

Entry to the  
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## Empowering Women in Sierra Leone’s Mining Communities



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Please note that the following characters and dialogue are fictive and do not reflect a situation that has really happened. However, figures, events and names cited are correct. And nonetheless, just maybe, somewhere in Sierra Leone’s East and major mining area, this dialogue between Fatmata (female activist ♀) and a paramount chief (♂) could have happened...



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♪♪♪ *It's a Man's World, It's a Man's World* ♪♪♪

♪ [Fatmata signing along. The chief approaches] ♪♪

♂: Hey Fatmata, why are you listening to that? Do you understand what you sign?

♀: Honourable chief, just look at Kono, our mining district. It's a man's world!

♂: But you, the women are very present in the sector as well. You do menial work and provide services like catering etc.

♀: Indeed. We also suffer more from the consequences of mining, like water pollution, swamps in the digging holes with mosquitos that make our children get malaria. And I don't even want to mention those lonely miners from other regions who impose themselves if they don't get the attention they want...

♂: I am sorry about that!

♀: Despite all this, there are hardly any women in the community structures that decide about revenues from mining. We should be there to have a say in how this money is spent!

♂: We have one woman in the committee for the DACDF<sup>1</sup>, those allocations from the export duty on the artisanal diamonds. As we have a big number of licenses in our chiefdom, we also get a big share of that pot sent from Freetown. It does not come regularly but is quite substantial.

♀: Yes, but she is the secretary of the community writing down what others say. Let's be honest: Does she speak much herself during the meetings? And would people listen to her and value her opinion?

♂: Hm – initially not so much but since that training with this WOME<sup>2</sup> group, it's getting better. She makes really clear demands now and I had a meeting with her and more women who backed up her two points. They wanted 10% of our DACDF allocation to go to projects they choose. I

think it's a good idea, that way we can make sure they really benefit and can't say later that we picked the wrong projects. The second point was that they want a quota of three women on the DACDF committee in our chiefdom. I don't have a problem with that but we do not want to increase the overall number of people to keep costs for the committee low. The men who would have to give up their seats are not so happy about this idea. We are not used to women speaking up. The committee for the DACDF has been held for quite a long time and until now women have never claimed a seat at the table. I will have to talk to them again. – Aren't you member of that WOME group as well?

♀: Yes, I am. Unfortunately, I was sick and could not attend when you met with my sisters to present you the demands. But I also participated in that training and helped identify strong women in the community who are leadership figures. WOME worked together with GIZ on the training series. That's the Germans. The trainers were from here though. As you know, most of my fellow sisters do not know how to read or write nor speak English; and those Germans don't speak our local language, only a little Krio. Communication with them was difficult when they visited in November 2016 during the first training. Still interesting to hear their opinions and get their reaction to the problems we encounter here with the mining. The trainers did a needs assessment with us, and also with 5 other chiefdoms, about 60 participants in total. Oh, I can tell you, there were so many grievances around these mining activities, and hence also so many ideas how we could spend the community proceeds from it. The trainers helped us to cluster our needs, formulate them as easily measurable demands and finally we had to prioritize and agree on two objectives for this year. That's the ones my sisters presented to you. We also practiced how

<sup>1</sup> Diamond Area Community Development Fund

<sup>2</sup> Women in Mining and Extractives; local NGO in Kono District promoting women's rights around the mining sector.

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to speak in front of people and authorities. You know, most of our community women have been afraid of talking to you.

♂: What? But why? I want to make sure that everyone can have a good life in our community, and I would like to avoid those conflicts and claims of corruption that we had going on in the past. They were really disturbing the peace in our chiefdom.

♀: Unfortunately not all authorities see our participation this way. You have been to those round table discussions that WOME and GIZ organized three weeks ago with the chiefdom committees as a follow-up. All committees of the six chiefdoms where we had meetings with the authorities had shown willingness to meet our demands. However, only two of them have really done so after a year! The others have to follow suit; it's still a long way to go. I hope WOME and GIZ will continue accompanying us on that path. At least awareness for our needs seems to increase: 240 people in total showed up for the roundtables. That is a great turn out and we are really happy about it!

