

# Women In Mining Nigeria and the Region

## A MONOGRAPH



# **Women In Mining**

## Nigeria and the Region

A Monograph

*Interviews By Fatima Ibrahim Maikore*



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## Women and the Changing Face of Mining In Nigeria and the Region

*The extractive industry has been the sector on which the fortunes of Nigeria have hinged in the past decades, not only as the primary source of national income, but also as the main foreign exchange earner for international trade and commerce. While undue emphasis had been placed on the oil and gas constituent of the sector for so long, more recently the vast potentials of its mining component has come into reckoning, particularly with the unravelling of traditional means of federal sustenance in what is fast becoming a post-Oil age.*

Yet, the story of the Nigerian extractive sector – mining inclusive – is also the narrative of the actors whose toils and efforts have given it shape, alongside the deep silences attendant upon some of the key roles involved, even if not preponderant – importantly those of women. These have been the barely acknowledged toilers and victims of the sector's worst manifestations – whether in terms of the income or environmental burden, and who equally hold out the possibilities of a new dawn for the mining industry in Nigeria.

This monograph attempts to plug some of the crucial information gaps in the sector, as it concerns the issue of gender representation, the significant roles being played by women in the mining sector, both nationally and in the region, and how their various endeavours – some of them unique and unprecedented – are leading to leaps in the growth of the

solid minerals sector, its entire value chain, and certainly the wealth of nations.

In their context of their operation, the extent of Nigeria's solid mineral endowment has been geologically ascertained as quite humongous, with huge proven deposits of over fifty different solid minerals in more than four hundred locations across the country. These minerals include limestone, gold, coal, gypsum, kaolin, sapphire, granite, copper, iron ore, sand, etc., which are in reserves running into millions of metric tonnes. However, due to fallouts and challenges in the sector, comprising increasing levels of illegal and artisanal mining that is carried out practically in all the states of Nigeria, coupled with other issues such as low levels of capital investment and lack of key infrastructure, the mining sector is grossly underdeveloped. This is evident in the economic numbers of the industry. As instance, according to the Nigeria

Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI), mining contributed a mere 0.5 per cent to the national gross domestic product in 2019, down from over 12.1 per cent in the 1970s.

The mining sector is capable of significant economic benefits to countries in the region, especially Nigeria, and its potentials are vast in the face of adequate sectoral reform and the harnessing of capabilities of drivers of the industry, of which women constitute vital stakeholders. The benefits that mining offer would, no doubt, impact directly on the creation of salient country revenue streams, alongside the provision of employment for teeming demographics, in a manner that also realises part of the objectives of this endeavour.

Bridging information gaps within the frame of proper gender representation is one of the cardinal pillars of the work of the Premium Times Centre for Investigative Journalism (PTCIJ), which is a well-known media innovation and development organisation.

As part of our wider governance and accountability mandate, we designed a Natural Resource and Extractives Programme (NAREP) to build and strengthen the capacity of the media to report the extractive sector, with professionalism, depth and insight. PTCIJ has equally utilised this approach, successfully, in the health sector and is currently doing so in the agriculture sector. These fall within the Centre's overarching vision of making journalism more professional, from the storytelling perspective. And it presents a unique – yet overdue – opportunity to project the voices of women, who are significant but often unrecognised players in the mining sector.

The broader goals of PTCIJ's focus on the extractive sector are to work around the

constraints in effecting impactful interventions required to reform the sector. And these constraints are largely due to the absence of data needed by media and civil society groups to facilitate informed decisions on the mining industry. This is a sector that has been shrouded in secrecy, with little or no transparency on the part of the Nigerian and other governments in the region. Such lack of openness has reinforced the absence of accountability, the mismanagement of funds, revenue leakages and the inability of the governments to meet its obligation in the sector, despite its potentials.

For instance, licencing and contract information, as well as royalty payments, are not available to the public. Mining and other extractive activities are mainly press briefing items, and the continued absence of an open data platform deepens the secrecy culture in the extractive sector.

Importantly, one of the urgent needs in the mining industry – at this point – is how to make it more safe and inclusive for women, and for us an interesting entry point is the documentation of the efforts of a growing breed of women, who are creating their own spaces within a sector not considered as readily open to them.

