

Report



# Gender Mapping in the Artisanal Gold Mining Sector in Mongolia

by  
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# **Gender Mapping in the Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Mining Sector in Mongolia**

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## Summary

### About this Report

This gender mapping report has been conducted as part of the Contextual Study of the planetGOLD Mongolia project. The planetGOLD Mongolia project is funded by the Global Environment Facility, led by the United Nations Environment Programme, and implemented in collaboration with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization. It is executed by the Artisanal Gold Council (AGC) in partnership with the Government of Mongolia through the Ministry of Environment and Tourism.

The objective of the study is to provide a baseline assessment of current conditions, standards and practices of artisanal and small-scale mining in the selected study areas, including gender issues. The objective of this report is to summarize the gender dynamics in the artisanal and small-scale gold mining sector at the project sites, and their social and economic implications on women miners in Mongolia.

### Gender Division of Tasks

The study shows that women constitute around 30% of the workforce in the artisanal gold mining sector, though women tend to work slightly less hours and more seasonally. Findings also indicate a strong gender-related distribution of tasks within artisanal mining organizations, with men doing most of the hard labour (ore extraction and processing) and women – though also involved in physical work such as bagging ore – are mainly involved in supportive services such as management, administration or food supply. However, the study also found regional differences. In western aimags (Yusunbulag and Altai soum), where adherence to traditional cultural norms is prominent, men are more often in charge of managerial decisions such as securing finance, purchasing equipment or selling gold.

Both women and men miners provided reasons for the gendered division of labour by stating that women have better management skills and should not engage in heavy physical work. Overall, there seems to be a belief among women and men miners that women should not be involved in dangerous tasks such as work in shafts and tasks requiring heavy lifting, for protective reasons rather than discriminatory ones that would cause economic disadvantages for women (e.g., restrict their access to resources). The finding that income among survey respondents is mostly shared equally among women and men – independent of their tasks within the group – supports this assumption.

### Power Dynamics and Decision-Making

Findings indicate that women and men miners tend to have almost similar rights when it comes to decision making. According to the survey, men are slightly more often involved in decision-making within their mining organizations compared to women (95% versus 88%) and tend to dominate decision-making in mining operations (extraction and

processing). At the same time, both men and women enjoy similar rights to make financial decisions and women tend to dominate in administrative decisions.

The analysis of roles and responsibilities of men and women in the artisanal mining sector shows that there are relatively more women leaders of partnerships and ASM NGOs in all target soums, except for Altai soum of Khovd aimag. KII data also confirmed that ASGM NGOs in particular tend to be headed by a woman. However, the majority of respondents (42%) prefer a male leader, 37% are gender neutral and 22% prefer a female leader; target areas with a higher number of female leaders view female leadership more favourably. The reversed gender gradient in education, (i.e. women having a higher level of education, and women's involvement in management and legal compliance) provide favourable conditions for female leadership in Mongolia.

### **Access to and Use of Resources**

Qualitative and quantitative data did not reveal any major differences or inequalities between men and women in access to resources such as the distribution of income, access to finance or control over means of production. However, it is also important to understand that the majority of miners cannot live from artisanal mining alone and is dependent on other income sources.

While survey data and the in-depth study show no income inequality, government officials, human rights experts and the leaders of the ASM NF stated that differences in the gender division of labor and power allocation between men and women miners can constitute a reason for an unequal distribution of both wages and profits. Hence, results from the study areas cannot be generalized for the sector in Mongolia.

### **Access to Capacity Building**

Female respondents in the study areas have participated relatively more often than men in mining related training activities within the last two years; key stakeholders indicated that women are more active in participating in capacity building. In fact, key stakeholders highlighted the need to increase gender equity by involving more men miners in training. A gender-specific analysis of the training completed by respondents revealed that women were more actively participating in all training topics covered by the survey, including technical, legal and business-related trainings.

Women were mainly interested in formalization, responsible and better mining practices, as well as technology; the interest in gender and human rights training was low; but the in-depth study revealed that this was due to a lack of knowledge about the subject. Similarly, key stakeholders identified different training priorities for women and men than the respondents themselves. The top three priorities being: risks and harms of using mercury, legal frameworks and occupational health and safety. A female leader also voiced the need for training on domestic violence.

## **Gender-Based Violence**

According to the quantitative and qualitative findings, the prevalence of gender-based violence seems to be low within the artisanal mining organizations surveyed, though it can occur. Work in family units and in formalized sites where alcohol is banned seem to be protective factors. During the in-depth interview, domestic violence – especially in combination with alcohol abuse – was problematized by the respondents. This, however, does not seem to be a sector specific problem, but rather linked to overall social changes within the Mongolian society.

## **Gender Division of Labour in the Domestic Sphere**

Both qualitative and quantitative survey results show that women are bearing the major burden of domestic chores, despite similar work hours spent in artisanal mining. This is leading to a double burden of work for many women, though men are usually willing to help with different tasks and are for example responsible for collecting water or firewood. At the same time, women are mainly in charge of decisions for daily household purchases. Less participation of men in daily decision-making in families based on sentiments that “men have little interest in economically non-significant purchases” and “women are in charge of daily home chores” reinforce gender stereotypes in labor division. Lower involvement of men in decision-making regarding families’ daily consumption present them with difficulties in understanding the different needs of family members, including children, and recognizing the domestic responsibilities of women. This lack of understanding can impede activities related to negotiating a fair decision-making process and ensuring a work-life balance for women and men. However, the survey also reveals that decisions regarding major household expenses usually include both spouses.

## 1. The ASGM sector in Mongolia

Mongolia has traditionally been a livestock-based economy. Transitioning to a market economy during the 1990s caused significant economic disruption bringing about rapid increase in unemployment and underemployment ushering an increase in poverty across the country. Mongolians looked for any opportunity to sustain themselves and their families and workers from other sectors were driven into ASM out of economic necessity. A study estimated in the early 2000s that 100,000 people, who indirectly supported more than 400,000 Mongolians, were trying to support their families through artisanal mining (World Bank, 2007). Lack of data on the number of unregistered miners as well as seasonality and fluctuations make it difficult to estimate the total number of artisanal miners in Mongolia today. However, it is estimated that 40-60,000 miners are working in the sector, a third of them being women, supporting another 120-180,000 people (SAM, 2010, 2018).

The Government of Mongolia considered ASM as a temporary social phenomenon; it was assumed the sector would disappear as a result of the country's economic growth and rapid development of formal mining. For this reason, for the initial decade of 2000, the Government did not take any serious steps to create a legal environment that recognizes the presence and supports the development and conduct of artisanal mining. Instead, the Government focused largely on stopping or banning the practice characterizing the practice as criminal and imposing penal provisions. However, the increasing number of artisanal miners resulted in an increase of accidents and fatalities due, among others, to poor or non-existent health and safety measures as well as environmental degradation from a lack of environmental law compliance.

Therefore, the Government had to take actions to regulate the sector. In 2010, ASM was officially recognized by amending the Minerals Law and approving the ASM Regulation #308 paving the way for Mongolian artisanal miners to be organized and formalized. Currently, according to the ASM NF, the umbrella organization for artisanal and small-scale miners of Mongolia, there are 1,181 ASM partnerships with 10,671 miners from which 6,705 have land permits as of 2019 from which 86% of them are gold miners (ASM NF, 2019).

## 2. Objective of the Study

This gender mapping has been conducted<sup>1</sup> as part of the Contextual Study of the planetGOLD Mongolia<sup>2</sup> project to provide a baseline assessment of current conditions, standards and practices of artisanal and small-scale mining in the selected study areas, including gender issues. The objective of this report<sup>3</sup> is to summarize the gender dynamics in the artisanal and small-scale gold mining sector at the project sites, and their social and economic implications on women miners in Mongolia. Furthermore, these findings inform the project about opportunities and barriers that need to be addressed in project activities in order to improve gender equality in the sector. This is achieved by mainstreaming gender throughout all project activities in an adequate way.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology of the gender mapping Chapter 4 summarizes socioeconomic characteristics of the study areas from a gender perspective, as those tends to influence gender dynamics such as education, marital status, and income. Chapter 5 analyzes gender dynamics within artisanal mining organizations, with a focus on organizational form, gender division of labour, leadership, capacity building and other factors. Since artisanal miners often work in family units in Mongolia, the occupational and domestic sphere tends to be closely interlinked. Therefore, Chapter 6 describes gender dynamics in the domestic sphere with a focus on the division of labour for domestic tasks, and the roles of women and men in decision-making. Based on these findings, Chapter 7 outlines recommendations for improving gender equality in Mongolia.

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<sup>1</sup> The contextual study has been prepared by the planetGOLD Mongolia team and the Artisanal Gold Council with additional support from SICA LLC. SICA LLC was responsible for developing the study design, the data collection tools, the data collection in the field, data entry and preliminary data processing. All those steps were carried out in close collaboration with planetGOLD Mongolia team. Also, a monitoring team from the planetGOLD Mongolia team worked in the field during the data collection process in the target locations and participated in the daily debrief meetings. The planetGOLD Mongolia team carried out the in-depth study on gender issues in the sector, in close collaboration with the AGC Gender Expert. This gender mapping report was written by AGC's Gender Expert, Mareike Kroll.

<sup>2</sup> The planetGOLD program is funded by the Global Environment Facility, led by the United Nations Environment Programme and implemented in partnership with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, United Nations Development Programme, and Conservation International. The 'child project,' planetGOLD Mongolia is executed by the Artisanal Gold Council (AGC) in partnership with the Government of Mongolia through the Ministry of Environment and Tourism. The planetGOLD programme seeks to contribute to the elimination of mercury in the artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) sector through the provision of support for the government to develop and implement policies to enhance formalization of the ASGM sector, facilitate miners' access to formal gold markets and capital to purchase mercury-free processing equipment as well as to introduce responsible mining, gender and environmental practices in targeted ASGM areas.

<sup>3</sup> This report is based on chapter 6 (Gender Mapping in the Artisanal Gold Mining sector) of the contextual study (planetGOLD 2021, unpublished report).

### 3. Methodology

This study covered five project sites in four soums (suum = sub province) and one village, located in three different aimags (aimag = province):

- Bayangol suum in Selenge Aimag (hereinafter referred as “Bayangol”),
- Mandal suum in Selenge Aimag (excluding Tunkhel village) (hereinafter referred as “Mandal”),
- Tunkhel village in Mandal suum (hereinafter referred as “Tunkhel”),
- Yusunbulag suum in Gobi-Altai aimag (hereinafter referred as “Yusunbulag”), and
- Altai suum in Khovd aimag (hereinafter referred as “Altai”).

The project sites were identified during a structured site selection process including nine sites in Mongolia, conducted by the planetGOLD Mongolia team together with staff from the AGC in November 2019. In this report, data is usually presented disaggregated according to gender, but not study area, unless there were noticeable differences between the five areas.

A mixed methods approach was applied, combining data from:

- A quantitative survey among 371 miners (100 women, 271 men), providing gender-disaggregated data on ASGM issues and specific gender-related data from specific section on gender;
- Qualitative key informant interviews with local and national government officials, partnership leaders and civil society organizations. While all KII addressed gender to some point, KII with the National Human Rights Commission, social workers/officers at the provincial level and local women NGOs specifically targeted gender issues in ASGM;
- An in-depth study with 30 women miners on gender issues. The women miners interviewed were identified during the quantitative survey in the five target areas based on their increased interest, awareness and/or knowledge of gender issues in the sector; and
- A literature review, assessing information from reports on gender in ASM in Mongolia.

Quantitative and qualitative data collection tools were designed to allow data triangulation between different stakeholder groups and methods.

## 4. Socio-Economic Characteristics of Women and Men Miners

This section provides an overview on age and marital status, education, employment, access to social services and childcare.

### 4.1 Age and Marital Status

The age distribution of women and men miners showed similar patterns (Figure 2-1), except for a higher proportional number of men miners in the age group 18 to 29, which may be explained by the higher number of unmarried men (16% versus 7% of women).

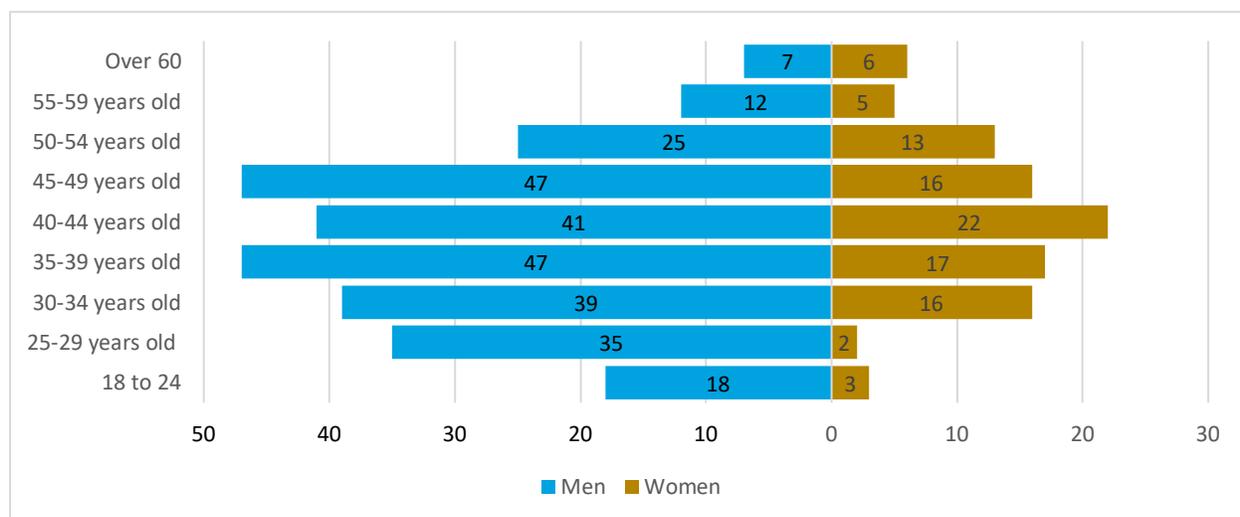


Figure 1. Age and gender distribution of survey respondents (n=100 women and 271 men)

The majority of women interviewed (76%) are in their reproductive age (below 50 years), which is important to note since several occupational hazards in mining such as heavy lifting or exposure to chemicals can have negative impacts on reproductive health and fetal development. Overall, the percentage of male singles was slightly higher than that of female singles at each site, with the highest number of male singles found in Bayangol (22%) and Mandal (21%). Mandal (18%) also had the highest number of female singles. The majority of respondents (87% of women and 80% of men) were married (Figure 2). The high number of married women can be explained by the fact that women often enter the sector with their husbands or other family members (Asia Foundation, 2013). The number of divorced or separated miners was very low among women and men. In two sites, Mandal and Altai soum, some women miners were widows (7% of the female respondents at both sites).