- SMART objectives and priorities, quick wins and follow up
- 240+ participants in exchanges between female activists and (mostly male) local authorities
- Create trust between stakeholders involved in local development

♂: Yes, there seemed to be a lot of interest in the matter. Maybe, some of the people heard about it from other sources. One of my sisters lives in Freetown and has an abonnement with this women's magazine GLOW. She said there was an article about WOME and the needs assessments in the first edition of GLOW this year which she read with great interest. I thought they only write stuff about fashion and politicians or business in Freetown.

♀: Oh, yes! GIZ put us in touch with the editor of this magazine. It was a great way to show what we do to other parts of the

country. Maybe I should get back to the editor again and write something about the CDA<sup>3</sup> process. As you know, I am not part of the chiefdom committee on DACDF but of this newly established community development committee. It's a completely new structure and process, so people might want to know more about it.

♂: That's a good idea. I am not really firm how this new set-up is supposed to work myself, even if, as the chief, I am part of it, of course, and so are the community representatives like you, and also young people and farmers. I don't know if you remember when I was accused of putting some of the social payments this big industrial diamond mining company made, I think they call it Corporate Social Responsibility or CSR in short, in my own pocket. That was in 2012, before the ebola outbreak and right before the elections. This MP<sup>4</sup> from the opposition party wanted to challenge me and my support for our presidential candidate, so he made those allegations up. It was a really tough time for me. I have to admit, those former owners of the big mine seemed dodgy to me but what am I supposed to do? When they offer more money for the chiefdom as compensation for their operations on top of the surface rent, I won't refuse it. But I really had a hard time proving where this money went as there were no receipts or proper records at the National Minerals Agency (NMA) about the transfers, and also none from the supplier who later built the roads I thought were useful. I guess people are very sensitive when it comes to payments from those multinational companies. They always think it'd be much more money than it actually is and they also have no idea how much the development projects they want finally cost. That includes your fellow women's representatives, by the way. And then for companies

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<sup>3</sup> Community Development Agreement

<sup>4</sup> Member of Parliament

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like Koidu Holdings who export diamonds, things are even more politically sensitive due to the role that diamond trade played in financing our horrible civil war.

♀: I have to admit that the trainings helped me to get a better and more realistic idea of the resources available and which projects would be feasible to implement. But chief, with all due respect, you must also understand that people want to witness the negotiations with big companies with their own eyes and ears, even if they usually trust your judgement. I think Sierra Leone's Mines and Minerals Act of 2009 was written in that spirit. It is only good for all of us that this law made it mandatory for holders of industrial mining licenses to negotiate and sign CDAs with their primary host communities like us. That way their social payments can more coherently fund development projects, as the latter are in line with local development plans. This new mechanism makes the CSR payments much more transparent. You also won't have problems anymore with proving what transfers were made as it all goes to a separate banking account. It's just too bad that everything in Sierra Leone takes so long and we could only set up the community development committees and the account in the last two years.

♂: You have to be patient in this country. At least we have established the structure now, and even designed a sophisticated monitoring framework. You must be happy that there is a fix quota of five women in the committee that negotiates and oversees the CDA.

♀: I think donors and companies wanted to make sure that we are not left out again. We welcome that very much! I also participated in meetings to draft a model CDA that should serve other communities and companies in the country as guidance. I think those Germans were involved in that one as well because they also work with the Community Affairs Department of the NMA who oversees the

CDAs from the Government's side. However, during that activity, we women first felt quite useless. We were supposed to advocate on our sisters' behalf but did not know much about industrial mining. You know, this is really a different world than artisanal mining, with all the machinery and long periods of planning and operations. Moreover, none of us was well informed about the CDA process itself; it's quite complex. So we decided together with WOME and GIZ to have further training on those topics for the female representatives and community leaders.

