained by inadequate funding. This is why the structures to propagate the initiatives are not entrenched.

To this end, Jane Ekapu, the Principal Gender Officer/Acting Commissioner for Gender and Women Affairs, notes some of the interventions being made include tasking District Community Development Officers (DCDOs) with more sensitisation and awareness related work, harnessing more collaboration with local governments, Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) and cultural institutions to sensitise communities about gender stereotypes, setting up information hubs targeting women to ease access to information (but all dependent on funding), and increased reliance on community radios.

Despite the numerous developments Uganda has made both in terms of laws and policies that seek to empower women, they (women) remain in danger of losing out on the different development initiatives if no special attention is paid to their issues.

## 6. Findings

### Salient Issues in Hoima

#### Who, how and when information is passed on

During a focus group discussion with district councilors, officers from the district community development office, civil society organisations and gender officers from Bunyoro Kingdom, it was discovered that the leaders felt their role as far as information dissemination on oil is not always clear. The respondents felt that information on oil is still highly centralised and that the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development (MEMD) directly passes on information to the district local authorities and communities. The district leaders appeared to interpret their role as mobilisation of already nominated members of communities and are not themselves actively involved in information dissemination on extractives.

The leaders shared that the MEMD has and/or sends its own liaison officers to the field who communicate directly with the members of the community. As one official said:

*"People from [the Ministry of Energy in] Kampala pass by and go directly to the community. We may not even know what they say to the community."*

Government and Oil Companies' information sessions at community level have on average an attendance of 80 percent male and 20 percent female. The officials put this down to the local cultural setting. Women are involved in and are responsible for agriculture and food security in the home. So, it falls on them to carry out most of the agricultural labour and yet the meetings happen at a time when they are tending to gardens or homes. It was indicated that cultural and societal norms and dictates influence how men and women receive information, process and act on it. **The woman's role is considered as fully supportive and decision making is left to the men. This means that even when a woman receives information regarding extractive activities, she will not act on it until she has got permission from her husband in the case of those that are married.**

In Keenan and Kemp (2014), interviewees working within extractive industries sector observed that where local culture was highly patriarchal, women's participation tended to be lower, although not in all cases. Keenan and Kemp (2014) suggest that companies with processes that establish a solid understanding of community context were better placed to enable women's participation. This assertion is supported by O'Faircheallaigh (2012), who highlights cases where, despite a patriarchal culture, women have played significant and direct roles at the negotiation table. For example, indigenous women played a major role during the Argyle Diamond mine agreement in Australia. O'Faircheallaigh suggests that women's participation in agreement process was a product of existing gender dynamics in the local culture, as well as involved, both investor company and community.

The men and women receive information from different sources which allow for the discussion of that information to foster better understanding. The different media preferences are informed by gender roles. The men have the responsibility of fending for their families, and so they prefer the more mobile channels like the radio which they can listen to anywhere they may be. **The gender roles also lead to selective information gathering. In a meeting where information is being given regarding oil, the women will be concerned with how climate patterns will change rainfall patterns because their gender role is tilling the land to grow food for the family. The men on the other side will want to know if the extractives industry will have jobs for them, since their gender role is to provide.** The communities also still hold the perception that it is a man's role to attend meetings and he may or may not pass on the information he receives to his wife. This also accounts for the big gender difference in attendance of community meetings.

The officials noted, however, that in the town and trading centres, the meetings are attended almost evenly by both men and women. The officials attributed this to more exposure and empowerment (voice and economic) by women in urban centres, as opposed to women in the rural areas who are less educated, less literate, less exposed to and therefore less likely to participate in public gatherings.

**Cultural underpinnings are very present in community meetings even when women attend. Women will not speak when their spouses are around, or they may feel hard pressed to voice their opinions in public, if they feel or fear that there will be negative personal repercussions (usually in the form of domestic violence) when they speak up in meetings.** While one may count physical presence as attendance in a meeting, for a meeting to be meaningful, one must feel that they can participate freely in voicing their opinions.