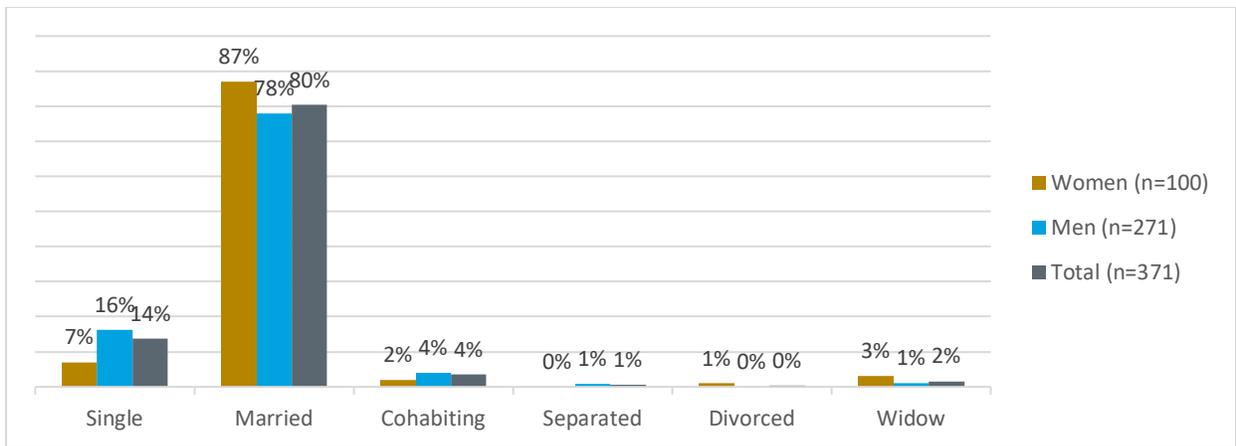


Figure 2. Marital status of respondents, by gender and total

The majority of the respondents (52%) lived in households with 4 to 5 family members, whereas 24% shared their household with 1 to 2 other members, and 20% with additional 5 to 6 members. The number of children of female and male respondents was not assessed.

#### 4.2 Education

The educational status of the respondents shows a reversed gender gradient, with a higher educational status being found amongst women. This finding is in line with the national average in Mongolia (IRIM, 2014). According to the survey 88% of women have at least a high school diploma, compared to 73% of men (Figure 3). Altai region had the highest percentage of women with just the primary school attendance (7%) as well as the highest percentage of women with higher education (bachelor's degree) (29%).

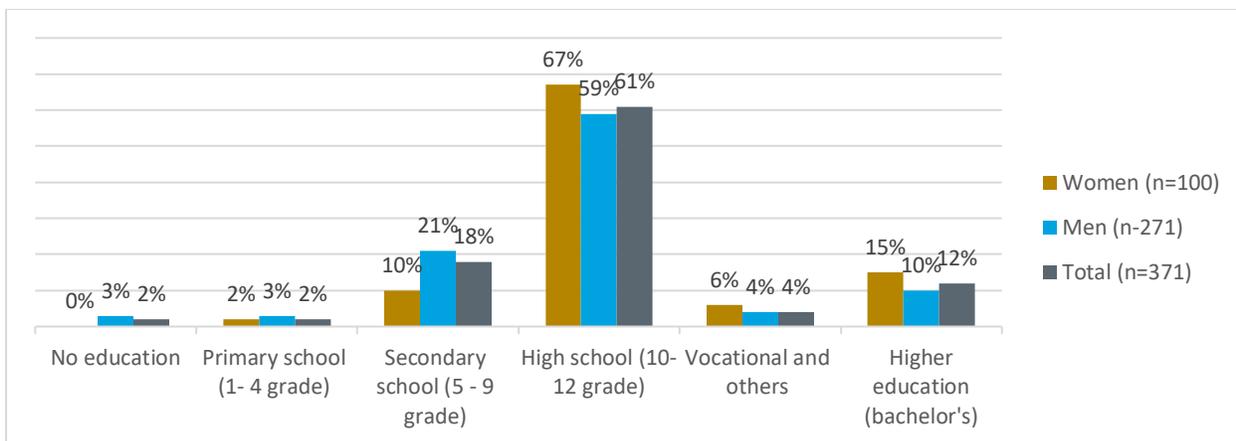


Figure 3. Education of respondents, by gender and total

### 4.3 Employment

Half of the respondents (49% of women and 51% of men) stated that artisanal gold mining is their primary employment. Around 36% of women only receive income from ASGM, compared to 32% of men (Figure 4). Major income sources for women outside the ASGM sector consisted of self-employment (16%), government welfare (18% (retirement and unemployment)) and farming/herding (13%). For men, the three major supplementary income sources are also self-employment (24%), farming/herding (20%) and government welfare (10%). The relative number of recipients of unemployment benefits was higher among miners in Altai (15%) and Bayangol (13%). Overall, these findings indicate that income from artisanal mining often supports households with unstable income due to lack of employment opportunities, seasonality of activities, or other disruptions.

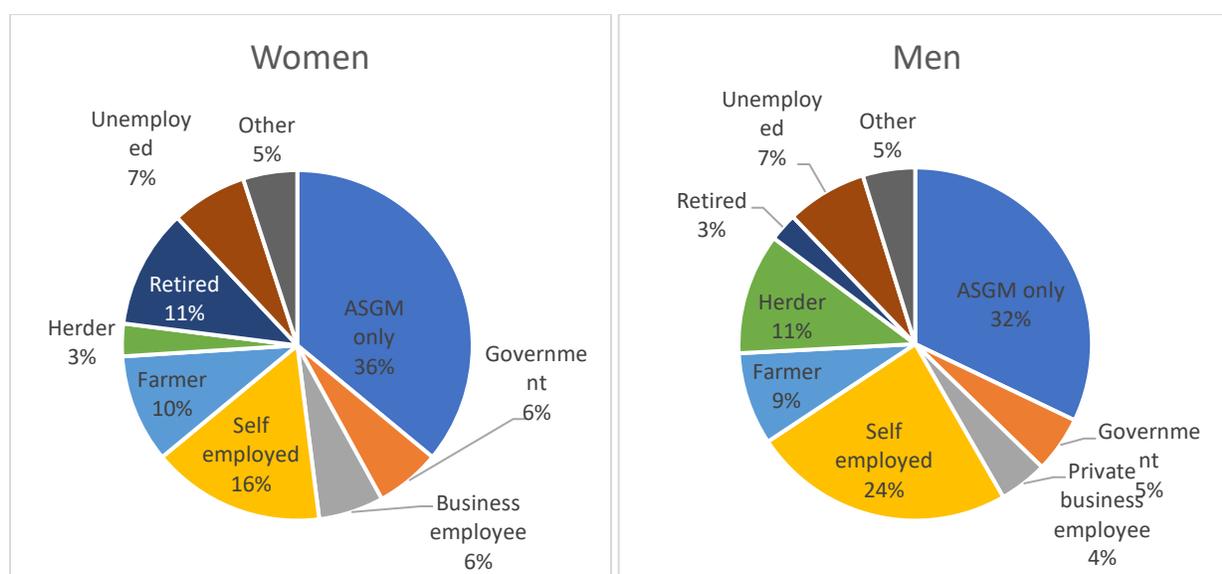


Figure 4. Income sources (primary or secondary income) outside ASGM for women and men miners (n= 100 women, 271 men)

### 4.4 Access to Social Services

Access to social services such as social insurance, health insurance, health care and childcare are crucial for women and men. However, some services such as access to pre- and post-natal health check-ups and childcare are an important determinant of women's physical and mental health which is why they should be examined (see Section 6).

According to the Law on Social Insurance of Mongolia (1994), artisanal miners can be covered by the voluntary social insurance scheme. It covers pension insurance, benefit insurance and industrial accident and occupational disease insurance. Benefit insurance covers pregnancy and delivery, sick leave and funeral costs. The costs for the voluntary social insurance scheme amount to 13.5% of the monthly reported income, or a minimum of 56,700MNT each month, based on the minimum wage fixed by the Government.

Mongolian citizens can also access a package of “essential” healthcare services at the primary level free of charge; complimentary health services are covered by the social health insurance system, which is mandatory. However, the health insurance does not cover all services and out-of-pocket spending on healthcare is high in Mongolia (Jigjidsuren et al, 2019).

The survey shows that only one third of women and men miners (36%) pay social insurance fees on a regular basis (Figure 5). However, more women pay regularly for health insurance (77% of women versus 58% of men). While health insurance is an important facilitator to access health services, availability and accessibility are other important facilitators. The survey revealed that 37% of respondents do not have access to basic health services in the study areas. Access to health care does not differ significantly between women and men, but between study areas (range of 50% in Altai to 80% in Tunkhel). Asked about the challenges in accessing health care, the majority of respondents answered that they have no need to see a health care provider (17% of women and 24% of men), but miners also mentioned legal challenges (4% of all respondents), institutional challenges such as high service fees (5% of all respondents) or individual challenges (5% of all respondents; e.g., 6% of female respondents said that they have no time to go to a clinic).

The survey did not assess health seeking behaviour. Further research is needed to assess whether miners would only visit health care facilities for acute problems or would also attend routine check-ups in order to identify early stage general and occupational health problems. A leader in Khovd aimag explained that miners within his partnership would not go for regular check-ups but that medical practitioners would sometimes come to their work site and offer free health checks.

*As no serious injury or accidents were registered in our soum, our partnership members have never received any emergency medical services. We do not go for monthly or annual regular health check-ups. We undergo health check-ups only if doctors from Ulaanbaatar arrive with offers of free diagnosis and check-up. We aren't the type of people to see a doctor, unless very sick.*

**KII, male leader of partnership in Khovd aimag**

While the range and quality of health services was not assessed during the survey, the data indicates that access to health services remains a challenge for both women and men artisanal miners.

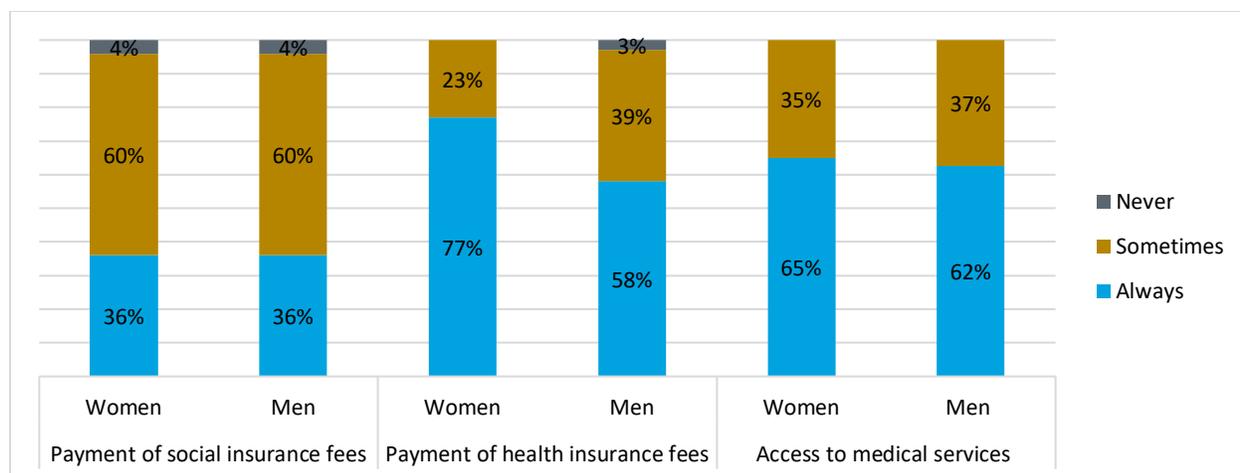


Figure 5. Access to social services of respondents, by gender (n= 100 women, 271 men)

Social insurance coverage was low among women and men miners (36%), and only 12 % higher among formal miners (39%) despite the fact that formal miners are required to pay social insurance. A local inspector in Khovd aimag explained that miners would pay social insurance only for one year during the partnership registration and then discontinue it due to irregular mining income:

*As far as we know, there are 4 to 5 partnerships in the soum. In 2018, all the miners of these partnerships paid social and health insurance as they were required to submit the documents of their insurance coverage along with the partnership registration documents to the Registration Authority. They paid the insurance payment for a year, however, only a few of them now continue to pay because of unstable operations or a suspension of mining activities. So, the miners individually pay the insurance as they do not work as a partnership at the mining site. ... It is important to formalize the artisanal miners and oblige them to pay health and social insurance when we draw up a contract with them and provide information on the benefits of insurance and tax payments.*

**KII, male officer, Khovd aimag**

Local representatives interviewed for the survey noted that promotional campaigns for social insurance and health coverage targeted at artisanal miners have had certain positive outcomes. An ASGM partnership member raised the point that the seasonality of mining activities should be considered in the fee structure.

#### 4.5 Childcare

Access to childcare was not addressed during the survey but was raised as a concern during the in-depth interviews with women miners. It should also be noted that 80% of the female respondents reported being involved in childcare versus 50% of the male respondents. In addition to this, women miners spend more hours per week on household chores than men (Section 6). Lack of formal childcare services or family support causes a double work burden of productive and reproductive care for women. If miners have to

move to temporary settlements to work on artisanal mine sites, lack of access to organized childcare can pose additional challenges. Two respondents from Tunkhel village in Selenge aimag explained that their children tend to stay in their hometowns with grandparents or relatives to ensure access to education and health care. This gives the parents additional time to work at mine sites (1 to 2 months). However, the two respondents expressed concern for their children's physical and mental development due to the separation from their mothers. The seasonality of artisanal gold mining in Mongolia and the requirement for temporary migration to mine sites by parents may have impacts on children's mental well-being. Additional investigation is required to understand the need for additional childcare support services for artisanal miners.

## 5. Gender Dynamics in the ASGM Sector

### 5.1 Gender Ratio and Work Time in the Sector

According to the results from the site assessment within the project (planetGOLD Mongolia, 2019), an artisanal gold mining team typically consists of 9 members, with 7 being male and 2 being female. Thus, it is estimated that around 28% of the artisanal mining workforce in Mongolia consists of women miners, with regional variations. According to a report from the Asia Foundation (2013), 22% of miners were women in hard rock mining, and 33% in alluvial mining. Since men are usually hired for physically challenging jobs (gender division of labour), the number of available jobs for women is limited. Few women reported working in ore extraction and processing, while the majority reported working in supportive and administrative roles.

Among the survey respondents, the relative number of women with more than five years of work experience in the sector was almost the same as for men miners (58% and 59%, respectively). More men had joined the sector in the last year than women (14% of men versus 9% of women). Women have the same standing in the sector as men in terms of work experience. However, more men tend to work the entire year (over 55% of all male respondents versus 40% of female respondents), whereas around 55% of women tend to work seasonally from April to October (Figure 6).

