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GrOW Project

“Growth in West Africa: impacts of extractive industry on women’s economic empowerment in Cote d’Ivoire & Ghana”

POLICY BRIEF

“Undermining women economic empowerment (WEE) in Ghana through underrepresentation and lower earnings of women in the extractive sector”

INTRODUCTION

Ghana’s strong growth performance over the last decade has been driven largely by remarkable growth of the extractive sector, including mining, quarrying and oil extraction. Indeed, the highest economic growth of 14% in the history of the country recorded in 2011 was aided by the commencement of commercial oil production during that year. The sector holds the highest annual average growth rate of 29.9% over 2007-2016, constitutes the leading foreign exchange earner and contributes significantly to national revenue. Even though the sector’s contribution to direct employment is quite minimal due to the capital-intensive nature of operations, it is the sector with the fourth highest average basic hourly earnings in 2013, beside the provision of indirect jobs through upstream and downstream extractive activities.

GENDER CONCERNS

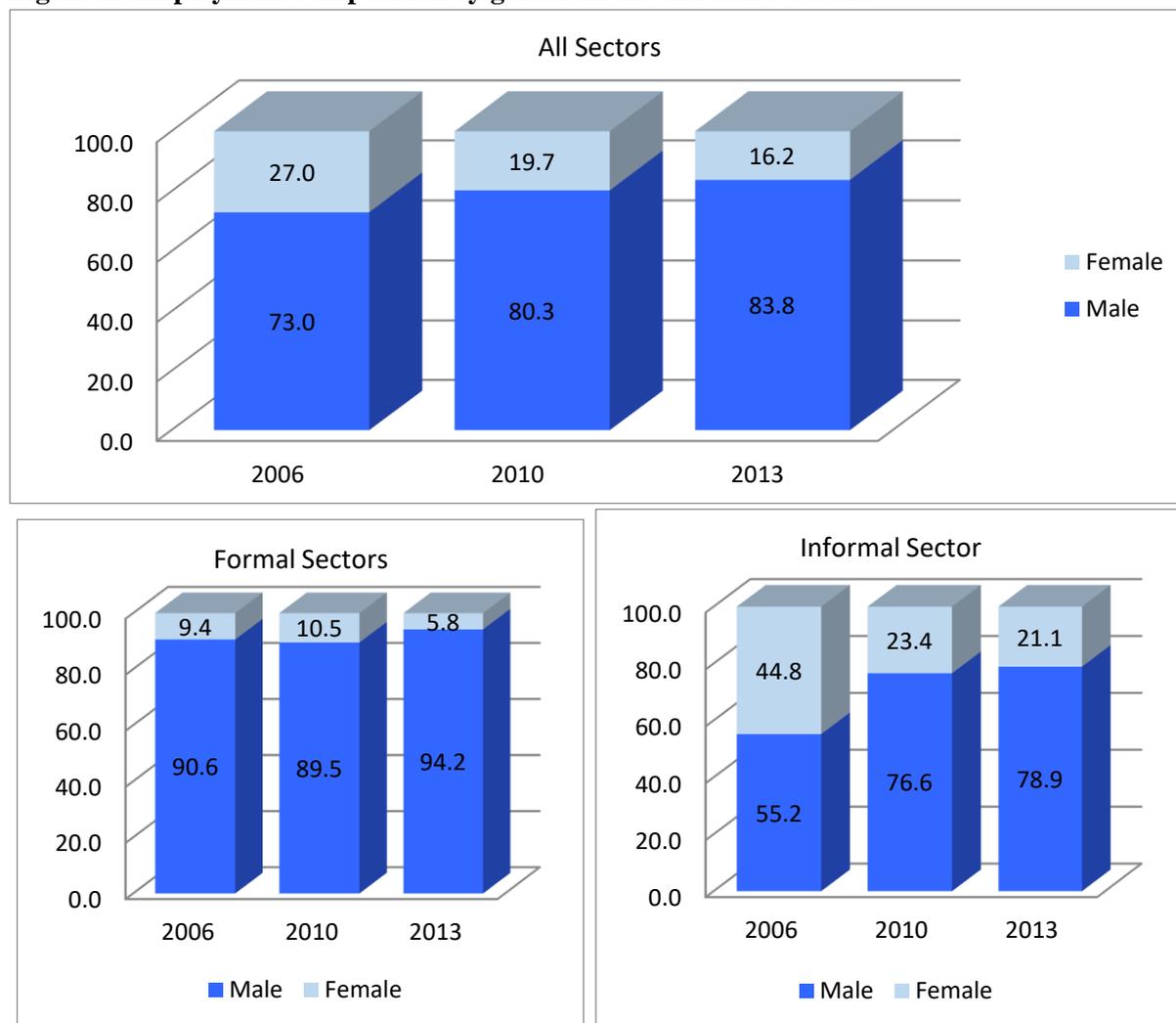
The inclusiveness of the benefits derived from extractive activities particularly along gender lines remains a major concern. Essentially, inclusiveness of growth depends largely on the participation of all citizens in the growth process. Available statistics indicates the dominance of men in all spheres of extractive activities with implication for undermining the country’s quest for promoting women economic empowerment. Thus, even though economic growth can be seen as key to enhancing WEE, it depends on the source of the growth and how women are involved in the economic growth process.