This monograph is a compilation of interviews with eight leading women investors in the mining industry, alongside a deeply insightful Afterword by Dr. Lynda Lawson on women and the mineral value chain. We hope that the narratives it offers will help in shedding light, driving badly needed reforms and drawing attention to how government policies, planning and actions constrain or advance the fortunes of women in the Nigerian mining sector.

We are immensely grateful to the Ministry of Mines and Steel Development and particularly



to the Honourable Minister, Arc. Olamilekan Adegbite, who kindly wrote an introduction to this monograph. We look forward to further collaborations with the Ministry in the foreseeable future.

We are highly appreciative of the support of the Australian High Commission and its most pleasant High Commissioner, Claire Ireland, who gave towards the realisation of this monograph, as a key document that highlights the important roles that women play in the Nigerian mining sector. Australia is one of the top five mining countries in the world, and its mining industry has been a significant contributor to their national economy. Nigeria certainly has useful lessons to learn in the organisation and management of the solid minerals sector from Australia, as we set about the building of a strong and inclusive mining sector. Once more, we thank you Madam.

More so, we owe a debt of gratitude to Mrs. Oby Ezekwesili, Nigeria's former Minister for Solid Minerals, who has the sturdy reputation of being one of the most impactful reformers in the country's mining sector, for the contextual outlay she has given on the political economy

of the minerals sector, and how things can only get better therein with the proper unleashing of the full potentials of women. In addition, no less significant thanks is offered to Dr. Lynda Lawson for her brilliant analysis and the range of information she has brought to bear on the opportunities available to women along the minerals value chain.

Equally, a job is as good as the team that gets it done. In this regard, I wish to thank all those who have been involved in putting this monograph together, from the major contributions of Fatima Maikore, who interviewed all the women who have been documented here, to our Editor and Creative Lead, Ololade Bamidele, alongside Benjamin Ukoh, the graphics designer. Also, thanks are due to Akintunde Babatunde, the Manager of the Natural Resources and Extractives Programme at PTCIJ. It is my genuine hope that we have put out a document that not only pays tribute to the endeavours of a key cross-section of women in mining in Nigeria and parts of the West African region, but also offers insight into some of the needed reforms in the sector.

**Oluwatosin Alagbe**  
Programme Director, PTCIJ







## Women's Indispensable Roles In Mining

*This publication is incredibly important, as it highlights the achievements of pioneers and leaders in the Nigerian mining industry, who have carved a niche and paved the way for younger women to excel and thrive in the sector.*

Women play important and indispensable roles in the mining industry, and its entire value chain: From skilled female artisanal gold miners tasked with the tedious duty of sorting ores and gems, to female civil servants and women leaders making waves in the sector.

Reading this monograph was extremely enlightening, as it allowed me a deeper insight into the various roles, successes and challenges faced by women in the Nigerian mining industry.

Within the Ministry of Mines and Steel Development, I make it a personal ethos to include women in key decision-making, and ensure equity in representation and opportunities provided to female members of my team. I am proud to say I have not been disappointed by their capabilities so far.

Nigeria's evolving mining industry has the capacity to skip the gradual evolutionary steps passed through by the now advanced mining nations and fast track the attainment of gender

equality in the mining and extractive industry. The most important element in achieving this will be enlightenment. We must teach our women to see that there are no ceilings to their achievements, to encourage them to override fear with ambition and assertiveness, and to educate them on their social, political and economic significance in the context of their environment.

Publications like this, which highlight the successes and influence of women in mining, would avail younger generations of Nigerian women the endless possibilities available to them. I congratulate the exceptional women featured in this monograph, the interviewer, and the publisher.

I hereby recommend this publication to the reading public, especially women, to stimulate their interest in mining.

**Arc. Olamilekan Adegbite**

Hon. Minister of Mines and Steel Development,  
Federal Republic of Nigeria



## Educating and Promoting Female Role Models

*It is an honour for me to introduce this monograph alongside the Nigerian Minister of Mines and Steel Development, and to be in the company of the inspiring women who it profiles. Each of them tells a unique story of how she came to work in the mining sector and offers thought-provoking ideas for the industry's development in Nigeria. I thoroughly enjoyed reading about all their journeys and learning from their insights. I hope they will inspire girls and young women to pursue careers in this burgeoning industry.*

This monograph is an important publication. It showcases female role models in the industry for other women to emulate. It also contributes a wealth of advice, ideas and energy to discussions around developing the Nigerian mining sector. What struck me most in reading these interviews was the wide range of ideas these women have for improving the industry. These are ideas that come from unique personal experiences. And that is why diversity in any industry or organisation is so important: It ensures that issues are considered from a range of angles, allowing the best solutions to be found.