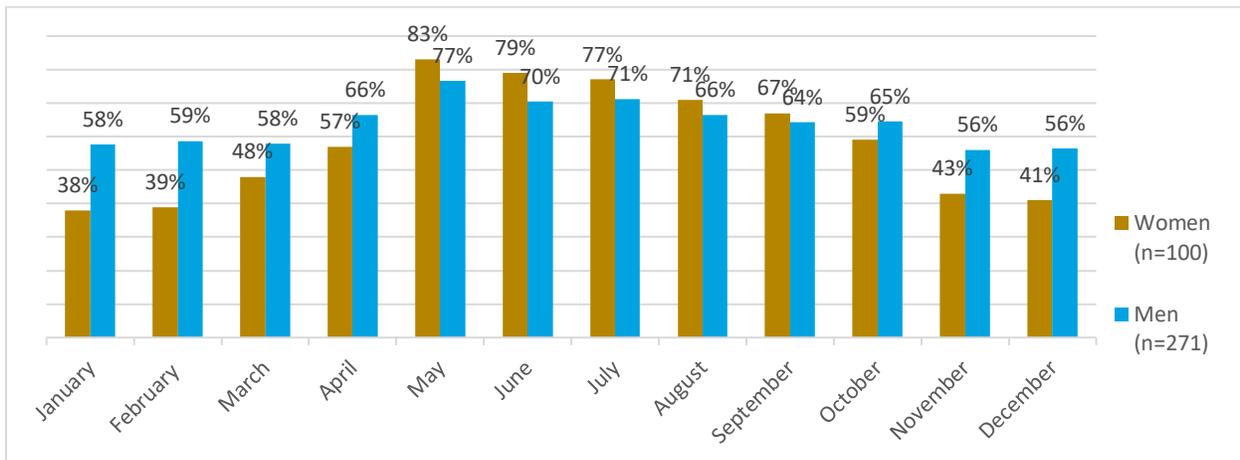


Figure 6. Active working months in ASGM by gender

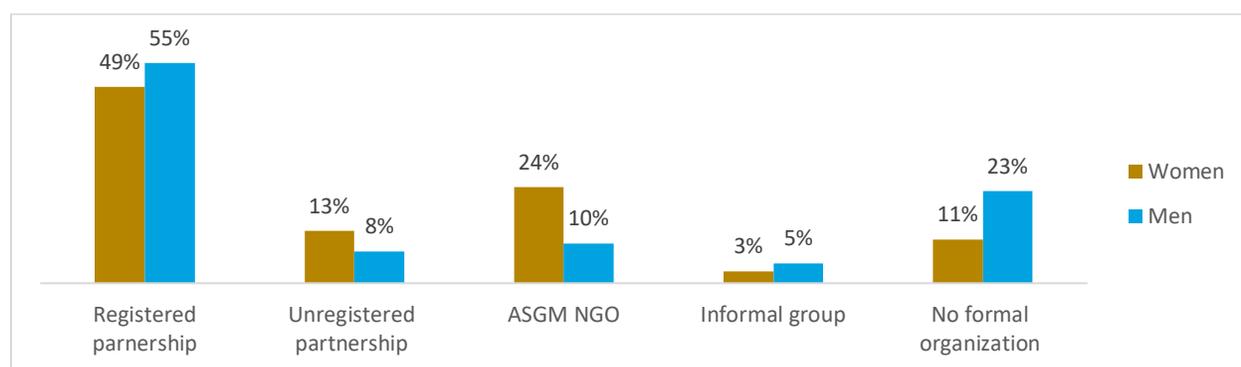
*Table 1. Period of employment in ASM (monthly, weekly, and daily) by gender*

	Women (n=100)	Men (n=271)	Total (n=371)
<b>Average Working days in a month</b>			
Up to 9 days in a month	30%	27%	28%
11 - 20 days in a month	47%	47%	47%
21 - 31 days in a month	23%	26%	25%
<b>Average working days in a week</b>			
1 day	13%	15%	15%
2 - 3 days	26%	26%	26%
4 - 5 days	37%	34%	35%
6 - 7 days	24%	25%	25%
<b>Average Daily working hours</b>			
Up to 2 hours in a day	7%	1%	2%
3 – 5 hours in a day	13%	12%	12%
6 - 8 hours in a day	38%	44%	43%
9 or more hours in a day	42%	43%	43%
Total	100%	100%	100%

There were no significant differences between women and men miners in the monthly, weekly and daily amount of time spent in the sector (Table 1). This information implies that while men tend to work more months per year mining, both spend a similar amount of time in the sector during active months.

## 5.2 Organization

Being a registered miner in an ASM organization is a first important step to formalization. All types forms of mining organization – partnership, NGO or cooperative – are open to women and men miners. Most respondents are members of a registered partnership (55% of men and 49% of women). More women are member of an ASGM NGO compared to men (24% versus 10%), whereas men are more often not organized at all (23%) or belong to an informal group (5%). Despite the high level of organization among women miners, none of the study areas has a designated women miners’ organization (planetGOLD, 2019).



*Figure 7. Organizational affiliation of respondents, by gender (n= 100 women, 271 men)*

### 5.3 Gender Division of Labour in ASGM

Women and men often perform different tasks along the gold supply chain, influenced by socio-cultural norms and beliefs, education (which is also influenced by gender norms), skills, preferences, power dynamics, level of formalization, etc. The survey revealed that most women are involved in supportive services (91%), but also play a major part in management, and ore extraction and processing, whereas almost all men (>97%) are involved in ore extraction and processing (Figure 8).

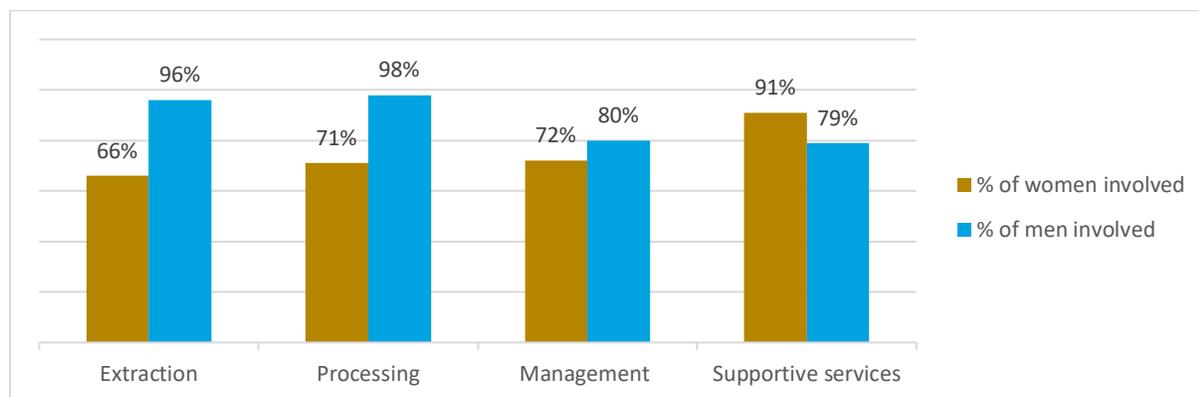


Figure 8. Respondents' involvement in different steps of artisanal mining (n= 100 women, 271 men)

However, when looking at the distribution of the different tasks within and across those four major categories, the gender division of labour becomes more apparent (Figure 9). The top five tasks men perform are crushing ore and panning (59%, each), ore extraction and tasks underground (54%, each), and grinding (52%). The top four tasks women perform are all linked to supportive services, specifically food preparation (79%), purchasing food and other items (63%), washing dishes (61%) and cleaning (55%). For women miners, the fifth most frequently performed task is linked to securing finance (49%).

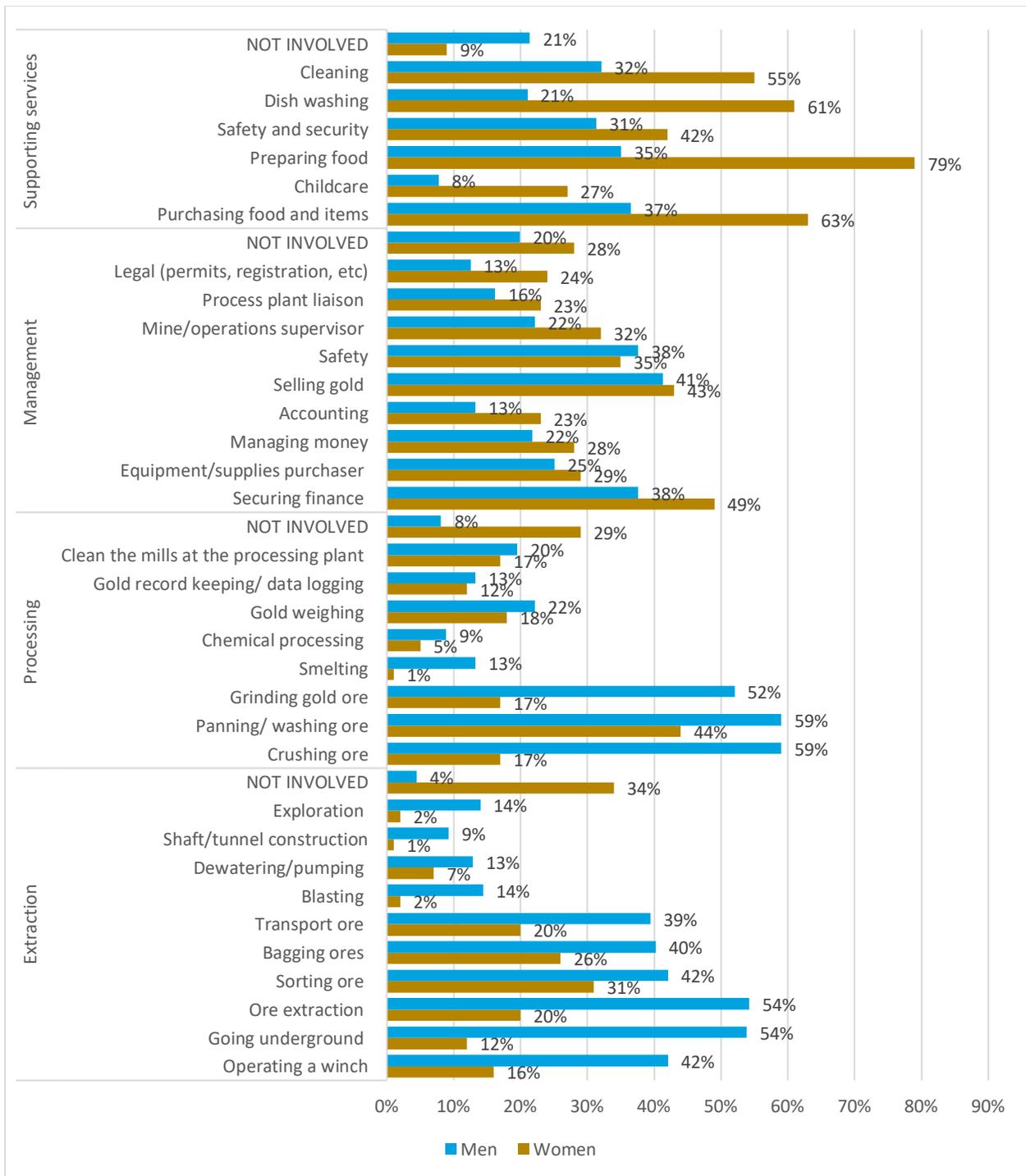


Figure 9. Gender division of labour in artisanal gold mining in the five study areas (n=100 women, 271 men; multiple answers recorded, total = 3,732)

While 28% of all women miners surveyed are not involved in management activities, those women who are involved, are responsible for individual tasks at least as frequently as men. For example, 24% of female respondents are involved in acquiring legal permits and

23% are involved in accounting, compared to 13% of men (for both activities). Almost every other woman (49%) is involved in securing finance. The gender division of labour at the five study areas also shows that women play important roles in ore extraction (especially sorting ore, 31%) and ore processing (panning, 44%).

The gender division of individual tasks differs between study areas. For example, all women in Altai are involved in some tasks related to ore extraction and processing. Information shared by participants from Altai soum indicated that in Mongolia’s western aimags, there is a stronger adherence to traditional cultural norms; hence, men are more often in control of selling gold, procurement, and monitoring financial transactions. These trends are difficult to confirm with the survey data on a local level due to the small sample size of women (n=14) in Altai (see Table 2). In the other target areas, women are more often in charge of management tasks, especially in Mandal soum and Tunkhel village.



Mine site supervisor filling out the shift logs in Tunkhel village (photo taken by planetGOLD Mongolia)

Table 2. Involvement of women and men in management tasks, by study area (green ≥ 50%, yellow ≥ 25%)

	Women						Men					
	Bayangol	Mandal	Tunkhel	Yusunbulag	Altai	Total	Bayangol	Mandal	Tunkhel	Yusunbulag	Altai	Total
<b>Number of respondents</b>	15	28	20	23	14	100	37	84	51	39	50	271
Securing finance	53%	61%	60%	30%	26%	49%	27%	37%	49%	41%	33%	38%
Purchase equipment/ supplies	7%	39%	50%	22%	11%	29%	14%	17%	39%	36%	25%	25%
Managing money	0	43%	50%	22%	5%	28%	11%	13%	41%	33%	17%	22%
Accounting	0	25%	40%	26%	11%	23%	3%	11%	24%	21%	10%	13%
Selling gold	33%	50%	55%	22%	42%	43%	27%	33%	53%	10%	72%	41%
Safety	0	36%	55%	30%	37%	35%	24%	23%	51%	41%	53%	38%
Mine/operations supervisor	7%	46%	45%	17%	26%	32%	8%	18%	27%	21%	33%	22%
Process plant liaison	0	32%	45%	13%	11%	23%	8%	17%	27%	18%	10%	16%
Legal (permits, registration, etc.)	13%	25%	40%	22%	11%	24%	8%	11%	22%	15%	8%	13%
<b>Not involved</b>	20%	18%	35%	57%	0	28%	30%	35%	14%	15%	2%	20%

According to the KII with ASGM NGO and partnership leaders as well as heads of civil society organizations, women are primarily involved in “light” tasks such as dust removal, packaging, sorting, sieving, gold washing and cooking, budgeting and procurement. An official from the ASM NF also highlighted the involvement of women in administrative and financial tasks.

Representatives from local governments noted that the transition from illegal mining to NGOs and partnerships has permitted the introduction of new technologies in ASM. The shift from manual to mechanical extraction and processing also facilitates the involvement of women in these tasks as they require less physical strengths; but a gender division of tasks seems to persist. Men primarily perform all the “hard” jobs related to extraction, transportation, handling and crushing of rocks, digging dirt and heavy work. This was also expressed by a partnership leader:

*“There are 2 female and 7 male members in our partnership. The women are responsible for gold washing and cooking. Women aren’t suitable for lifting heavy weights and are more prone to injuries. The labor division is not equal: easy labour is for women and heavy work is for men. We work from 8 to 9 hours on the mining site.”*

**KII, male partnership leader, Khovd aimag**

While the data set from the survey shows women’s roles in ore extraction and processing, 17 out of 30 women miners noted during the in-depth study that tasks requiring hard labour are a major challenge in the sector for women. Most of these women have been involved in hard labour at some point such as carrying bags of heavy rocks, working in deep shafts with heavy tools, and uploading ore from shafts at mine sites. Women miners working in Bayangol, Mandal and Tunkhel had more experience working in shafts. Women in the western aimags (Altai and Yusunbulag) tend to be more often involved in tasks such as carrying heavy rocks due to rudimentary technological infrastructure and low levels of mechanization, as well as the absence of a formal processing plant in Altai. The geographical differences in interview findings show that local processing systems also impact the roles of women in the sector. Hence, the gendered division of labor can be influenced by various factors such as the type of ore deposit (placer versus hard rock deposits), the level of mechanization, as well as the social fabric of the workforce at a mining site (i.e., whether the organization mainly consists of family members, friends, or unrelated individuals).



*Two women working at the site, screening dirt and ore in Tunkhel village (photo taken by planetGOLD Mongolia)*

Gender stereotypes and cultural beliefs within a society and especially within the male-dominated mining industry can lead to the perception, especially among men miners, that women are not allowed or supposed to perform certain tasks in the mining sector. Women were asked during the in-depth interviews whether customary laws and beliefs or social norms impact gender roles or social relations in general in the ASGM sector. None of the women clearly affirmed this. Six out of 30 women said that the role of women in ASGM would not be impacted by sociocultural norms and values. Eight out of 30 women answered that they have encountered negative tendencies while working in ASGM. While

these women did not specify their answer, other studies have shown that mining is not always considered as a respectable income source in Mongolia (Asia Foundation, 2013). However, women also stated during the discussion on training needs that they are not familiar with gender as a concept. Hence, women might not be aware of or not willing to disclose certain gender-based discriminatory structures in the artisanal gold mining sector; more research and awareness building is required on this subject to gain a better understanding.