Additionally, because women are usually less educated than men, women may fear expressing themselves and

participating meaningfully in community meetings. They fear being judged or stigmatised because of their low education levels. **Levels of education may sometimes go hand in hand with raising one's confidence to speak in public. Women usually do not want to draw any negative attention to themselves, so will not speak up in meetings where there are more well educated people than them.**

One method that both CSOs and oil companies have tried in order to get women to participate meaningfully is to have meetings for women alone. During such meetings, women feel safer to air their views and there is little hindrance. It is during such meetings for example, that women raised their discomfort with the requirement to have joint bank accounts with their husbands, as a prerequisite for getting the compensation money. Women know that in many cases, they have little decision making power where money matters are concerned. Therefore, to require a woman to have a joint account with her husband means she has even less access to the money which she might use differently from her husband, if given the chance. During such meetings, women also raised the fact that some husbands had abandoned their families after getting compensation money, thus leaving their families destitute.

The district officials felt that it is very crucial for local communities to have information regarding extractives especially because some of the extractives' activities tend to push already vulnerable communities into even deeper vulnerability. So, for their sake and for long term planning, communities need to be aware about the industry and how its operations may impact on their lives.

The other reason why communities need to have information about the extractives is to enable them access services and opportunities available through the industry. The officials said it was especially beneficial for women to have information about the extractives because it enables them to know about their rights in such an industry and increases demands for such rights. Information sharing with communities is also very important for social acceptance of the projects. People protect what they care about and they care about what they know about. They also care to the extent that they believe the information passed on is for their benefit and that the information source is credible.

**The officials felt that one of the challenges regarding the way information on extractives is shared is that such sessions tend to be brief, usually between two hours to half a day. The information sessions are done as a one off-event and they feel that such information given may be too much for the communities to absorb in such a short time. This is especially given the technical nature of the extractives coupled with the low literacy levels of the community, and the language barrier (sometimes), if the interpretation of the information into the local language is not done well.**

During FGDs in the communities of Buseruka, Kiziranfumbi, Kigaaga, and Kabwooya, there was consensus from both men and women regarding the popular and preferred channels of communication in their communities. They said that communal methods of information dissemination like local council or village meetings, announcements in places of worship like churches and mosques, at burial grounds, where there are usually large gatherings, and using school children as messengers to their parents are bound to reach more people. Some men however preferred modern forms of media like radio, telephone, television and print but were quick to note that whereas it is their preference, it serves a minority.

The district and local leaders also said that whereas village meetings are a good channel of information dissemination, they are not being exploited and therefore disenfranchising many people especially women from accessing information.

Leaders indicated that communities are asking for immediate benefits of attending meetings organised by local authorities, oil companies or other players. For example, a woman councillor said:

*"When you call people to a community meeting, they ask you for transport refund and if you say there is nothing, they will not come."*

With such a limitation, even when the community leaders have information regarding the extractives industry that they would like to pass on, they are limited and instead the few members especially men who are always in the trading centres will receive the information which they may not pass on to the women.

The LC III Chairperson of Buseruka sub-county, who doubles as the liaison between the community and the oil companies, said that since the attendance of meetings in the community is voluntary, the leaders are not able to ensure a balance in gender for the attendance of community meetings. This only works against women since their domestic responsibilities are very demanding and so they inevitably miss the meetings.

In the villages of Kenjojo and Hohwa, White Nile Consult, **a waste disposal company is disposing hazardous waste near a swamp where people especially the women fetch water for domestic consumption. Both men and women say that their efforts to seek redress have not been fruitful because there is a misrepresentation of facts by the waste disposal company that claims that the community was consulted and approved the operations. In the community's view, being consulted would have been to discuss with them about the project and how it will affect them and therefore what their involvement can be. This was not the case as they claim they were only told of what was already decided.** The women in this scenario are doubly affected considering they are not the decision

makers in their community and yet decisions relating to land and access to water affects them most even when they do not participate in making them.

At both the levels of leaders and community, men and women said that they had received information that the government was planning to acquire land for construction of the refinery. They had also been told by government officials through radio programmes that employment opportunities would increase with the beginning of the oil processes. The citizens were also told about the companies involved in the industry. Whereas such information is good, it is important for men and women to know how they will be affected since their gender roles expectations & interests differ.

