

## Ugandan women miners mobilising for change



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**By Betty Obbo**

**Today October 15, 2015, is World Food Day and International Rural Women's Day.**

The WoMin, an African Gender and Extractives Alliance in collaboration with National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE) launch its Participatory Action and Research (PAR) on women miners from Katwe Salt Lake, Western Uganda.

The PAR is part of a seven community based studies of women and mineral/oil-based development carried out by WoMin alliance members in Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda, South Africa and Zimbabwe. The launch also coincides with World Food Day and International Rural Women's Day which falls squarely within WoMin's regional work focusing on working class and peasant women in the extractive industries.

As WoMin, NAPE, and local partners recognise the importance of celebrating the International Rural Women's Day theme, "Recognizing the role of women in improving rural development and food security" we wish to acknowledge the numerous injustices inflicted upon women by extractive models of development. For example, women in Hoima have suffered greatly due to the land acquisition process for oil development. We particularly seek to highlight the challenges faced by women salt miners from Katwe Salt Lake in Kasese District.

Salt mining is labour-intensive and involves the use of rudimentary techniques of which women miners are particularly vulnerable and negatively impacted. Common health problems as a result of salt mining include inflammation of the uterus, dehydration, and chemical-induced burns and infection. Due to the influx of transient traders from other parts of Uganda and beyond, the prevalence of HIV infection is also high and women, again, are most vulnerable due to poor access to healthcare and a work environment that can only exacerbate their already precarious circumstances.

Rural women make significant contributions to their local and national economies and to regional and global trade, as smallholder farmers, entrepreneurs and labourers. They are responsible for producing and processing food and feeding and caring for family members – particularly children and the elderly. They also generate income and contribute to the overall well-being of their households. However, in many countries, rural women continue to face discrimination in access to agricultural assets, education, health, employment and other services. Such obstacles prevent them from fully enjoying their fundamental rights and opportunities for growth. Women, as daughters or

workers or both, have no title and are at the bottom of the production chain, notwithstanding the fact that they constitute the majority of harvesters.

Encouragingly, after participating in the Participatory Action Research (PAR) project, women miners at Katwe have deepened their understanding of the impacts of salt mining upon their lives and livelihoods and formed the Katwe Women Salt Miners Association to demand accountability and lobby for appropriate action to improve their livelihoods.

Hosted by NAPE, the launch of the Participatory Action Research takes place on Friday, October 16, 2015 at Riviera Hotel in Hoima, at 12h00 and brings together the District Woman Member of Parliament, the Hon. Tophace Kaawa Ateeny, local communities, organisations and women affected by the extractive sector.

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**<http://www.newvision.co.ug/news/674509-ugandan-women-miners-mobilising-for-change.html>**