During the survey, 90% of men and 81% of women answered that there are certain tasks women are not supposed to do in mining (Figure 10). Those tasks mainly include the work in shafts and tasks involving heavy lifting (i.e., mainly tasks linked to ore extraction). According to Figure 9 above, 66% of women are involved in the extraction process. However, the number of women involved in work related to shafts is low (12%), while more women are involved in ore sorting (31%), bagging (26%) and transportation (20%).

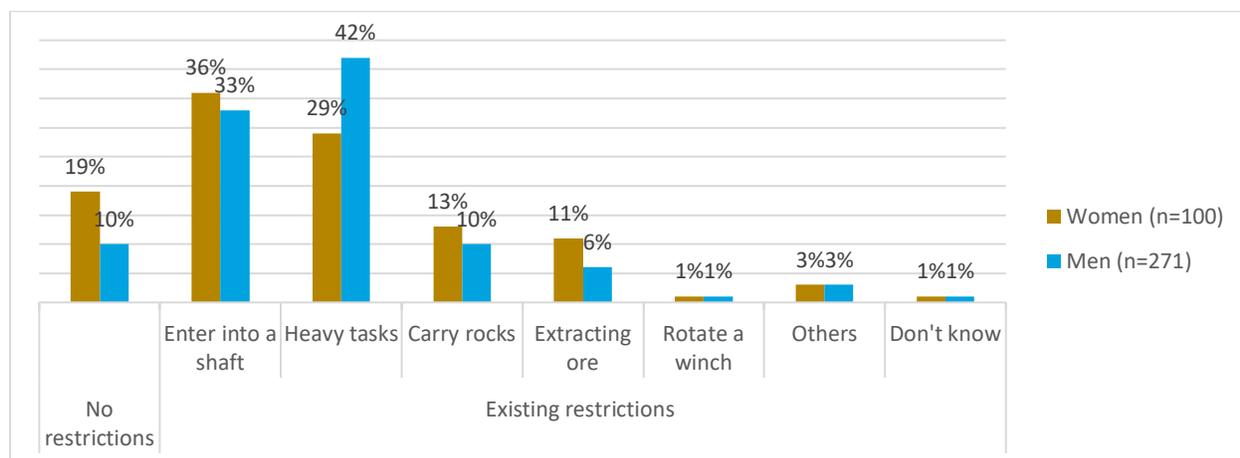


Figure 10. Respondents answer to the question whether there are certain tasks women are not allowed or supposed to perform in the sector (multiple answers recorded, t = 407)

Overall, there appears to be a belief amongst women and men miners that women should not be involved in labor-intensive and potentially dangerous tasks. This belief mostly stems from the idea that women must be protected from potentially dangerous tasks at mine sites for their own personal protection, not for discriminatory purposes that may also restrict women’s access to resources. The finding that income is mostly shared equally amongst women and men – independent of their tasks within the group (Section 5.5)– supports this assumption and was further explained by a partnership leader.

*“Partnership members spare women from doing hard work, however, since everyone works at the site, incomes are distributed equally. ...Men do more work. In fact, all mining work is done by men, I guess. Women cook and do housework”*

**KII, female partnership leader, Gobi-Altai aimag**

However, an equal benefit-sharing mechanism does not seem to be prevalent in all mining groups (Section 5.5). If not in place, this gender division of labour can inadvertently cause

economic disadvantages for women miners, since men will be hired for physically strenuous jobs that are more numerous and better paid. An official from the ASM NF further supported this, by pointing out that the gender division of labour in artisanal mining can create inequalities in access to resources and income. This shows that while gender-related income equality is not sector inherent, it can vary from group to group. The influencing factors that determine the existence and extent of income inequality require further investigation.

### 5.4 Power Dynamics, Leadership and Decision-Making at the Mining Site

#### Decision-Making

The gender division of labour in section 5.3 already provides a good overview about the different roles and responsibilities women and men are engaged in in artisanal mining. Figure 11 shows how many women and men consider themselves as actively involved in the decision-making process of selected activities. While only 2% of women are involved in exploration activities (Figure 9), 22% are involved in decision-making regarding exploration. While men are more often involved in decision-making in most processing steps, women are more often involved in decision-making regarding waste disposal. This finding corresponds with other findings which show that women are more likely to be responsible for due diligence compliance, including environmental performance. In addition, women are more often involved in decision-making regarding administrative issues, and similarly involved in issues pertaining to profit distribution and finance.

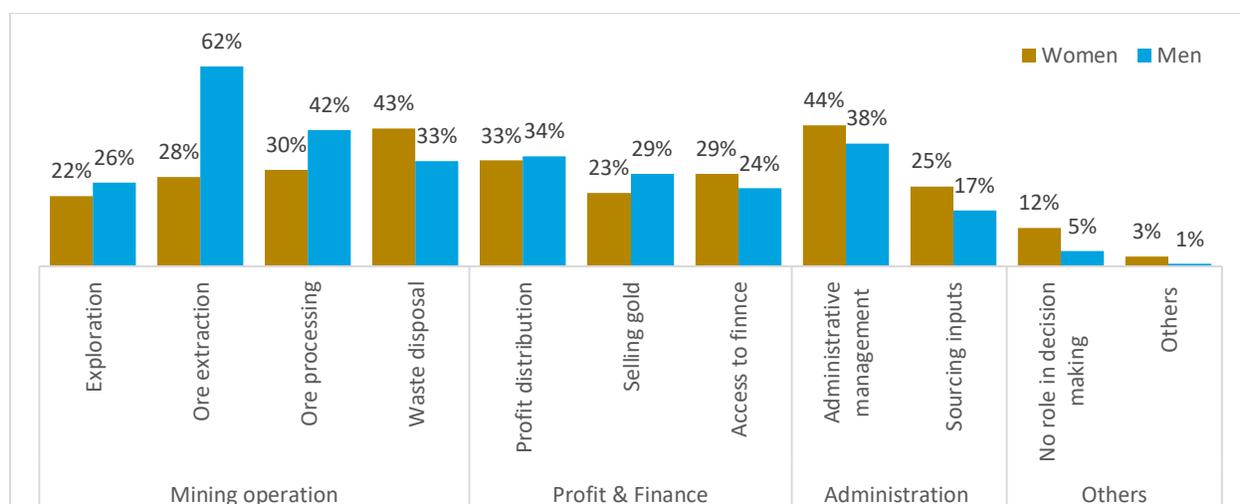


Figure 11. Involvement of women and men miners in the decision-making process of selected activities, by gender (n=100 women, 271 men; multiple answers recorded, total=1,139)

The findings from the in-depth study also confirm that women and men miners tend to have mutual rights when it comes to participating in decisions and revenue sharing at work. In the domestic sphere, women primarily have leading roles in decision-making at the household level and addressing domestic or family issues (Section 6). According to the

findings, most women (19 out of 30) revealed that they participate mutually in decision-making processes at the mine sites. In addition, they emphasized that solutions or decisions are made based on a mutual discussion among partnership members. Nine women miners pointed out gender-related differences in decision-making processes, with some seeing women and others seeing men in dominating roles.

## Leadership

The previous section on the gender division of labour in artisanal mining shows the involvement of women in important management tasks, such as acquiring legal permits and registration, securing finance and selling gold. At the same time, 88% of women are involved in making decisions regarding various activities along the supply chain (Figure 6-9). These findings indicate that women have an important influence on the decisions pertaining to management systems at the mining sites and hence, also perform leadership functions.

From the 47 partnership and NGO leaders who participated in the survey, 19 were women and 28 were men (Figure 12). Women are more likely to be the leader of an NGO than a partnership, as ten out of 15 leaders are women, compared to six women out of 26 registered partnership leaders. Taking into account the smaller share of women in the survey population, which is reflective of the lower number of women in the ASGM sector in Mongolia, 22% of all organized women miners were leaders, versus 14% of all organized men miners. Key stakeholders from the ASM NF confirmed that women tend to be more frequently in leadership positions, especially in ASM NGOs where 6 out of 10 organizations would have a woman as leader.

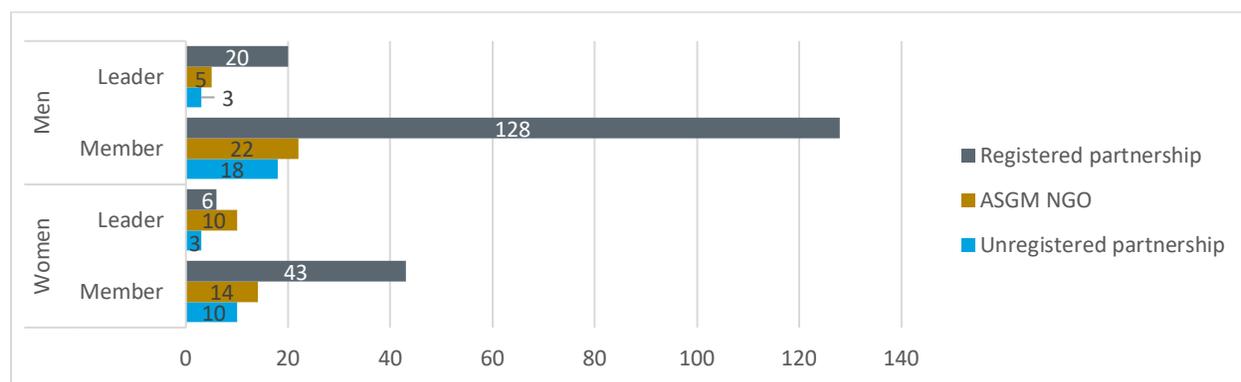


Figure 12. Number of members and leaders of ASGM organizations, by gender (n=282)

An analysis of the data according to the five study areas, however, indicates that female leadership might vary geographically, as it was more prevalent in Mandal soum (8 female leaders, 5 of those leading registered partnerships) and Yusunbulag (6 female leaders, 5 out of them leading NGOs) (Figure 13). There were no female leaders in Altai among the survey participants.

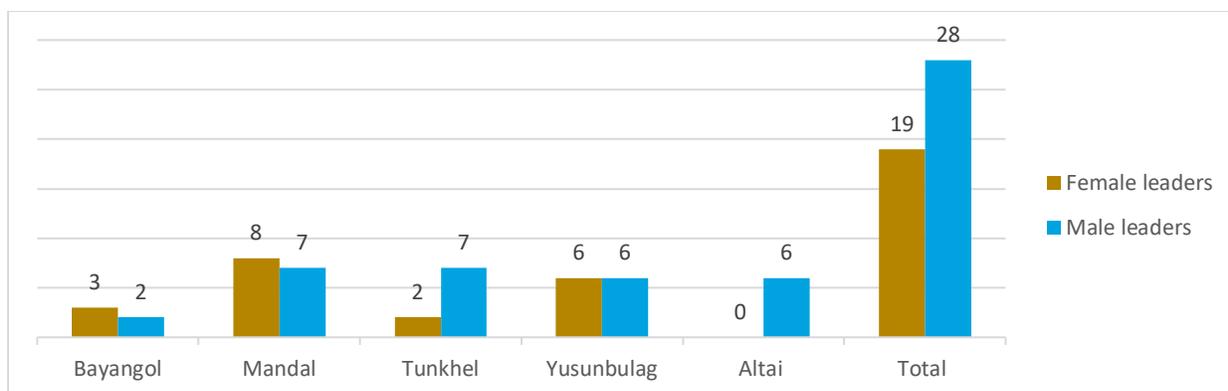


Figure 13. Number of female and male leaders, by study area and total (n=100 women, 271 men)

### Preferences in Leadership

The respondents were asked during the survey whether they prefer a man or a woman as the leader of their respective mining organization in order to assess possible biases against female leadership. Overall, 42% of respondents prefer a male leader, while 22% prefer a woman leader (Figure 14). Women were more in favour of a female leader (31%) than men (18%). It is positive to note that over one third of all respondents (37%) had no preference (i.e., were gender neutral in their judgement over leadership skills).

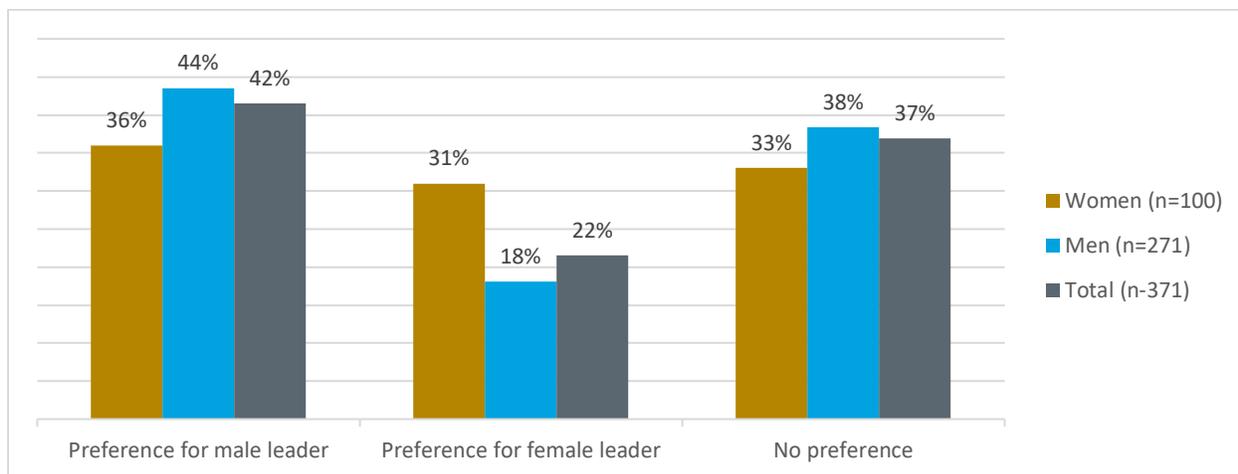


Figure 14. Gender preferences in leadership, by gender and total (n= 100 women, 271 men)

The gender preference for leadership varied among the five study areas (Figure 15). The preference for female leaders is the highest among women and men in Yusunbulag (39% and 46%, respectively); it is high among women in Bayangol (40%) but low among men (5%); and it is quite low for both women (21%) and men (5%) in Altai. These findings correlate with the level of experience in female leadership in the study areas. Respondents in Altai have a high preference for male leadership and have no current experience with

female leadership. The low level of preference for female leaders in Bayangol and Tunkhel among men corresponds with the low level of current female leadership. Yusunbulag, on the other hand, where female leadership is preferred by women and men, also has more current female leaders. In addition, preference for a female leader was the highest in male ASGM NGO members (52%), whereas female members of registered partnerships were mainly in favour of male leaders (41%).

