



Small ventures, big hopes

Tanzania's artisanal and small-scale miners are fuelled by determination and hope



Acknowledgements

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Mrs Mwanahamisi Mzalendo

Mrs Mariam Hassan

Mrs Mary Nicolas Dismas

Mrs Rehema Peter Mushi

Mr Amati Ngerera

Mrs Shamsa Diwani

Interviews by Gabriela Flores

Photos by Magali Rochat

**This booklet is based on a long read, available at:
www.iied.org/small-ventures-big-hopes**

Introduction

Tanzania's artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) sector is a vibrant and growing part of the country's economy. Some one-and-a-half million people are directly involved in ASM, and many more depend on the sector for their livelihoods.

The government has launched several initiatives to promote ASM, but the sector is still struggling to realise its full potential. Limited access to technology, data, skills, finance and markets hampers its ability to deliver economic growth and sustainable development.

The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) is convening a global series of dialogues on ASM. We aim to encourage a more inclusive and responsible mining sector by running dialogue processes that bring together a

wide range of stakeholders, including ASM operators, ASM associations, mining companies, government officials, local communities and civil society organisations to explore issues, build trust and find pathways for reform.

We travelled across Northern Tanzania to meet ASM miners and their communities. We met optimism and determination — especially among women, who make up 27 per cent of Tanzania's ASM sector and who often face the greatest hardships.

This booklet provides an insight into the lives and hopes of those involved in ASM in Tanzania. We will be sharing their stories at an ASM dialogue in Tanzania in November 2017 and beyond at national and global levels.





“If you work together, you do better”



Sharing the risks, sharing the benefits

Mwanahamisi Mzalendo is one of many women involved in Tanzania’s ASM sector. She has a licence to quarry limestone. She says: “We get the money for our children’s school fees. We get the food from here. Even the houses that we built come from this business.”

Artisanal licensees blast solid rock into rubble, which they crush — often by hand — into smaller pieces. The rocks are sorted by size and labourers carry the rocks out of the mine in small crates. The rocks are sold to local people who use them to build their homes.

Mwanahamisi has three children and one grandchild, and started quarrying some 20 years ago. In 2010, she and two other women, Mwanamkasi Rasi and Juliana Mananga, decided to pool their

resources. Every day they set aside a small sum towards their licence fee, taxes and a contingency fund.

Mwanahamisi got the idea of teaming up with others at a workshop on entrepreneurial skills run by the government and the International Labour Organisation. “If you work together, you do better,” she says.

Their businesses are doing better, but still they don’t have funds to buy equipment.

“I would like my children and grandchildren to do this work, but not the way I’m doing it,” says Mwanahamisi. “If they get the good technology and advanced machines, I would love to see my children and grandchildren do this in the future because this is a good business.”



Opportunities for micro entrepreneurs

At the side of a road leading to several quarries, Mariam Hassan operates a tiny restaurant for mine labourers.

Her breakfast offering consists of two or three warm chapattis and a cup of tea costing about 300 Tanzanian shillings (about US\$0.12).

Mariam is one of the many micro entrepreneurs who earn a living by providing services to quarry workers. She had to find work to support her children after she separated from her husband, and she carries her youngest child on her back during the hour-long walk from home.

“Business is not paying much but I can support myself,” says Mariam while preparing chapattis for the breakfast crowd. She would like to expand her restaurant, but lacks the capital to buy supplies in bigger quantities. As an informal business owner, she can’t get a loan from banks.

While there are other jobs for women, Mariam says that they are not as profitable as her small restaurant. “Working in a shop or staying in the farm, you don’t earn much money, so I came to the mine. There’s better business here because of the mines.”

“Business is not paying much but I can support myself”





Lack of funds limits progress

Mary Nicolas Dismas is an artisanal producer of green garnets. A widow with three grown daughters, Mary Nicolas supports her extended family.

Her site is small and simple. The lack of investment and equipment are obvious. At present she does not have the money to employ helpers, so she is working the site alone. But none of this seems to dampen her spirits.

“Sometimes I don’t have enough money for the running costs so I have to go and do other work, like farm work, to raise money for the site and to support my family,” she says.