During a focus group discussion with the community in Kaseeta Parish, Kabwooya sub-county, participants requested to know the plans of government for the gazetted towns in Hoima, of which Kaseeta is one. They also sought to have precise information regarding when they would be required to relocate so that they figure out how to live their lives in the interim. This is in view of the fact that they have school going children and have food crops growing to foster their livelihood. They also wanted information on how they will mitigate the negative effects of oil activities like air, water and land pollution, population influx, that they are likely to experience.

They also wanted to know whether there was a plan by government to construct boreholes in the area as a source of clean water since oil activities especially waste disposal was contaminating the available clean water sources. The community members also wanted to know the licensing procedure for oil companies so that they can have recourse in the event of excesses like where waste disposal is not properly handled especially in the case of White Nile Consult. Knowing the procedure helps to check possible abuses and improve accountability efforts by local communities.

Participants also wanted to know what plans government has to mitigate the land grabbing scenarios that they were already experiencing especially given the fact their leaders were being compromised using bribes and therefore were abetting the injustice.

They also wanted to know how the assessment report will benefit their plight. They said that they have been respondents in various researches but they have never received results or seen how the research feeds into advocacy. The community desires to be informed of any intervention in their community before it happens. The men and women during a Focus Group Discussion in Kenjojo village, Kabwooya Sub County quoted a land survey that was happening at the time of the research and yet even their community leaders were not informed. The information gaps if addressed will lead to meaningful participation and gender inclusion.

### **What does participation mean to locals?**

With regards to participation, both men and women **in Hoima interpret participation in the extractives industry especially to mean that their agricultural produce is consumed by the different chains.** Whereas Hoima is a metropolitan town, the culture and existence of communities that dominate it is shaped around land use. The most common livelihood source is agriculture characterised by the growth of food and cash crops. The food crops include sorghum, millet, rice, beans, cowpeas, tomatoes, onions and sweet potatoes among others. According to the District Development Plan 2011, about 90 percent of the district population depends on agriculture for their livelihood.

An official from Tullow, one of three oil companies operating in Uganda, said they have a detailed community engagement strategy from the national down to the community level. He added they ensure that they are sensitive to gender needs and issues and they mostly organise separate meetings for men, women and youth, in order to maximise participation. In a women-only focus discussion meeting, the women said that they feel they have participated when they attend meetings and their ideas are listened to.

**The women spoke about their desire to have a representative at parish level as a liaison between the community and oil companies.** This way, they believe, their plight of discrimination and denial of participation opportunities will be well represented since the parish representative lives in the community and is easy to reach and faces the same challenges. They believe that through such a structure, they will have a strong voice together.

**The men also said that their participation is considered meaningful when their suggestions are considered.** They gave an example of the housing project for the people affected by the oil refinery where locals proposed to government their preferred housing structures but instead different ones were constructed as initially conceived by government. This they cite as an example of failed participation.

**Locals proposed that men and women also consider their ability to get employment from the extractives industry whether casual or for their educated children as the ideal meaning of community participation.** They believe that this will improve their livelihoods and hence make them proud of the industry.

The officials acknowledged the low levels of participation by women in the extractives industry both as users and consumers of information and opportunities. They also acknowledged that as officials, they do not always have the requisite capacity to engender participation by women. They did point out, however, a few interventions that they have or are going to try out including instituting gender audits for all the departments at the district level to ensure

that the various departments take cognisance of and are held accountable to gender in their planning, budgeting and execution of projects.

They also spoke about efforts to ensure that girls are retained in school, since education is a means to increase empowerment for women. The district is eager to implement campaigns such as 'Girls Not Brides' that addresses early childhood marriage.

**Another proposed intervention to encourage women participation is to re-think the compensation requirement around joint accounts for spouses. This is especially important in a situation where registration of marriages is still poor/low, cohabitation is on the increase and polygamy is still practiced.** There were fears that without any clear way to keep marriage records, it is hard to enforce joint accounts if a man thinks he can get away with presenting a female who is not his wife in order to get all the compensation money.