- New mechanism designed with female representation (quota)
- Networking with female employees' representatives of a company
- Growing scope of the activity

♂: I still struggle to become familiar with the CDA myself. What was the training like? Maybe I should ask the Community Affairs Department and GIZ to organize some more training on it for us as well. But I heard they pay very low DSA<sup>5</sup>.

F: The story about the low DSA is true but I am still happy I attended the workshop they organized in September this year. They brought in this amazing trainer, Mrs. Aisha Fofana Ibrahim. She is a member of the "50-50 Group" in Freetown which fights for equal political representation and lecturer for Gender Studies at our best university, Furah Bay College. I personally first had doubts about an academic woman from Freetown teaching us about abstract concepts like gender roles and empowerment. And I had already taken part in the needs assessment and advocacy training last year. But this one really went beyond creating an agenda of demands. The other 20 participants and I really liked how she used interactive methods and managed to link abstract terms to our everyday experiences in our

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<sup>5</sup> Daily substance allowance

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own communities. She created an atmosphere where we could comfortably share our own struggles and challenges as women and relate them to her approaches. We also talked about gender-based violence. Chief, this is really a problem we have to tackle. - And my communication skills have improved further I think. There is still a training series for us starting in December 2017 on the CDA process itself, negotiations, ethics and conflicts of interest. After that, I will be well equipped to assume my role as female leader in the scope of the CDA and have the knowledge and confidence to influence the outcomes of the process. But don't worry. You will see that the whole community will be better off if we women participate more in development efforts.

♂: I guess that remains to be seen. It's still a lot of new aspects in decision-making processes in our community that we have to "digest". Are we the only chiefdom who implements the CDA like that?

♀: No, not at all. The model CDA ensures that the same standards are applied for all CDAs. There are two more of them already signed and not sure how many more are in the pipeline. My aunty who lives in Imperii Chiefdom where this sand miner Sierra Rutile/Iluka signed a CDA told me that they recently had a roundtable with a local NGO and GIZ to assess the training needs for female representatives for their committee, too. So I think they will run a similar training series there very soon. Interestingly, the 22 community women there also met with six members of the female employees' group, Sierra Rutile Women. My aunty did not like most of them before because they came across as quite arrogant with their degrees from abroad but I think this dialogue was the start of a future collaboration of both groups. My aunty also mentioned something about mentorship but I am not sure what that is about. I imagine it will be more effective if also someone within the

company pushes for projects that take women's needs into greater account. Unfortunately, Koidu Holdings does not have such a group among their staff.

♂: Maybe GIZ should suggest it to them!

### Our success factors:

- Reliable and committed partners in civil society and the private sector
- Networking and mentorship
- Quick wins with potential for deepening and up-scaling

♀: I am not really sure if that is their role. Besides, they seem quite busy with providing some more profound content in our upcoming workshops and roll-out similar activities in other mining areas with CDA at the same time. Someone mentioned that ReGo is actually a regional project and they look at what they could do in Guinea, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. And it seems to me that they spend a lot of time with meticulous reporting. One of their employees explained to me that he needs to know all the details about number of participants etc. for their progress report and also one of their project indicators targeting 40% of all CSR money to go to gender-sensitive projects. I am not sure how they will determine when a project is gender-sensitive and when it isn't, though. They also asked us to help them draft a "gender note" where they reported about activities and included many more ideas on gender & mining for their own colleagues. So maybe people in Germany will read about us and our chiefdom too!

♂: That sounds like a lot of effort and work for them. Anyway, I have to go, my wife should be waiting with dinner. Growing up in a family with only sisters, no brothers, believe me, I learnt that you should not get strong women angry at you, even if you are the chief.

♀: Thanks, honourable chief, for the chat. With that confession I see you as an ally so that my daughters will not sign "it's a man's world" anymore. God bless you!