EVIDENCE OF GENDER DIFFERENCES IN EXTRACTIVES

Women constituted just about a quarter (i.e. 27.0%) of all extractive workers in 2006 and this declined to 16.2% in 2013. Female share is lower in the formal sector where earnings are better with well-defined working conditions, compared to the informal extractive sector. In 2013, females accounted for only 5.8% in the formal extractive sector compared to 21.1% in

the informal sector suggesting that gender composition in the sector is clearly skewed in favour of men.

Figure 1: Employment composition by gender in the extractive sector.



Source: Computed from 2010 Population and Housing Census, GLSS V and GLSS VI

Disaggregation of employment composition by major activities in extractives shows gender imbalance in all extractive activities in Ghana, particularly petroleum and gas and mining. Female composition is highest in quarrying (44.3%) where technology usage and education requirement is very low. The composition of females is lowest in the petroleum and gas industry followed by mining – the two extractive activities associated with higher earnings and better employment conditions.

Table 1: Gender composition in various extractive activities

Extractives	Male	Female	Total
Mining	85.9	14.1	100.0
Gold	85.6	14.4	100.0
Diamond & other mining	87.5	12.5	100.0
Quarrying	55.7	44.3	100.0
Petroleum & Gas	92.3	7.7	100.0

Source: Computed from GLSS VI of 2012/13

Women are woefully underrepresented in high skilled extractive jobs, which are equally high earning extractive jobs in Ghana. Men dominate all activities that require high expertise while women are predominantly found in elementary and other ancillary jobs, which do not require much skill or education to accomplish. Generally, women’s responsibilities in mineral processing activities range from crushing, grinding, sieving, washing and panning, to amalgamation and amalgam decomposition in the case of gold mining (see Hilton et al., 2003).

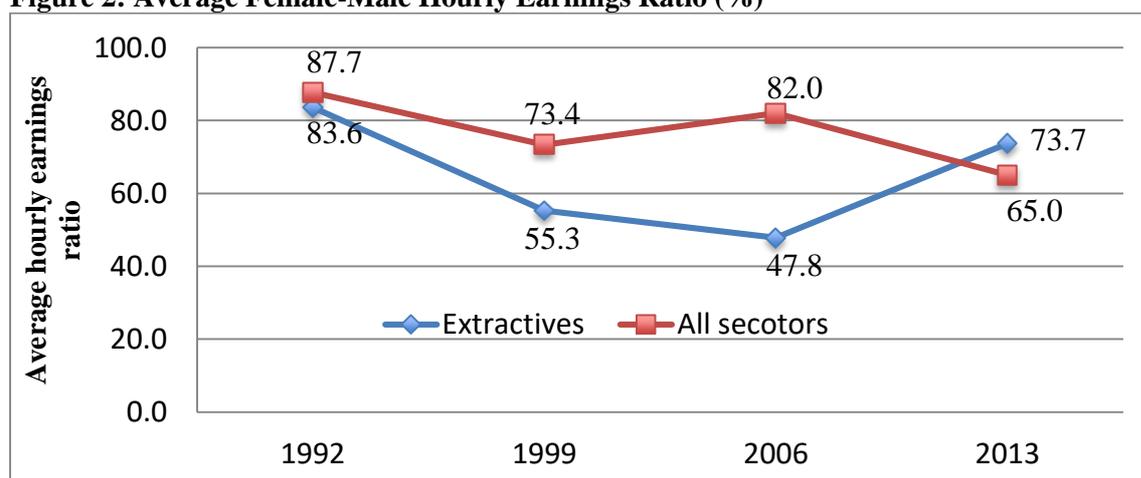
Table2: Job Positions in Extractive Sector 2013