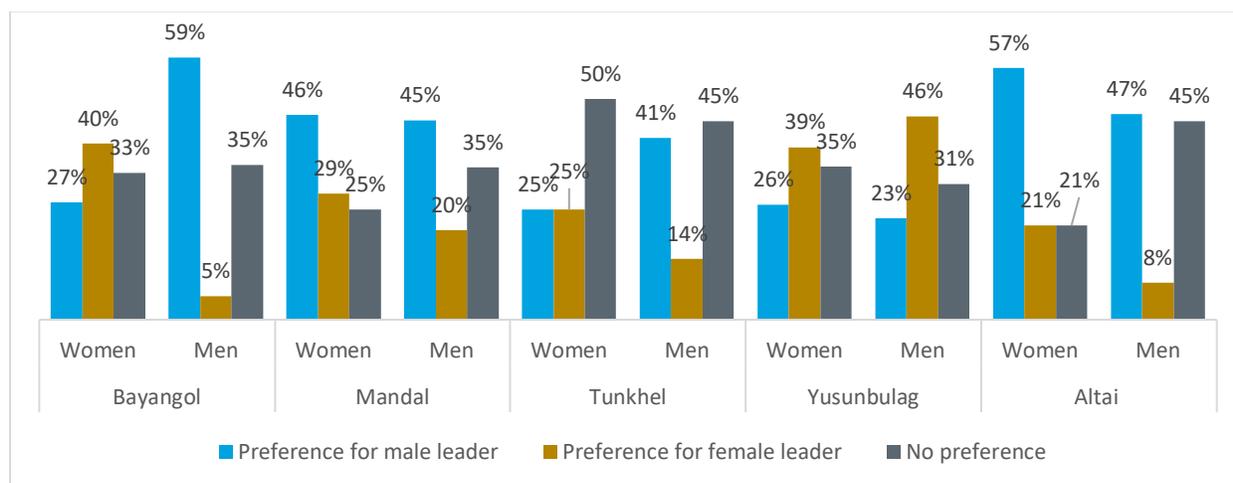


Figure 15. Gender preferences in leadership, by study area and gender (n= 100 women, 271 men)

Respondents with a gender preference were asked to explain their preference for a male or female leader (Figure 16). While many respondents were not able to provide concrete feedback, some did provide examples of best leadership practices amongst men and women miners. For example, men are considered to have more manpower or physical strengths and can adapt better to the challenging work conditions, are more knowledgeable and skillful and are better in working together with other men miners. However, both men and women miners acknowledged that the management skills of women leaders were better, for example in terms of managing finance or compliance with legal frameworks. In addition, women were considered more reliable and responsible, which included different statements such as being more consistent, punctual, take care of others or do not drink alcohol. Interestingly, men miners considered female leaders as more honest than male leaders. The category “other/unspecific” includes general statements such as “men are better” or “women are gentler”, which are not directly linked to leadership qualifications.

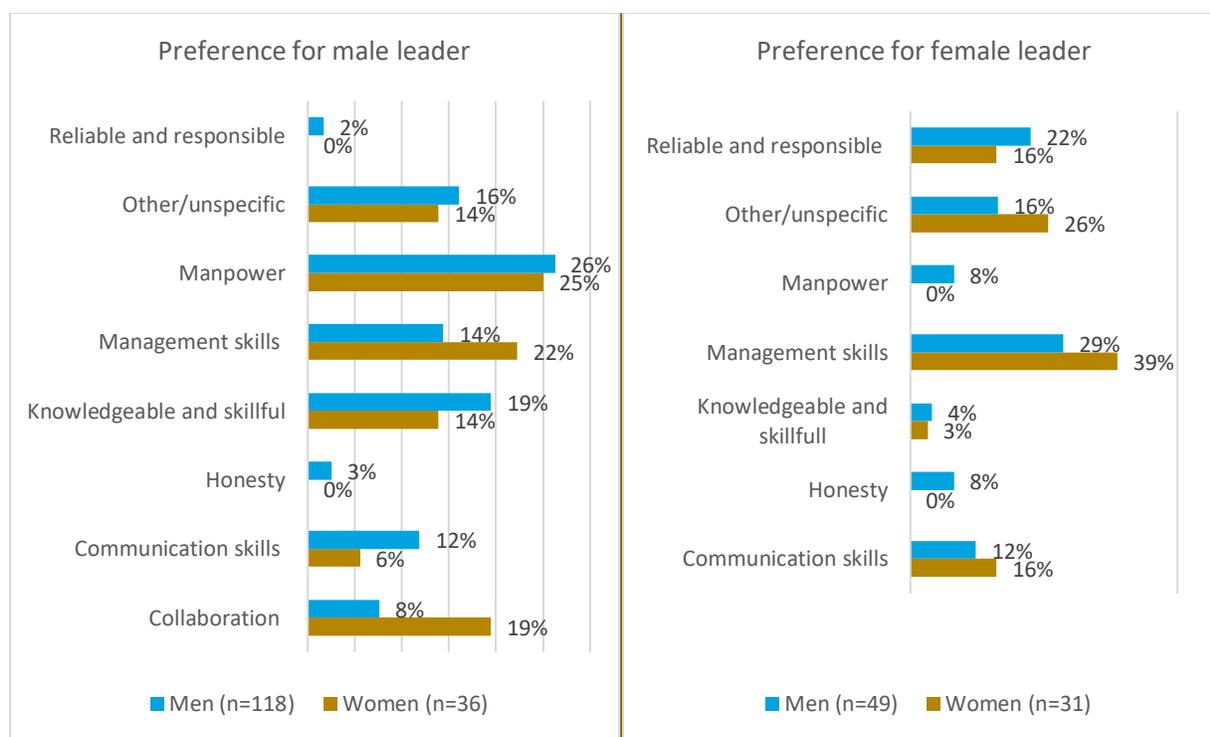


Figure 16. Reasons for preferring a male or female leader, by gender

Overall, the stronger involvement of men miners in the technical and physical aspects of ore extraction and processing seem to cause a preference for male leadership, especially among men miners. However, the organizational, managerial and communication skills of women are also valued. This is especially true in areas that are more formalized, where knowledge of legal frameworks is an asset, and where miners have already been exposed to female leadership.

Another important factor that can influence female leadership is the collaboration of ASGM group leaders with local officials. The in-depth study with women miners indicates that the support of an artisanal mining organization by local government officials rather depends on the level of formalization, rather than the gender of the leader. Ten out of thirty respondents highlighted they would have support once the partnership is formalized. The positive support from local authorities was highlighted by respondents in two soums in Selenge aimag: Mandal soum, including Tunkhel village, and Bayangol soum.

### 5.5 Access to and Use of Resources

This section looks at income, access to finance and control over means of production in artisanal mining from a gender perspective.

## Income

As outlined in Section 4.3, 50% of respondents named artisanal mining as their main income source. However, only 38% all women and 33% of all men stated that artisanal mining provides enough income for themselves and their families. This means that two-thirds of all respondents have to rely sometimes or always on additional income sources. At the five study areas, 63% of miners earned a monthly average of less than 1 Mio. MNT<sup>4</sup> (including secondary income, as stated by 67% of respondents). For comparison, the national monthly income average was MNT 1,328,100 in the fourth quarter of 2020, with a lower average in peripheral regions (e.g., Western Region MNT 971,200) (NSO, 2020).

Considering only income from artisanal mining, the average monthly income among all respondents was 980,163 MNT, with only a slight difference among women and men of MNT 3,657 (Figure 17). This gap is considerably smaller than the national average gender pay gap.



Figure 17. Average monthly income from ASGM among survey respondents, compared to national average, by gender, in MET (national income data: NSO, 2020)

A closer look into income from artisanal mining shows that more women earn less than MNT 200,000 a month (15% women versus 4% men) (Figure 18). The official poverty line in 2018 in Mongolia was MNT 166,580 (NSO & World Bank, 2020). However, these data have to be interpreted with caution as mining income can be subject to large fluctuations due to the seasonality of work, access to high quality ore, and availability of work, as two partnership leaders pointed out. Since women tend to work slightly more often seasonally in artisanal mining rather than year-round compared to men (Section 5.2), it remains unclear whether the annual mining related income shows a larger gender gap or whether the income is split evenly amongst all members of a partnership or NGO throughout the year as well.

<sup>4</sup> As income is a sensitive topic, total income was recorded in ranges, impeding further analysis at this point.

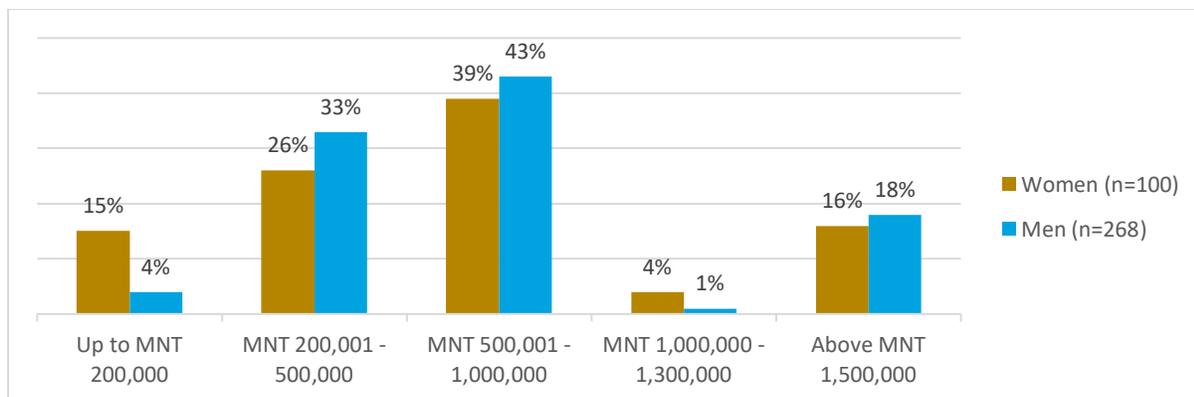


Figure 18. Average monthly income from artisanal mining income, by gender

The survey findings indicate that gender related income inequality is not very prevalent in the five study areas. Artisanal miners pointed out in face-to-face interviews that they equally divide the earned income regardless of gender, despite the fact men tend to do more strenuous and dangerous tasks, while women are more involved in supportive and administrative tasks.

*“We equally divide income among members after deduction of expenditures.”*

**KII, male cooperative leader, Selenge aimag**

*“Partnership members spare women from doing hard work, however, since everyone works at the site, incomes are distributed equally.”*

**KII, female partnership leader, Gobi-Altai aimag**

Women confirmed during the in-depth interviews that income is equally divided within their organization. As for differences between men and women in revenue sharing or when negotiating fair prices, a significant number of respondents (27 out of 30 women) said they have no controversial issues over income division. They stated that revenue sharing is not linked to gender since they have a fixed salary for each task. Most importantly, they emphasized that they usually work or organize as a partnership based on family connections, which tends to raise less issues on revenue sharing.

*“We usually go with our family or spouse to work at sites. I think, this pattern is common to other miners in ASGM. Once we work with our immediate family or relatives, it is unlikely to have unfair salaries or sharing as we negotiate well before starting our business.”*

**In-depth study, women miner, Gobi-Altai aimag**

However, information from KII interviews revealed that equal wage distribution is not prevalent in every artisanal mining organization in Mongolia.

*“In my view, there is no equal wage distribution. Just a handful of artisanal cooperatives practice equal distribution of wages. It usually depends on a partnership’s leader. Although members don’t complain in the presence of partnership leaders, they talk about unequal wage distribution in their absence. They cannot discuss the issue with leaders as they are afraid of losing their jobs. In other words, partnerships are owner-centered institutions.”*

KII, government officer, Ulaanbaatar

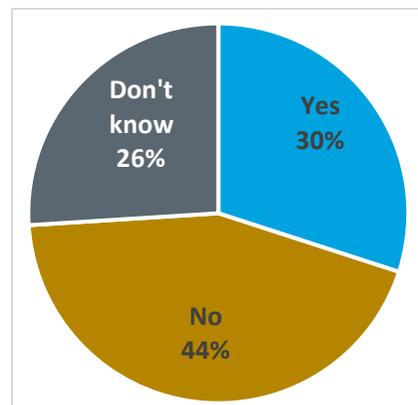
According to government officials, human rights experts and the leaders of the ASM NF, differences in the gender division of labor and power allocation between men and women miners can constitute a reason for unequal distribution of both wages and profits. These observations could not be confirmed by the survey results in the study areas but do require further investigation. It would also be interesting to investigate how far female leadership is associated with income equality within a mining organization.

**Access to Finance**

The survey did not identify any major gender-related problems for women miners regarding access to finance. Around 29% of female respondents are involved in financial decision-making within the mining organization, compared to 34% of all men. In addition, more women said that they currently have a loan than men (61% versus 51%, respectively).

During the in-depth interview, 22 out of 30 women answered that there is almost no significant gender-related difference in accessing finance. They explained that all banks and other financial organizations require signatures and permissions from both spouses when they request loans. Therefore, spouses tend to discuss financial issues before applying for any loans. However, they also stated that both women and men miners face challenges getting approval for loans due to lack of income guarantee and other qualifications. In very few interviews did women miners respond saying that men usually make decisions on getting loans.

Asked during the survey whether there are any specific challenges faced by women in accessing finance (Figure 19), 44% of respondents responded with no. From the 30% of women who stated that there were problems, most of them provided explanations that do not seem gender related, such as the requirement for collateral, general difficulties in accessing loans and lack of permanent income.



*Figure 19: Problems faced by women in accessing finance (n=100 women)*

**Control Over Means of Production**

Two other indicators for gender equality in the ASGM sector in Mongolia are the number of female owners of processing plants and shafts, since both indicate the role of women in controlling means of production. From 28 processing plant owners surveyed, 9 (32%) were women located in Bayangol, Mandal, Tunkhel and Altai. From 36 shaft owners surveyed, 9 (25%) were women. Considering again the lower number of women in the sector, this information reveals that some women do have control over means of production in the sector. On the other hand, women are more frequently employed as support workers (68%) compared to men (50%) who are more frequently employed as miners (38%, versus

13% of women). This indicates that women can take on a wide spectrum of roles in ASGM, from owners of central means of production to supportive workers. More research is required to investigate whether there is a disproportionately larger group of women miners with less access to resources and resource ownership. During the in-depth interview with women miners, women also confirmed that men and women usually have the same access to work tools at their work sites since they tend to purchase required tools and materials with their communal budgets. It should be noted that women also stated that they access work tools less frequently due to the gender division of labour.

## ***5.6 Capacity Building and Information Sources***

Building capacity among artisanal miners through access to training and information are important facilitators for better mining practices, but also for empowering women in the sector. Training creates more favourable work conditions for women and aids in closing the gender gap between women and men miners. This section describes past training exposure of women and men miners in the study areas, training needs and utilization of information sources.

### **Completed Trainings**

A total of 38% (141) miners have attended at least one mining related training over the past 2 years, with a reverse gender gradient: 47% of the female respondents and 35% of male respondents had attended at least one training, with an average of 3.0 trainings per woman and 2.4 trainings per man. Representatives of national and local authorities, human rights organizations and civil society community indicated during KII's that women are more active when it comes to participating in capacity building training. In the in-depth interviews, the majority of women (22 out of 30) said that they had enough opportunities to participate in training, while 6 women revealed that they had constraints in participating in training and had limited access to information.

Miners have mainly received training on formalization (19%) and better/responsible mining standards (19%). A gender-specific analysis of the training completed by respondents (Figure 20) reveals that women were more actively participating in all training topics covered by the survey, especially business management (16% of women versus 3% of men), environmentally sound practices (14% versus 6%), rehabilitation (14% versus 7%) and health (11% versus 6%). Training on gender and human rights (3% of women and 2% of men) was the topic least attended by the respondents.