The district officials also acknowledged that they need to address the issue of power imbalance in decision making in the home by adopting a 'harm reduction' mechanism for compensations. As one participant put it,

*"Men and women can sign the consent form for land, but once the compensation money is in the hands of the man, he alone decides how the money is spent."*

**The officials shared about a proposed local curriculum for Hoima, as one way to improve education in the region, especially targeting retention of girls in schools.** The local curriculum would draw on the positive aspects of the Bunyoro culture as a way to encourage girl children to go to and to stay in school, as one way to improve empowerment of women.

The Ministry should enhance programs to empower people with financial literacy to prepare them to properly manage their compensation money as well as increased income expected from oil and gas activities.

Such efforts will be very vital in addressing the question of gender sensitivity since society biases regarding education tend to favour boys over girls.

## Salient Issues in Buliisa

### No gender sensitivity report for the district

During a FGD with the district and local council leadership, it was revealed there is never effort to carry out any gender needs assessment before delivering information connected to extractives. Instead, they use generic information channels such as meetings and radio programmes in the hope that both men and women will be targeted, even though the same officials said that more men than women attend community meetings and most rural homes have one radio set, which is usually in the possession and control of the man. In such a situation, women are disadvantaged the most by not accessing information regarding the extractives sector.

### Information packaging is not friendly for local communities

The officials shared that information on oil is still highly classified and often reaches too late. This, they said, makes it doubly difficult to make meaningful contributions let alone exhaustively disseminate it.

*"There was a meeting on land acquisition being held by Tullow Oil. They sent me a one-hundred-page report on a Wednesday and asked me to read and send my comments for the meeting slated on Friday. How can I do that? Where do I get the time? I decided not to go for the meeting because the information was sent too close to the meeting date for me to participate meaningfully."*

In explaining how they feel about the lack of a clear information chain or flow on extractives, one official expressed it using an analogy of domestic relations thus:

*"It's like I'm a daughter in the home but instead of giving me information directly, you [as the head of the home], give the information to the house help, for her to pass it on to me."*

### Lack of information depository centre

While the officials shared that indeed information about the extractives industry has been shared in the local community through different channels like radios, places of worship, there is neither a record at the district or a central place that tracks which entities, whether government or CSOs, have disseminated information and what information has been disseminated and how many people have been reached, through what means and where. This means there is really no way to track what information is in circulation and even what information gaps still exist among men and women.

### Gender roles keep women away from meetings

The officials pointed out that the gender roles in the community explain why women are not always active participants in community meetings. It is widely accepted that women are responsible for food security in the home, and so their primary role is to work in the fields to ensure that the family has food. The family lands are usually far away from the

family home and women have to travel quite a long distance and stay away in the field for several weeks, tending to the gardens. Women are not allowed to leave the family fields at will. They often have to ask for permission/or inform their husbands if they want to come back to the family home. This means that if sensitisation meetings are not timed right, based on a season of low agricultural activity, then there is a likelihood that very few women will be reached with information on the extractives.

### Low literacy levels among women

Additionally, the officials said that women feel that information meetings on extractives are for the learned. Low literacy levels among women mean that they are not able to read and comprehend any extractives information that is written. Low literacy levels among women impacts their ability to participate in and engage with the information about the extractives industry. As a long term measure, the district needs to be deliberate about increasing literacy among women. The district can also consider partnering with CSOs that are already engaged in these sensitisation campaigns like LACWADO which is increasing awareness through information campaigns.

### Information does not mean action

The major goal of information dissemination is empowerment. Information should be shared in such a way as to enable and encourage better decision making for both men and women right from the home all the way out to the oil value chain. The district officials felt that even though women may receive information on the extractives, if they are not able to do anything with it, because of limited decision making power, then it doesn't help much. As one official stated,

*"For now, empowerment stops at the door. A woman cannot take it into the house with her. Instead, she picks it up again, at the door where she left it, and proceeds on with it to the next meeting."*

### Myths that extractive industry is for strong men

The district officials spoke of participation in extractives mostly as it relates to jobs. They said in advertising for jobs, the oil companies clearly stated that they wanted only physically fit people. The officials felt that this was already skewed to men since they are perceived to be physically fitter than women.

Women mostly access jobs that are already typical to their gender roles, i.e. cleaning, catering, laundry. These are often low paying compared to the jobs men are able to access. So it still leaves the women vulnerable.

