

Talking Points HOM: Mining and Gender Forum, 25 October 2013

Acknowledgements: Ms Ohara Diseko, Special Adviser to the Minister of Mineral Resources (and co-host of this Forum); Deputy Minister, Research & Technical Services, Ministry of Gender and Development, Liberia, Hon. Annette Musu Kiawu; other distinguished guests; our very talented course participants; ladies and gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this Mining and Gender forum. The presence of so many outstanding women and men here today reflects a commitment to women's participation in economic growth, the mining sector in particular.

The Australian Government shares this commitment. As our new Foreign Minister – and first female Foreign Minister I might add – the Hon. Julie Bishop, noted in her recent address to the UN General Assembly, economic growth – driven by the private sector – is the source of development. A strong business sector, open trading rules and liberal foreign investment policies can foster economic growth, prosperity and security.

Economic opportunity, however, must be provided for all people. No-one should be left behind. We must therefore support women's participation and empowerment, including through a post-2015 framework that promotes women's leadership, and extends equal access to employment, resources, education and health services.

Australia's Commitment to Africa's Economic Growth

Australia is optimistic about Africa's development prospects and we see immense opportunities for the continent. I'm sure I don't need to tell an audience like this, but the environment has never been better to realise Africa's economic growth opportunities.

The Economist magazine recognises that Africa is 'rising'. The IMF predicts that four of the world's top 10 fastest-growing economies in the next five years will be from Africa. This positive picture is coupled with more stable political environments and a greater openness to foreign investment.

Australia and Africa are increasingly forging connections in trade and investment – particularly in mining – and through people-to-people links.

- We have a large and growing African diaspora – with around 300,000 people from communities in South Africa, South Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia now living in Australia.
- 14,000 African students are currently studying in Australia – just some of the next generation of African leaders in government, science, medicine, business and, of course, mining.
- In Africa's minerals and resources sector, there are currently more than 200 Australian companies involved in over 700 projects in 37 countries.
- Africa hosts the largest number of Australian mining projects of any region outside Australia – around 40 per cent of all overseas mining projects.
- And the Africa Down Under conference, which has grown every year since 2003, is now the second-largest African mining investment conference in the world (after Mining Indaba in Cape Town).
- Australia and Africa have a great deal to offer one another – we've knowledge and experience to share. Mining is a great example of this.

Mining for Development: A Shared Story

Mining has played an important part in Australia's industrial, economic and social development – the resources sector has contributed over A\$500 billion to Australia's wealth in the 1990s and the first decade of this century, directly and indirectly employing 320,000 Australians.

By 2015, mining's contribution to Australia's GDP alone is projected to soar 66 per cent to A\$83.3 billion, while energy and mineral export earnings are expected to increase by 18 per cent to A\$219 billion.

And we remain an effective manager of substantial foreign investment in the minerals sector – in mid-2011, mining and energy projects underway in Australia were worth about USD176 billion.

Like Australia, Africa is rich in arable land, mineral reserves, and energy deposits with:

- 30 per cent of the world's mineral resources
- 10 per cent of the world's oil reserves
- 8 per cent of the world's natural gas stores.

In 2011, the African region accounted for 10% of global production and 15% of investments signalled by the project pipeline.

This translates to a unique opportunity for transformation and sustained growth. For a number of African countries, well-managed exploitation of natural resources should be one of their most important sources of financing for economic and social development.

The Australian Government shares Africa's mining vision of 'transparent, equitable and optimal exploitation of mineral resources to underpin broad-based sustainable growth and socio-economic development'.

We are committed to supporting African governments to leverage better development outcomes from the exploitation of their mineral wealth – that is, to get a better deal from mining.

The Mining for Development Initiative

Australia understands both the opportunities and the risks of natural resource endowment. African governments have given us a clear message that they believe Australia has a lot to share from its experience. We agree.

So, in late 2011, Australia launched the Mining for Development Initiative, to partner with African countries committed to effective management of the mining sector.

Let me give you some examples of what we have achieved in the last two years:

- Since 2011, we have provided more than 1,200 education and training opportunities to African government officials. This has included hosting more than 500 officials from 33 African countries, on mining study tours like this one.
- We have also offered a range of education, training and professional development opportunities through our Australia Awards (scholarships) program. In 2012, a total of 145 mining-related short course and Masters-level scholarships were delivered to participants from 35 African countries.
- We have provided demand-driven capacity development support to 21 vocational and tertiary training institutions, and 10 government agencies and departments across Africa.

- Australia supports the African Mining Vision adopted by the African Union, and last year committed A\$5 million to its implementation through the African Minerals Development Centre.

Australia's Commitment to Gender

The Australian Government recognises the vital role that women have in driving development in Africa.

According to research outlined in the World Development Report on Gender Equality and Development (2012):

- eliminating barriers that discriminate against women could increase productivity by 25 per cent in many countries;
- women's opportunities, and their ability to make effective choices and influence decisions, shape those of the next generation;

The Australian Government is putting in place a range of practical measures to encourage greater involvement of women in development. For example:

- Our aid program set a target of 30 per cent for women's participation in training and public service programs. We have, in fact, delivered well above this target – close to half the 1,000 scholarships we offered to African participants in 2012 were offered to women.

Australia's Commitment to Gender and Mining

Australia understands that the goal of transforming mineral wealth into sustainable development can only be achieved with the support and contributions of women. So we are ensuring women play an integral role in many of our Mining for Development activities.

- We have supported research in four African countries on issues that affect women in mining communities, such as Land Use Agreements. This is research that will help us all to understand better how sustainable outcomes can be achieved for women through mining activities.
- Education and training for women working in the minerals and related sectors has also been a focus of our work, both through study tours like this one and through short-course and Masters-level scholarships.
- As our recent evaluations have found, these opportunities are having a real impact. For example, the director of a Ghana-based NGO, who attended AusAID's Mining and Communities Study Tour in December 2011, told us that since the study tour she has been able to organise 500 women in 7 communities in the Tanu North District in the Brong Ahafo Region. These women have now been provided with training to ensure they can make informed decisions about new mining operations.
- In October 2012, 30 women from 12 African countries attended our inaugural Women in Mining Forum, co-hosted by South Africa's Minister of Mineral Resources, Hon. Susan Shabangu, before they participated in a two-week Women in Mining study tour to Australia. The success of that Forum and the study tour inspired this year's event, which I hope will generate just as much learning, just as many networks, and just as many friendships.

Your presence here today is testament to the important role that women are already playing in the mining sector in Africa – one which I am pleased the Australian Government has been able to support.

Conclusion

While there are still a number of challenges for women participating in the minerals sector – and we must strive to overcome these – there are also opportunities.

The opportunity to play an important role in development of the mineral sector is an integral part of a shared endeavour to secure a better, more sustainable future for Africa.

The greatest opportunity we have is to work together – across geographical and gender divides. Australia and Africa can show the way through our cooperation in fields such as education and mining. I am confident that this Mining and Gender Forum will be very successful and I urge each and every one of you to make the most of this wonderful opportunity and to return to your home countries with the knowledge and passion to make a real difference.