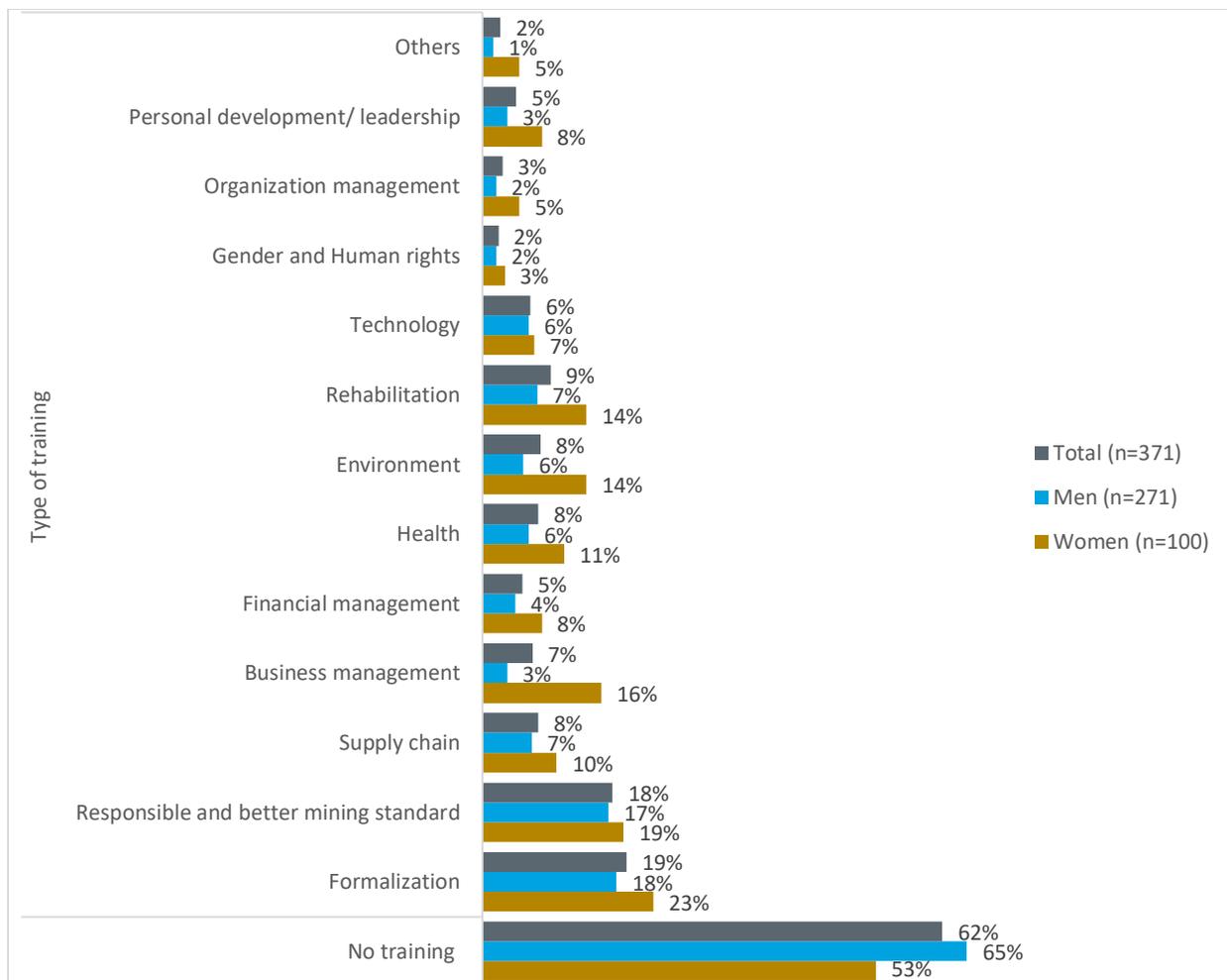


Figure 20. Training attendance of artisanal miners in the recent 2 years by gender and total (multiple answers recorded, total =369)

The gender-disaggregated participation in training varied between the study areas (Figure 21). While miners in Tunkhel and Yusunbulag had the most training experience (51% and 44%, respectively), especially women miners in Mandal had also received more training (57%). Training participation was the lowest in Altai (20%) and Bayangol (22%).

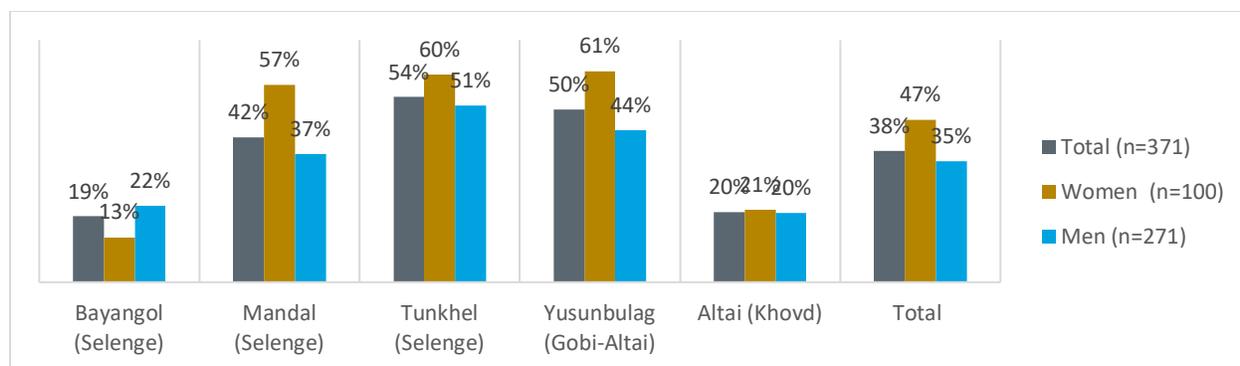


Figure 21. Number of respondents who had participated in training in past 2 years, by study area, gender and total

Most respondents (40% of 141 miners) had received training organized by the ASM NF who provides ASM training and other activities for its members and other miners (Table 3). While miners were not always able to name the training institution explicitly, table 3 shows that most trainings were offered by NGOs and only few by government officials.

Table 3: Training hosts named by survey respondents (n=141)

	Organizations	%
1	ASM NF	40%
2	From UB city	11%
3	Local Institutions	9%
4	NGOs	6%
5	Public institutions	5%
6	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation	4%
7	World Vision	4%
8	Don't remember	9%
9	Others	12%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

Overall, the survey shows the limited amount of training women and men miners have received so far. A partnership member in Khovd aimag described how the safety training had made him aware of the importance of the topic:

*We recently received a safety training which we lacked the knowledge of. With this training we understood that we should be accountable for our activity, ensure our own safety and use personal protective gears, for example to regularly wear a helmet and harness at mining site; and we re-organized our mining site. Further, we need capacity building or more professional training, for example on how to properly operate and maintain the equipment and technology etc.*

**Male partnership member, Khovd aimag**

## Training Needs

Training on formalization was identified by miners as priority topic for capacity building (35%), followed by responsible and better mining standards (26%), rehabilitation (27%) and technology training (26%). The training needs raised by respondents during the survey show a similar pattern for women and men miners (Figure 22). However, women preferred more often than men training on formalization, business, and financial management as well as personal development and leadership, while more men wanted to receive training on responsible and better mining standards, occupational safety, rehabilitation, and technology.

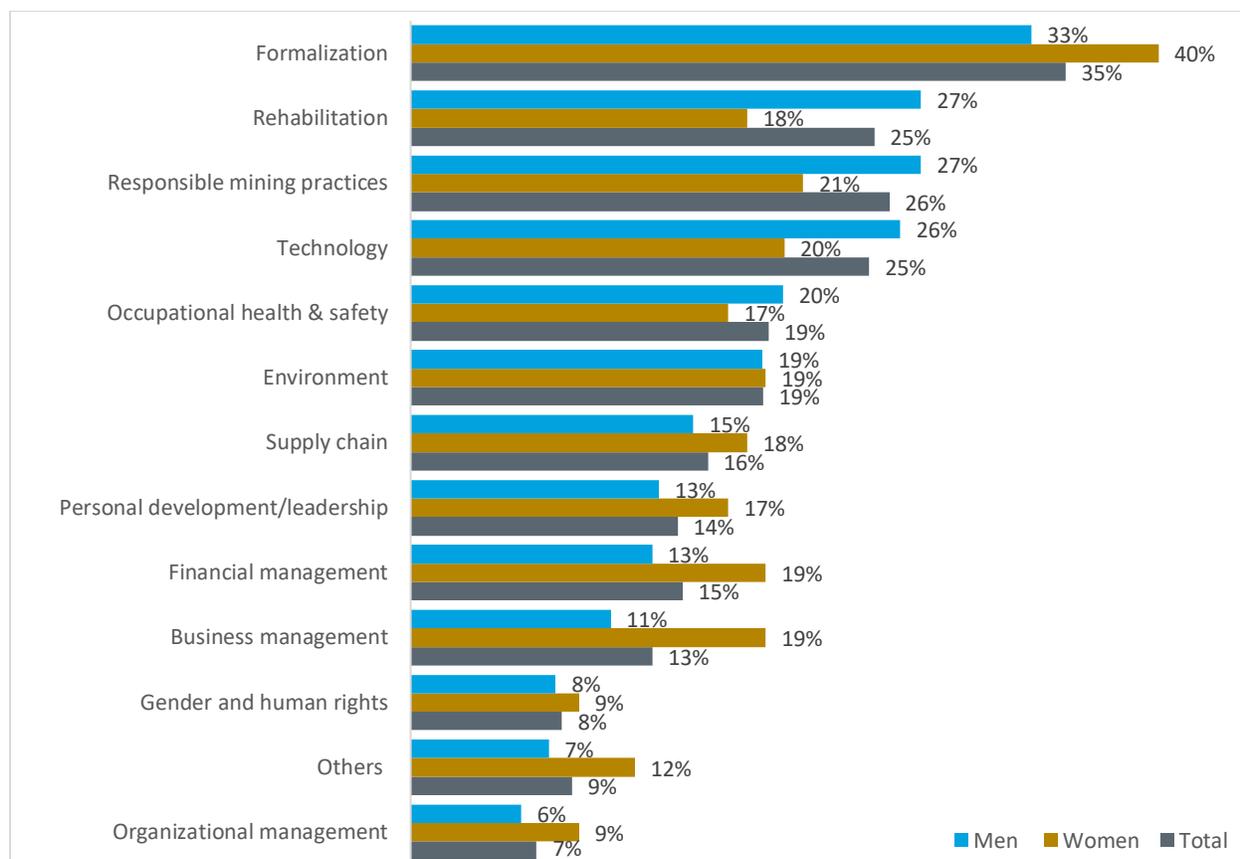


Figure 22. Training needs of respondents by gender and total (multiple answers recorded, total=850)

Based on information shared by local officials, the training priorities identified for artisanal gold miners included training on laws and regulations in order for miners to comply with legal frameworks, environmental training, occupational safety training as well as training on health impacts of mercury. Leaders of partnerships and NGOs in the study areas also emphasized the need on health-related training including mercury toxicity. This indicated that miners were either too timid to bring up knowledge gaps regarding mercury, since mercury is illegal, or they were not sufficiently aware of their knowledge gaps. This might also apply to the topic of gender and human rights.

In terms of interest in gender training, gender and human rights were identified by 9% of women and 8% of men as an important topic for capacity building. The in-depth study revealed that women (and possibly also men) did not have sufficient understanding of what training in gender and human rights would entail; women asked for clarification and explained the topic was new to them. This might explain the low interest in the topic.

In addition to mining related training needs identified during the training, 11 women also voiced their interest in training in supplementary income opportunities such as tailoring, planting vegetables and hairdressing. The interest in supplementary income sources was mainly linked to the fact that mining only provides seasonal income, which does not provide sufficient annual income. In addition, some women miners do not want to leave their children behind when they move temporarily to the mine site. This underlines the importance of aligning the work-life balance of artisanal miners.

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a sensitive topic and hence, was only covered to a limited extent in the interviews with mining communities (see Section 5.8). A female leader from a civil society NGO brought up the issue of increasing domestic violence cases and that family law should be included in the training.

*There is a need for training. Needed are trainings on improving youth participation and building capacities. Domestic violence cases are on the rise. Hence, a training on Family Law is needed. Whether we talk about ASGM or the society in general, after all there are families at the core of both. We need to talk about family environment and what is meant by having a caring atmosphere in families. Trainings should not exceed 2 hours and should be carried out away from classrooms. You won't find a single person who would agree to sit in a lecture for 8 hours.*

**KII, female leader of civil society organization**

This KII interview indicates that GBV is prevalent and an important topic that should be covered in the gender training. A key stakeholder from the Human Rights Commission also pointed out that, while most regional and national government officials have received gender trainings, there is a need to train government officials at soum level, especially in remote soums. Since those government officials are often the first point of contact for miners, it is also important to strengthen gender capacity at this level in order to facilitate gender-sensitive planning in all activities.

In terms of training formats, experts suggested the development of tailored trainings for women, men and youth based on their specific needs, in addition to offering core ASGM content.

### **Information sources**

Access to information is an important resource for miners to acquire knowledge for example on laws and regulations, better mining practices or the current gold spot price. While the widespread use of smartphones and access to the internet have increased the range of information miners can access, this does not determine the quality of the information. However, the objective of the survey was to understand how women and

men miners prefer to receive information to identify locally adequate information channels for project related activities.

The survey shows that women and men used very similar information sources (Figure 23). Around half of the total respondents (51%) receive their information on artisanal gold mining from people within the ASGM sector, 32% from family, friends, and relatives. Public and government organizations are ranked as the least important information source (10%).

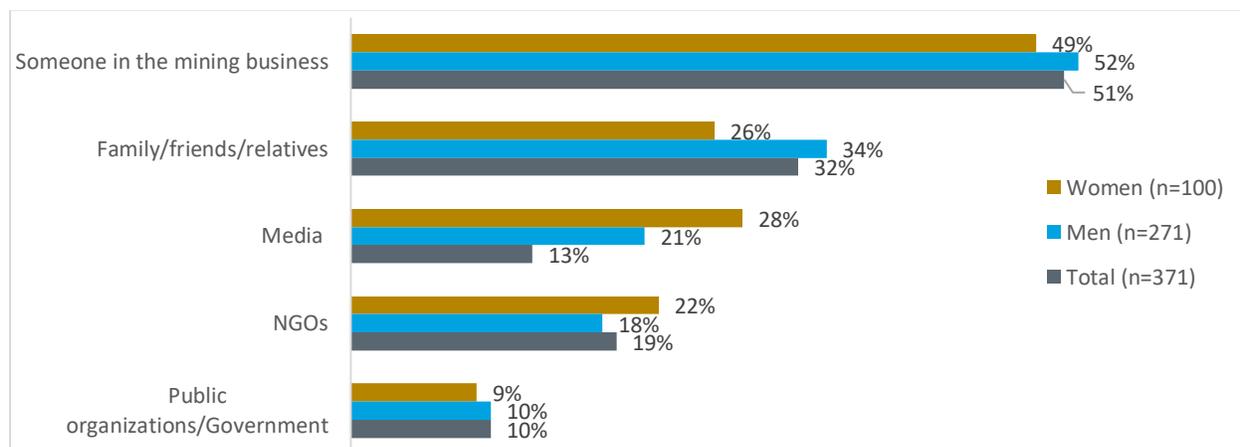


Figure 23. Information sources on ASM, used by respondents, by gender and total (multiple answers recorded, total=503)

As for the question on miners’ awareness about the ASM Knowledge Hub (a platform created by the SAM project to provide miners and stakeholders with an opportunity to exchange and share information related with ASM; <https://www.asmhub.mn/en/home>), almost 90% (n=331) were not aware of it. Among those who were aware of the Knowledge Hub (n=40), women were slightly more aware of the hub than men (13% versus 10%, respectively) and only 22 respondents were able to access information, while 6 miners knew about it but did not use it.