### Women not consulted on Compensation and resettlement

The women, as the major users of land especially for cultivation as per their cultural and gender role, said that they would consider participation to mean that they are consulted during valuation to determine compensation of their crops rather than using the prices set by the chief government valuer because they do not consider them fair. This situation leaves the women disenfranchised. According to an official from Tullow Oil,

"Compensation is paid for long-term land use while rentals are paid to landowners for temporary use. There are no rental payments outstanding to any projected affected persons. The amounts paid are not discretionary for the oil companies to negotiate with landowners. The law gives the sole power to determine those rates to the Chief Government Valuer."

### Markets and jobs

Women of Buliisa perceive participation in terms of their agricultural produce finding market within the extractives industry. As it stands, none or very little of their merchandise is consumed by the oil companies. The reasons cited for this are varied including poor quality, inability to meet the market demand and the lack of adherence to "international standards". A number of CSOs have designed training interventions regarding both production that meets required standards and lobbying for markets within oil companies.

During a focus group discussion in Kiyeeere village, Kirama parish, Kigwera sub-county, participants decried the negative effect of oil discovery in their district. As a predominantly fishing community, the discovery of oil in Lake Albert has led to the reduction in the prevalence of fish, which locals attribute to seismic activities applied in the exploration of oil and flaring. This situation has led to the use of dangerous fishing methods by the locals to try and catch all they can before the fish get depleted. Women are active participants in the fishing industry and are more affected by the reduction in fish supplies.

Whereas some people within Buliisa Town Council have been employed by the oil companies as casual labourers, drivers and cleaners there were no statistics at the sub-county or district to establish the exact number of beneficiaries.

## Salient Issues in Mubende

Mubende has emerged as one of the major sites of artisanal and small scale gold mining in South West Uganda. It has attracted men and women across all its stages from actual mining, panning to the sales chain, which makes information regarding mining, legislation, health, pricing, key in determining participation.

During a focus group discussion in Kagaba Village, Bukuya sub-county, titled landlords and community members who participated noted that whereas radio is a popular media of communication, information from the Resident

District Commissioner (RDC) during meetings is received with more credibility. They also said that social gatherings like burials, religious gatherings and cultural marriage functions are the most popular because they attract massive attendance.

### Mercury use amidst ignorance

Participants highlighted the dearth of information regarding mercury, which a lot of miners rely on to produce gold. In the process of small scale gold mining, mercury is mixed with gold-containing materials. This forms a mercury-gold amalgam, which is then heated, vaporising the mercury to obtain the gold. In most instances common in Mubende, the residue is just washed off into the drainages and gardens, putting the lives of people in danger.

The lack of information regarding the health risks pertaining to mercury exposure puts the men and women involved in this industry at risk. International treaties like the Minamata Convention on Mercury call for the reduced use and possible elimination of the use of mercury in artisanal and small scale gold mining because of its dangers to human health and the eco system.

Government, it was noted, is improving its mechanisms to control the use of mercury and importation of cyanide by empowering the Police to play a more robust part in the regulation. It is also improving the registration of artisans so their activities are streamlined and monitored better.

### Limited Human rights knowledge in mining sites

The other information gap respondents highlighted as critical regards human rights. According to the District's Community Development Officer, there are a number of human right violations in the mines. The workers, majority of whom are women are not being paid and being dismissed arbitrarily under the excuse that they are lazy. This discrimination runs counter to both national legislation and international instruments on labour relations. The Mining Act, 2003 states government stand

To remove restrictive practices on women participation in the mineral sector and protect children against mining hazards. This government seek to do through, encouraging employment and involvement of women in mining; encouraging the formation of women mining associations or groups; and Put in place and enforce regulations against child exposure to mining activities.

Respondents in Mubende mining camps expressed lack of information about the position of government in regard to artisanal miners. The way they are categorised as illegal miners limits their participation. According to the general secretary of Singo Artisanal Gold Miners' Association (SIGMA), which has a registered membership of over 2000 members comprising both men and women, the association applied for a location licence for the area where most of their members operate but it has yet to be issued. The lack of licensing not only makes involvement risky but disenfranchises participants since they are regarded illegal.