Status on the Job	Mining & Petroleum		Quarrying		All extractives	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
High Skilled	11.4	8.9	4.4	0.0	9.9	4.0
Semi-skilled	3.2	2.2	0.0	1.8	2.6	3.0
Production	41.3	28.9	22.1	20.4	37.4	24.0
Elementary	41.6	60.0	70.6	72.2	47.6	66.0
Other	2.6	0.0	2.9	5.6	2.6	3.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Computed from GLSS VI of 2012/13

Not surprisingly, women in the extractive sector on average earn less than their male counterparts. In 1992, female average earnings in the extractive sector were 83.6% of that of males compared to 87.7% in the entire labour market. This declined to 47.8% in 2006 while the ratio for the entire labour market stood at 82.0%. Average earnings of females in the extractive sector improved significantly in 2013 at 73.7% overtaking the entire labour market at 65.0%. Thus, in general female average earnings remain lower than their male counterparts particularly in the extractive sector, which has the potential of undermining WEE.

Figure 2: Average Female-Male Hourly Earnings Ratio (%)



Source: Computed from GLSS 3,4,5 & 6

KEY OBSERVATIONS

Extractive is tedious and physically demanding: Many women shy away from extractives particularly mining because they find the job to be tedious, physically demanding and dangerous and that most women are not able to withstand the working conditions. This is

confirmed by the adage “*barima beko Tarkwa*”¹ as a clear evidence of masculinity of mining activity resulting in the underrepresentation of women in mining activity.

Patriarchy and intimidating behavior of male workers against female workers: Some discouraging comments about women involvement in mining, as “work for men” by their male counterparts are also a major factor contributing to weak participation of women in extractives. Indeed, some women who operate excavators or drive tipper trucks are intimidated in the course of their work with the excuse that such activities are the preserve for men.

Primitive cultural beliefs and norms: The general confinement of women in elementary occupations away from core extractive activities is blamed on some primitive beliefs and cultural norms. Women are often not allowed to get closer to the actual extraction particularly among small scale miners with the belief that a woman in her menstrual period getting closer to the digging area would drive away the mineral deposits.

Isolated mining sites away from town: the “isolated” nature of mining sites (mostly out of town) tends to discourage particularly women from engaging in mining and that engagement in mining competes with time for family which women find it difficult to cope.

Lower Education of women than men: education of women in extractives is far lower than men, such that only 5.0% of female workers in extractives have at least secondary education compared with 21.0% for males in 2013. The unequal educational level is worse in mining and petroleum extraction than quarrying and this largely explains the lower job status of women and earnings differences in favour of men. A decomposition analysis using econometric technique indicates that between 10% and 19.0% of gender earnings differences in 2013 is attributable to gender differences in education in favour of men. Women underrepresentation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) also explains women underrepresentation in high-skilled occupation in extractives in Ghana. Additionally, non-exposure of girls to prospects in mining related disciplines in school and cultural barriers that tend to perceive women as better in the kitchen are also to be blamed for lower representation at the top of the echelon of the job ladder in extractives.

POLICY THOUGHTS

Bridging gender gap in education particularly in STEM to improve women access to high skilled jobs in the extractive sector and reduce gender earnings gap which education contributes between 10% and 20% in extractives. The promotion of science education for females at the secondary school level would get more girls into STEM including Geology and improve their access into core activities in extractives. Few women who pursued programs in STEM and managed to break into male dominated core extractive activities could serve as role models for young females in schools to address the negative perception that STEM education is the preserve of boys while humanities belong to girls.

Public education on primitive cultural beliefs: public education against primitive cultural beliefs that tend to keep female mining workers away from core mining activities could be a breakthrough initiative to reverse the confinement of women in elementary occupations.

Enforcement of labour regulation and firms code of ethics: to address the harassment and intimidation of female mining workers by their male counterpart. Indeed, all firms that participated in this research have sexual harassment policies and code of ethics and thus its enforcement would minimize “hidden” intimidation against female mine workers.

¹ Literary translates, as “a man would go to Tarkwa a mining town”.

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