While the ASM Knowledge Hub is a good approach to provide relevant information on one centralized platform, the survey shows that miners are overwhelmingly not familiar with the tool, and that websites do not belong to their preferred medium to access information. Respondents were asked to list their preferred medium for accessing occupation related information. Approximately 55% answered that they prefer to get information from the television, 46% through their mobile phones and 44% from Facebook (Figure 24). Women miners preferred to receive information through social media (Facebook) and TV, while male miners preferred the television and mobile phones.

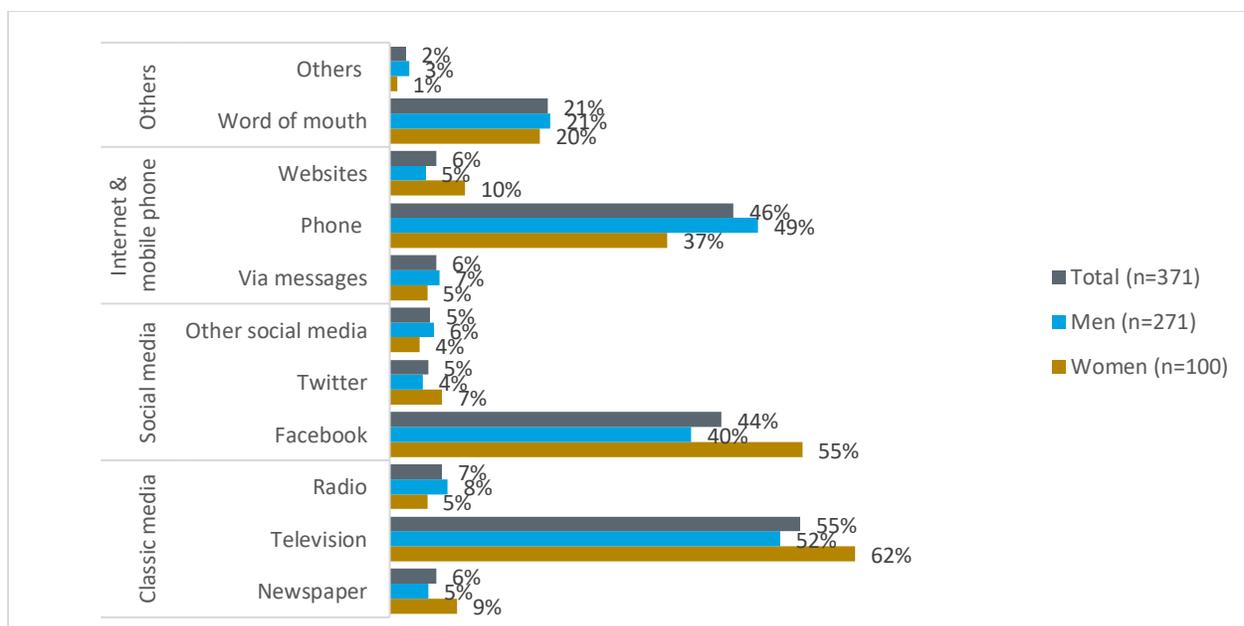


Figure 24. Preferred medium for accessing news and information, by gender and total (multiple answers recorded; total=757)

## 5.7 Occupational Health Risks

Occupational health and safety risks in artisanal and small-scale mining operations tend to be higher compared to many other sectors due to the hard physical work involved and lack of safety standards in informal operations. For example, 63% of all registered miners reported to have an OHS officer in place at the mine site, versus 20% of all unregistered miners. Rockslides and cave-ins were considering the biggest safety risk during ore extraction. From the gender division of labour at the mining sites (Section 5.3), it can be concluded that men are significantly more often involved in tasks that can lead to injuries and accidents, caused for example by heavy lifting or work in inadequately secured mine shafts. However, women are also involved in ore extraction and processing – with regional variations depending on the level of organization and mechanization – and are hence, also susceptible to physical accidents and injuries. Subsequently, women miners identified during the in-depth interviews the following occupational health risks: working in cold weather during extended periods of time including associated urological problems, joint and back problems, respiratory problems and allergies.

Women miners are more vulnerable to occupational health hazards during pregnancy. Three quarters (76%) of the women who participated in the survey are in their reproductive age (below 50 years). Risks associated with the sector include tasks such as heavy lifting, exposure to chemicals, access to health care for pre and postnatal check-ups as well as during a pregnancy related emergency. Asked whether they have ever worked at the mining site while pregnant, 17 female respondents (17%) answered positively and 11 women out of these did not take any precautions. Precautions identified by others

included working less hours, strictly following safety and health advice, taking medicines and controlling blood pressure. Four women from the in-depth study reported health problems while working in the mining sector during pregnancy, without specifying the problems.

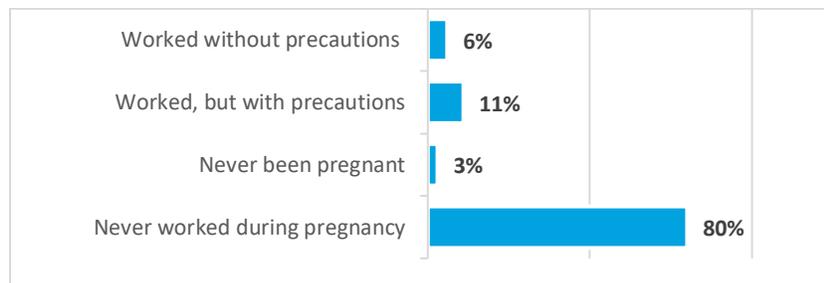


Figure 25. Work related safety precautions taken by female respondents during pregnancy (n=100 women)

A local government officer from Altai soum explained that many women miners would apply for social welfare when they get pregnant and hence, do not have to keep working at the mine site. However, only 65% of all female respondents answered that they would pay social insurance on a regular basis, which is necessary to qualify for social welfare. There was no correlation between pregnancy precautions and social insurance coverage in our data set. In fact, those women who worked without precautions during pregnancy had indicated earlier that they pay social insurance on a regular basis.

### Mercury Exposure

In artisanal gold mining, the use of mercury for gold extraction poses an additional challenge since exposure to elemental mercury vapours can lead to severe health implications for the mother and the unborn child. Since mercury use in Mongolia is illegal, this report can only estimate its prevalence based on various factors. Participants of the in-depth study revealed that mercury use in Tunkhel, Bayangol and Mandal soums in Selenge aimag vanished after processing plants were introduced in their areas. Women in Altai soums, Khovd aimag, stated that there is still illicit use of mercury in Altai soum and adjacent soums, especially in hard rock mining.

Since respondents were reluctant or refused to reveal information on mercury use, it could not be assessed whether women or men are more frequently involved in processing steps including mercury (i.e., amalgamation and vaporization). Other studies have shown that women were more often involved than men in amalgamation at informal mine sites in Tuv Aimag (Navch, et al., 2006). While these patterns can change regionally, there is a tendency for women to perform amalgamation and vaporization since it requires no physical strength. In the study conducted by the Asia Foundation (2013), several ASGM leaders confirmed that they have seen pregnant women handling mercury at formal and informal sites.

While exposure to elemental mercury vapours is toxic to all humans, women of childbearing age are more vulnerable, since mercury can readily pass between the blood-placenta barrier and cause neurodevelopmental toxicity in the developing fetus. The health effects caused by mercury in utero tend to be permanent and can cause developmental deficits such as language and motor skill deficits in children (AGC, 2020). Newborns, infants and children are also more susceptible to mercury exposure since their central organs are still developing. However, the survey was not able to collect data which would indicate the presence of women of childbearing age, infants and children during the processing steps involving mercury, especially vaporization.

### **Use of Personal Protective Equipment**

In terms of general safety precautions at the mining site, female and male respondents reported similar compliance levels for the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) (56% and 58%, respectively). The relative number of women miners who have participated in occupational health and safety training was higher compared to men miners (64% and 57%, respectively); and this also applied to the self-assessed compliance with OHS standards at the mining site (61% and 58%, respectively). Local authorities confirmed the tendency of women miners to be more compliant with OHS standards; hence, training women in OHS standards and the development of OHS safety plans can offer the opportunity to train women as change agents for healthier and safer mining practices.

### ***5.8 Challenges and Opportunities for Women in ASGM***

The artisanal mining sector in Mongolia poses gender-specific challenges for women miners, but also offers many opportunities. Due to the sensitivity of this topic, gender-specific challenges and opportunities for women were mainly addressed in the in-depth study and only to a small extent in the survey. Due to COVID-19 safety procedures, it was not possible to conduct focus group discussions with women and men miners, as planned.

#### **Challenges**

During the survey, women and men miners were asked whether they perceive any of the social, economic or workplace related problems outlined in Table 4 at their mining sites or within their mining organizations. Overall, most respondents (66% of women and 59% of men) did not report any problems. The responses of women and men showed a similar pattern. However, especially socially sensitive problems such as violence, gender-based harassment and alcohol abuse are most likely to be underreported and have therefore also been addressed in the in-depth study.

*Table 4. Problems reported at the mining site, by study area and gender (multiple answers recorded, total= 490)*

		Region					Total	
		Bayangol (n=52)	Mandal (n=112)	Tunkhel (n=72)	Yusunbulag (n=62)	Altai (n=74)	Women (n=100)	Men (n=271)
<b>No problems</b>	No problems	56%	67%	65%	63%	50%	66%	59%
<b>Social problems</b>	Violence	8%	2%	0%	2%	8%	2%	4%
	Harassment (general)	6%	3%	1%	3%	5%	2%	4%
	Sexual harassment	2%	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%
	Alcohol abuse	8%	4%	1%	10%	12%	4%	8%
	Crime	4%	4%	0%	2%	1%	2%	2%
	Discrimination	8%	3%	3%	6%	7%	4%	5%
<b>Economic problems</b>	Income insecurity	12%	15%	18%	13%	22%	16%	16%
	Unfair pay	12%	4%	13%	3%	11%	8%	8%
	Value of labour	12%	4%	4%	2%	4%	4%	5%
<b>Workplace related problems</b>	Workplace conditions	10%	10%	7%	13%	7%	9%	9%
	Exposure to chemicals	6%	4%	0%	0%	1%	2%	2%
	Safety at work	4%	6%	3%	10%	9%	7%	6%
	Others	4%	2%	3%	2%	0%	0%	3%

It is notable that more men than women reported violence, harassment, gender-based harassment, alcohol abuse and discrimination as prevalent problems (2-8% of all male respondents). Since the question was open-ended to whether the respondent had been subject to any of the identified problems or whether these problems generally exist at the mining site, these quantitative findings do not allow the identification of gender-specific challenges for women miners.

The prevalence of problems by study area may indicate the magnitude of a problem on a local level; however, bias effects due to underreporting and the small sample size need to be considered for the analysis of findings. For example, while alcohol abuse was mentioned by at least one respondent at each study area, the maximum number of cases was reported in Altai (10%; n=9) and Yusunbulag (12%; n=6). General and sexual harassment as well as violence were reported by 19 respondents, mainly in Yusunbulag (8%, n=11) and Altai (6%, n=50).

## Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) is not limited to physical or sexual violence; it can also include words, gestures or other actions with the purpose to humiliate, control, deprive or harm another person because of their gender or gender identity. GBV can be exercised in many different forms such as physical, sexual, societal or economical abuse and it can be carried out in many different places such as public spaces, the workplace or at home (GAC, 2020). GBV at the mine site, or in other places, is difficult to address in a quantitative survey since participants tend to prefer not to disclose sensitive information in a formal interview setting. Reports on gender issues in Mongolia indicate that GBV is widely prevalent in the general population. A report from NSO and the UN Population Fund (2018) for example found that 30% of women in Mongolia experienced physical violence and 20% economic violence (e.g., prohibiting women from getting a job or denying money for

household expenses). In the general population, GBV is on the rise in Mongolia, including sexual harassment at the workplace. While GBV was addressed in KII and in the in-depth study with 30 women miners, several women decided not to answer questions pertaining GBV.

One third of the respondents (n=10) mentioned that they have not seen or heard of GBV or domestic violence in places where they live, and 6 respondents decided not to answer the question. However, almost half of the respondents (n=14) have heard from or seen women face elements of GBV in their local area. Of those, 6 women had observed incidences at the mining site, whereas 8 women said that GBV would usually occur at home. Some key informants explained the low prevalence of GBV at mine sites by the fact that husband and wife often work together, and that the presence of family members offers some protection against GBV carried out by non-related men. In fact, the number of unmarried, single, or divorced women in the survey was low.

However, while this might explain a lower prevalence of open GBV such as sexual harassment of women, this finding is not an indicator for the absence of GBV at the domestic level or the mine site.

A report of the Asia Foundation (2013) found that GBV in ASM tends to be low and often related to alcohol consumption. The majority of women (n=18) expressed that excessive alcohol consumption is associated with GBV mainly at home, but also at the mine site; women stated that incidences of excessive drinking barely occurred at mine sites. However, other studies show that alcohol use at informal ASM sites is high (Asia Foundation, 2013). Excessive drinking at the soum level was mainly linked to lack of income and poverty in Altai and Yusunbulag soum. As observed by some interviewers from the project team, debt, lack of job opportunities at the soum level, no access to mining land and the economic impact of COVID-19 on local businesses has led to frustration and behavioral changes among communities in soums. This has resulted in a rise in violence. As well, this finding underlines the importance of ASGM as an important income source among local communities, as it helps to improve livelihoods and reduce poverty-related violence.

To eliminate GBV, women suggested socializing relevant communities and organizing trainings for both men and women miners, covering topics such as ‘human psychology’ and behaviour (i.e., gender identity and power relations), as well as family development. In fact, the ASM NF organized a group training on GBV in 2019. According to an official, the training was productive, because women miners gained knowledge on GBV. For instance, the women miners learned that verbal abuse and touching a woman’s body without consent counts as GBV, and how they can defend themselves. The women also learned that they can apply for benefits in case their husbands divorced them.

More research is required to better understand the prevalence and drivers of GBV in the sector, as well as at the domestic level in mining communities.

## Opportunities

Women were asked during the in-depth study to identify opportunities for women in the ASGM sector. Almost all interviewed women miners (27 out of 30 women) identified advantages to working in the sector. One of the major opportunities identified included the possibility of women to be involved in the management of ASGM organizations due to women’s better organizational skillsets – compared to most men (12 out of 30 women). The survey also identified that women have a better knowledge of legislative frameworks and permitting processes. Moreover, based on some women’s feedback, women miners tend to follow occupational health and safety regulations and work more cautiously than men miners at mining sites. The existing knowledge, skill sets and interest in capacity building among women miners offers a great opportunity to empower women to serve as change agents for formalization and better mining practices, including due diligence compliance, in the sector.

Furthermore, 10 out of 30 women stated better income opportunities in ASGM compared to other jobs available for women, as well as the opportunity to work in a position with decision-making powers such as financial management (8 out of 30 women).