But government officials cite the lack of application requirements such as financial thresholds relative to the length in time of licences needed as hampering a number of applications from Ugandans for mineral rights. According to Ms. Catherine Nyaketcho- Senior Geologist at the Department of Geological Surveys and Mine

*"It is true those that can access the information benefit from it. For instance, applications are made through the CAO- DGSM. Often locals don't meet requirements. So, there is need to review laws and policies that favour the local people."*

Regarding participation, the number of women participating actively in the core processes of mining is still low compared to the men. According to the Community Development Officer in Kitumbi sub-county, the prime sub-county in the district for gold mining, the trend is attributed majorly to the lack of protective gear and lack of regulated access and operation of the mines. Some women shun the mines for fear of death in the event that the mine caves in.

The women in Bukuya also attributed their little participation to their consideration of mining as unpredictable business in the sense that investment does not always translate to returns. They therefore prefer agriculture where the farmer has more considerable control. Most of the people are predominantly subsistence farmers who earn their livelihood from growing maize, beans, cassava and sweet potatoes. They engage in gold mining mostly during the dry season when there is little farming to do.

Government officials note an improvement in the legal regime that, for instance, has removed prohibitions against women going down to the mines, Labour Occupational Health and Safety guidelines and a checklist reporting mechanisms have been established, there is increased monitoring to eliminate the involvement of children, and more lobbying is ongoing to make clear provisions in the Public Finance law on gender and equality.

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

Government has the primary mandate to ensure that the benefits from the extractives sector are shared equally by women and men. Generating and disseminating adequate information is important to enable frontline communities to participate fully and to make informed decisions. Availability of information, its accuracy and relevancy or the lack of it will greatly determine participation.

When men and women hear information regarding extractives, they shape their participation based on the same. For instance, they will make choices of crops to plant, economic activities to engage in based on their understanding of how the different processes in the extractives will affect them and their homesteads. In the absence of accurate information, the community will find it difficult to engage either government or oil companies. This is a catalyst for speculation and exploitation hence disenfranchisement.

To ensure an even and transparent extractives sector, the following recommendations are necessary to strengthen gender inclusiveness in extractives governance.

- Government needs to consider a bottom up communication strategy to complement the existing top down through which government plans and community interventions are communicated. It is hoped that this will reduce community dissatisfaction with government modus operandi in implementation of its projects.
- The government should make available to the public the policy, legal and institutional framework especially on compensation and resettlement to deal with the peculiar grievances arising out of the extractives industry especially as relates to oil and gas.
- As government disseminates information regarding the extractives sector, it is important to consider what the most effective media or channel is that will reach both men and women in the communities at the same time or with equal effectiveness. This is important to guard against distortions.
- Government and oil companies need to promote women-only meetings where appropriate because of their effectiveness in communicating information targeting women and same for the men. This is in a bid to deal with the bottle necks presented by gender biases and cultural limitations where public meetings are perceived to be for men only.
- Government must create a gender task force at the different district levels as a way to ensure and enforce gender mainstreaming and as an accountability mechanism and learning platform on issues of gender. These task forces already exist in some districts in eastern Uganda such as Katakwi and Amuria. It was suggested that the model could be studied for possible replication in Hoima and Buliisa.
- Government needs to identify the bias between men and women in relation to the extractives industry and define strategies to address them to ensure equitable benefits.
- Government needs to consider partnerships with cultural institutions and NGOs to find effective ways to enhance culture in the promotion of access to information for purposes of improving participation of women.
- Government needs to consider a skilling platform for the community members to enable them become primary beneficiaries as a way of fostering project ownership. Since the community is largely agricultural, training them to produce products to acceptable standards will enable their meaningful and profitable participation.
- Frontline districts need to develop databases about the extractive activities in their locales. This could include number of people employed by gender, skills gaps, and constraints





# GLOBAL RIGHTS ALERT

Global Rights Alert  
Plot 128, Old Kiira Road  
P.O. Box 27977, Kampala  
Tel. +256414531661  
Email: [info@globalrightsalert.org](mailto:info@globalrightsalert.org)  
Website: <http://www.globalrightsalert.org>