The local women miners used to sell stones to local traders by the kilo. At a recent workshop run by Pact and the Gemological Institute of America (GIA), they learnt that they could make more money by first sorting stones by quality and selling them in sub-lots.

“My brother asks: ‘Why do you keep wasting your time over there when you don’t get enough, why don’t you find something else to do,’” says Mary Nicolas. “But I don’t want to stop because I have hope in this area.” Her hope, she says, is to find a big stone that will change her life once and for all.

“I don’t want to stop because I have hope in this area”





“It’s not just for me;
it’s for everyone”

Building a business

Rehema Peter Mushi mines red garnets and sapphires. She recently won a large grant from a government programme funded by the World Bank. The money will enable her to get an excavator to remove rock after blasting and a compressor to power jackhammers to drill the rock.

“The grant will change the business a lot. I’ve been waiting for this for a long time. We are working hard and will produce more. Lives are going to change,” says Rehema.

Gemstone sites generally employ both men and women. After blasting, it takes one day for 15 male labourers to remove roughly 300 kilograms of debris from the pit. It takes another day to sieve the rubble to separate out the gems. Finally, it takes three days for five female labourers to sort the gems according to their fluorescence and shine. With an excavator, they will be able to move the rock faster and to blast more often.

Rehema says that she is thinking big — and she knows she needs to grow her skills too. “I want to learn about management, supervising workers, and marketing,” she says. “You cannot do everything by yourself. You need to find people who can help. But I feel good about the process.”

“If I get this [company] right, it will help me and my family, but it will also help others and their families. It’s not just for me; it’s for everyone.”







“They create jobs and opportunities for more people”



Investment boosts local employment

Three months ago, Amati Ngerera and his partners secured finance from a private investor. The site's productivity has increased considerably: they are set to produce about 35 kilograms of green garnet per month.

Their investor, Sadat Ahmed Abdullah, financed the purchase of the excavator and lights for night work. He also teaches women labourers, most of whom come from the local Masaaï community, to sort the gemstones.

Amati says: “He’s a good man. Sometimes he sleeps in his car and doesn’t make it home. He works hard.”

The site employs 12 miners who work in shifts, day and night, and eight women who sort stones. The mineworkers are mostly young

men from nearby villages. “When they arrive, most know nothing about mining and learn at the site,” says Amati. “They come to find work. We teach them how to do mining.” He adds that if the mineworkers were not employed at his site, they would be working in farms or unemployed.

Amati chairs Tanga’s Regional Miners Association (TAREMA), which represents Tanga’s miners at the national level. “If small-scale miners are empowered they can contribute to the economic development of the country,” he says. He notes that there are 3,000 small-scale miners in Tanga. “They pay taxes and the country economy grows. They create jobs and opportunities for more people.”



Building relationships along the supply chain

Shamsa Diwani fell in love with gemstones as a young woman. She registered her first mining company in the 1970s, but did not succeed. Years later she tried again — but becoming a miner at age 51 was too hard. Unwilling to give up on her love of gems, she now focuses on processing stones into jewellery and ornaments.

As a past secretary general of the Tanzania Women Miners Association (TAWOMA), Shamsa knows the struggles of women in artisanal mining. “Women are always suffering in mining. It’s really hard. But they have determination and a passion. But it’s very hard unless we have investors. Maybe you work together — otherwise, it is not easy.”

Her Mineral Value Addition Company supports miners, cutters, polishers and artisans across the trajectory from mine to buyer. There are 52 members, all women, who pay registration fees and pool their resources — however small — every month.

Shamsa checks how the stones that she buys are mined. The market seems to be interested in her approach. She says: “Jewellers want to know where stones come from and I can tell them that they come from women I trust.”

Shamsa says: “I won’t do this for many more years but I want other people to benefit from this sector because this sector I feel is good.”

“I want other people to benefit from this sector”





IIED is a policy and action research organisation promoting sustainable development and linking local priorities to global challenges. We are based in London and work on five continents with some of the world's most vulnerable people to strengthen their voice in the decision-making arenas that affect them.

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