*“In my understanding, working in ASGM gives me the opportunity to earn more salary than working in other jobs. For example, I used to work as a teacher at one of the local colleges and I needed money to let my daughter attend an international tennis contest in 2015. Because my daughter should have deposited 5,000,000 MNT into a bank account as a price fund to attend that contest. However, I didn’t have such an amount of money, so I decided to join a group of people who go for gold. As a result, I was able to collect the money for my daughter within a month, which was a big opportunity for us.”*

**In-depth study, women miner, Khovd aimag**

Few interviewed women miners responded that women working in the sector also have the advantage of access to training for personal development, or the option to approach local authorities to report and seek support for solving their problems. This opportunity only exists for women working in formalized organizations. This indicates that the formalization of an ASGM organization is an important prerequisite to obtaining support from local authorities. More research is required to understand in how far women miners have been reaching out to local authorities to seek support for gender-related issues, and in how far local authorities are currently able to provide gender-specific support. Overall, the qualitative survey participants noted that formalization of the artisanal mining sector has provided women and men with the opportunity to have reliable and secure jobs in the industry.

However, with the formalization of the ASGM sector, there is also a need for the development of a more favorable work environment for women and men miners. This will allow more women miners to take on leading roles or tackle the problem of a double burden of work faced by many women (Section 6). A senior officer with the MMHI explained that the government responded to these challenges by approving the “Gender-responsive policy in the geology, mining, petroleum and heavy industry sectors (2019-2026)”. Although the policy primarily targets issues surrounding large mining operations,

such as 14-day work rosters in organized shift work and family separation, some aspects are also relevant for the ASGM sector. The policy targets the implementation of “*special measures*” and other activities in various forms to enable an environment that addresses gender-specific needs adequately in all levels of public and private spheres in the extractive sector; ensure work-life balance of all employees in the sector; ensure equitable participation and representation of women and men on management levels across the sector, including in ministries, agencies, government offices, and in business entities and organizations; and ensure equal distribution of benefits to men and women in all spheres.” (MMHI, 2019).

To implement this policy in the ASM sector, more capacity building might be required for local government officials to facilitate adequate gender-responsive interventions in a less formalized sector. According to information from KII, the MMHI together with the NGO Women in Mining Mongolia, is planning to conduct training on the main gender concepts, gender-sensitive policy, and gender-sensitive budgeting.

## 6. Gender Dynamics in the Domestic Sphere

While the survey mainly focused on the occupational sphere and its gender dynamics, the survey also captured two aspects of the domestic sphere: the gender division of household chores and decision-making powers at the household level. Since artisanal miners often work together with family members, power dynamics and workload at the household level can also impact gender dynamics at the mining site.

### 6.1 Gender Division of Domestic Labour

The “Time Use Survey” conducted by the National Statistics Office in 2015 revealed that women spend an average of 3.4 hours (203 minutes) per day on housework, compared to 1.2 hour (69 minutes) spent by men, indicating that most of the domestic work in Mongolia is performed by women. Rural women tend to spend more time on unpaid domestic work, including caring for children and the elderly. Results from the survey among artisanal miners showed that women spend on average 5 hours per day (35 hours per week) on household chores and men almost 4 hours per day (27 hours per week). However, compared with data from the Time Use Survey, this data might be biased due to overreporting of hours, especially among men. Figure 26 shows that one in 10 male respondents (21%) spent less than ten hours per week on household chores. The distribution of tasks (Figure 27) also indicates that weekly work hours on household chores was overreported by male respondents.

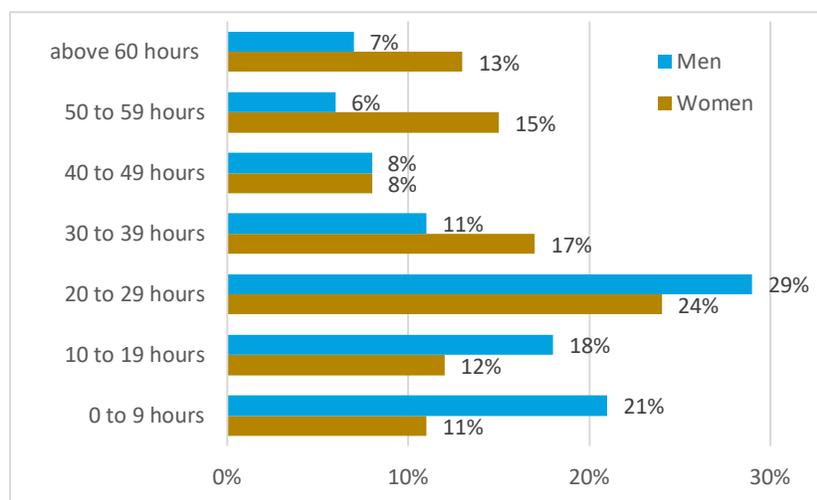


Figure 26. Participation in domestic chores at home and time spent (per week), by gender (n= 100 women, 271 men)

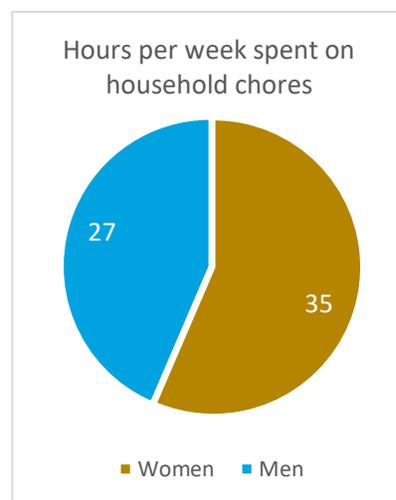
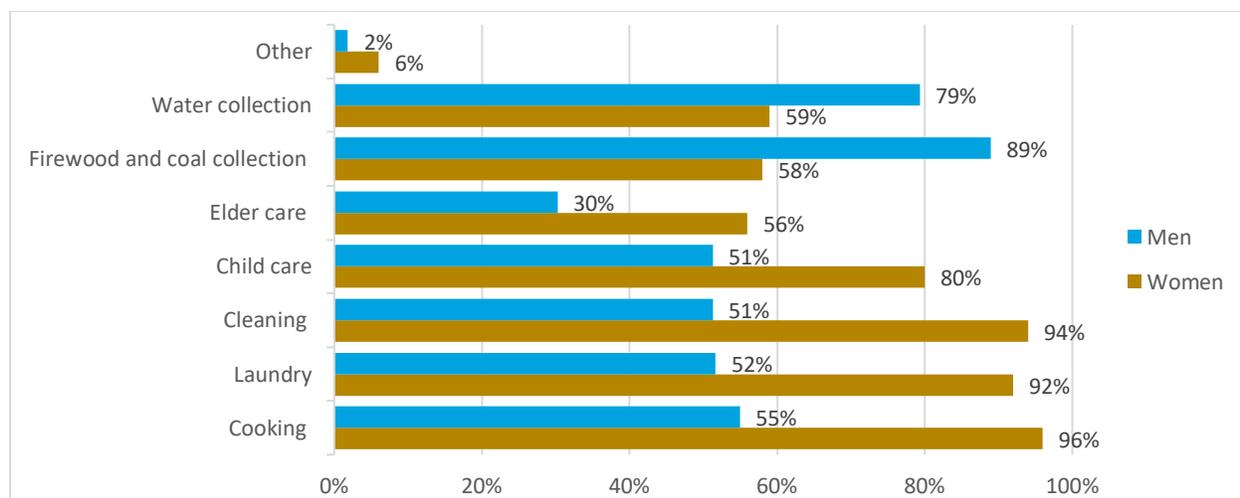


Figure 27. Time spent for participation in domestic chores

Figure 28 shows that women bear the main responsibility for most domestic chores, especially cooking, laundry, cleaning ( $\geq 92\%$ ), caring for children and the elderly ( $\geq 56\%$ ), whereas men are mainly responsible for chores outside the house (i.e. collecting water, firewood and coal ( $> 79\%$ )).



*Figure 28: Gender division of domestic labor (n= 100 women, 271 men; multiple answers recorded, total=1,651)*

The contribution of men miners to household chores might also be influenced by industry specifics, such as work shifts lasting for 8-9 hours as reported by the survey participants. However, the average working days in a week and daily work hours spent by women and men miners in artisanal mining did not differ significantly and was only slightly higher among men (Table 1).

Overall, the data indicates that while men are contributing to different household duties, women are still affected by a traditional gender division of domestic labour, causing longer workdays for women. The double work burden consisting of productive and reproductive work can cause physical exhaustion and stress in women. The higher workload also needs to be considered when planning training activities for mining communities to ensure that women have time to participate.

## **6.2 Gender Division of Decision-Making**

The decision-making process within a household impacts the gender dynamic within a family; these dynamics at the domestic level can also impact gender dynamics at the mining site. For example, prevalent norms impact how women's and men's roles are judged at home and at work. Factors such as who contributes to the family income, age, education, marital status, and presence or absence of children can influence the level of gender equality within a household.

Within the survey, respondents were asked to identify the person usually in-charge of decisions related to major household expenses, daily household purchases and visits to relatives. The objective was to measure women's and men's roles in decision-making at the household level. This household decision-making scale has been used with women and men in 12 countries (C-Change, 2011).

Among the survey participants, decisions about major household expenses are mainly made by several household members (60%), but in 25% of all cases by the husband alone (Table 5). If the man is considered to be the main bread winner within a household, then procurement of significant assets tends to be made by the man. This increases the probability that men may claim ownership over assets, e.g. in case of a divorce.

*Table 5. Key decision makers within the household among married respondents, by gender persisting patriarchal culture and traditions in which women are in charge of daily household chores and total*

	Women (n=87)	Men (n=211)	Total (n=298)
<b>Who usually makes decisions about major household expenses (e.g., car, housing, livestock)?</b>			
I decide alone	17%	24%	22%
My spouse decides	22%	12%	15%
I decide with my spouse	56%	62%	60%
I decide together with other family members	5%	2%	3%
<b>Who usually makes decisions about daily household purchases (e.g., groceries, clothes)?</b>			
I decide alone	71%	7%	26%
My spouse decides	11%	64%	48%
I decide with my spouse	15%	26%	22%
I decide together with other family members	2%	4%	3%
<b>Who usually makes decisions about visits to relatives?</b>			
I decide alone	32%	15%	20%
My spouse decides	8%	23%	19%
I decide with my spouse	57%	60%	59%
I decide together with other family members	2%	2%	2%

Decisions about daily household purchases such as groceries are usually done by women. Since women are mainly in charge of household chores such as cooking and cleaning, this is not surprising and though it indicates some autonomy about daily household items, it does not indicate greater decision-making powers than men. It can rather be linked to a persisting patriarchal culture and traditions in which women are in charge of daily household chores and are responsible for the procurement of food and supplies. Decisions about family visits were again mainly made by husband and wife or several family members (59%), rarely by the spouse only (8%).

The findings of the in-depth study confirm these decision-making practices. The majority of respondents (17 out of 30 women) agreed that they had mutual discussions with their spouses when making household related decisions. Seven women expressed that women miners usually have leading roles in the management of family issues, whereas five women stated that men dominate decisions at home. These findings are in line with other reports on gender roles in Mongolia in general and in the ASM sector in particular that state that women have equal or dominant decision-making powers at the household level, but also bear the majority of household chores (Asia Foundation, 2013). Therefore, decision-making powers at the household level are not necessarily a direct indicator for gender equality within the household. However, control over the household can also be an empowering factor, as the quote from a respondent from Tunkhel village describes:

*“In my opinion, the women have more leading roles within the household than men. I think we usually follow a matriarchal pattern within the household in our community. For example, I am responsible for spending and managing the family budget and my husband agrees to this. I also know many women who have similar family tasks as me and participate more powerfully in decision-making within the household in our areas.”*

**In-depth study, women miner, Selenge aimag**

## 7. Conclusions

Gender dynamics were mainly characterized by respondents as being neutral; while there is a gender division of labour at the mining site, sharing of benefits and decision-making seem to be gender equitable within many mining organizations. The gender mapping also showed that women have been able to profit more from capacity building than men, and that women are using their education, work knowledge and skills to fulfill administrative tasks which also lead to more engagement in decision-making. Access to decision-making and leadership seems to be determined more by skills than by gender. The existing knowledge, skill sets and interest in capacity building among women miners offer a great opportunity to empower women to serve as change agents for formalization and better mining practices, including environmental performance, OHS and gender equality in the sector.

However, not all women have the same access to these positions and many women are only involved in auxiliary services. More research is required to understand which factors lead to differences in status among women in mining organizations: the sample size was too small and the topic too sensitive to draw conclusions based on the data set, in how far for example education or status within the organization cause higher levels of gender-based discrimination in the sector.

Women also face challenges, which seem less linked to contextual factors within the artisanal mining sector but cultural factors that lead to a double work burden of women and an increased exposure to gender-based violence at home. Alcohol and poverty were identified as major drivers of GBV.

Overall, the artisanal gold sector offers a viable livelihood option for women due to flexible work hours, equal pay and the possibility to strengthen their leadership position (Asia Foundation 2013). Formalization can improve the situation of women miners since it mitigates some of the risks that are inherent in the informal sector.

## 8. Recommendations

### **Gender-disaggregated data for evidence-based decision-making**

The study revealed a lack of gender-disaggregated data in the artisanal mining sector at the soum level which impedes gender-sensitive planning and monitoring of the sector. Hence, any routine and periodic data collection efforts should collect, store and report data gender-disaggregated, including also other relevant information such as education, family status, age and formalization status of the respondent. This will support monitoring and evaluation efforts by checking whether social programmes and other support directed at artisanal miners reach the target groups.

### **Improve existing policies**

In order to implement the “Gender-Responsive Policy in Geology, Mining, Petroleum and Heavy Industry Sector (2019-2026)”, different stakeholders such as national researchers, the ASM NF and other parties should discuss and suggest strategies to implement adequate gender policies in the artisanal mining sector. The policy can support women in achieving a better work-life balance and at the same time strengthen women to take on leadership positions in the sector. These measures in the ASGM sector can also make an important contribution to close the gender-equality gap in the Mongolian labour market (see Khan & Aslam, 2013). In addition, more capacity building on gender, gender policies and gender-sensitive budgeting is required especially at the local level amongst government officials.

### **Gender and human rights training within the sector**

In addition to the recommendations outlined in the section on capacity building in general, training on gender and human rights is required for women miners, men miners and leaders to enhance their understanding of what gender and gender equality means, how gender identities are formed, how roles and expectations are created in society, and how gender can be mainstreamed in the sector. This also entails training on gender-based violence and human rights, covering different forms of GBV and strategies to mitigate and reduce GBV, including women empowerment, community support and involvement of local authorities.

### **Establish and promote women’s organizations**

The study areas had no women’s organizations, indicating a low level of organization among women miners; those organizations can provide an important institutional setting to provide further capacity and offer a space for women empowerment. In addition, those women’s organizations could elect a representative that would receive further training to act as a local gender focal point. Those focal points can for example monitor the implementation of gender-sensitive policies at the mining site, report violations as well as advocate for women’s needs and voice women’s concerns.

In addition, infrastructural deficits at mining sites pose a challenge for women and men; the support to build gender-sensitive spaces reflecting the special needs of women and men at mining sites, including gender-sensitive arrangements for men's and women's toilets and showers would improve the situation at work.

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# planet**GOLD** Mongolia

The Global Environment Facility funded planetGOLD Mongolia is led by the United Nations Environment Programme and United Nations Industrial Development Organization and executed by the Artisanal Gold Council in partnership with the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, Mongolia.

The planetGOLD programme seeks to contribute to the elimination of mercury in the artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) sector through the provision of support for the government to develop and implement policies to enhance formalization of the ASGM sector, facilitate miners' access to formal gold markets and capital to purchase mercury-free processing equipment as well as to introduce responsible mining, gender and environmental practices in targeted ASGM areas.

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