Within my organisation, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, there is a strong emphasis on women in leadership

and achieving equal gender representation at all levels in society. I have the privilege of being Australia's first female High Commissioner to Nigeria. And I believe this provides an opportunity to view our relationship with Nigeria from a different perspective and explore different aspects of our bilateral engagement. The refreshing of perspectives, the continuous search for different approaches and ideas, is essential to innovation and the continuous improvement of any organisation.

Australia is known for the success of its extractives companies. In Nigeria, and across Africa, Australia is heavily involved in the mining sector, helping to build technical capacity and providing investment in new projects. This is an industry that provides

strong tax revenue for governments, supplies a country with the materials to power the economy and, most importantly, creates jobs. However, across the world, mining is very much a male-dominated industry.

This is a deep-seated issue. Society does not encourage girls to pursue education in sciences. From a young age, through persistent stereotypes that linger both overtly and more subtly, girls are conditioned to aspire to careers in expressive or human-centred fields, while boys are pushed towards technical fields. These stereotypes are changing. But all over the world, including in both Nigeria and Australia, there is still a significant gender gap among students in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) degrees. This is a problem, not just for equality, but also for business productivity.

Australian companies understand this. They pay attention to the research that shows the substantial productivity gains and improvements in workplace culture and safety achieved through having a gender-balanced and diverse workforce. Australian giant BHP, the world's largest mining company by market capitalisation, has committed to an ambitious goal of achieving gender balance across its operations by 2025. BHP set this target in 2016, when just 17.6 per cent of its workforce comprised women. As of last year, nearly 25 per cent of BHP employees were female. Other major Australian mining companies such as Rio Tinto, Fortescue Metals Group and Newcrest Mining also have programmes to increase the proportion of women in their workforces.

The mining sector in Nigeria is in its early stages of development, though the potential

is significant. There is a recognition that mining can help to drive the diversification of the Nigerian economy, create new jobs and improve infrastructure. While more geological mapping needs to take place, indications are that Nigeria has abundant mineral wealth. Mineral extraction, and the associated jobs in construction, transportation, processing and technological services, can provide substantial benefits for Nigeria.

Nigeria has an opportunity to learn lessons from other countries and ensure its mining industry is developed in an economically, environmentally and socially sustainable manner. Inclusive economic development is essential. This means that right now, while the industry is still young, Nigeria should strive for equal gender representation in its mining sector. While Australian companies are now working hard to achieve this, well over 100 years after the development of our industry, Nigeria has the chance to seek gender balance from the beginning.

This starts with education. It starts with encouraging young girls to study and develop careers in STEM. And it starts by promoting female role models, as the minister and this monograph are doing. People are inspired to take a less-travelled path when they can see people who look like them at the far end. I trust that the stories of these successful women in the mining sector will inspire many girls and young women to pursue careers in mining and that they will inspire women who are already in the industry to reach for even greater heights.

**Claire Ireland,**  
Australian High Commissioner to Nigeria



## Women, An Ascendant Mining Sector and the Political Economy Dilemma of Resource Endowment

**“Women must now fully take their place in the mining sector in both the business and policy sides. More women, not only in mining, but in politics, may be just what finally breaks the protracted cycle of failure of leadership in Nigeria to make the ‘earth of Nigeria work equally for all’.”**

Nigeria's history of dismal economic performance, despite its huge oil, gas, and mineral resources endowment, is no longer perplexing because substantial research studies have offered empirical explanations for the paradox. What remains confounding is that leaders and the largely impoverished citizens fail to link poverty to the recurrent pattern of mismanagement of the country's oil resources revenue, which till date represents more than 80 per cent of annual public budgets, but yet fails to “transform wealth of natural resources into advances in human development for all women and men”.

The inability to understand that the poor governance of earnings from oil, gas and mineral resources is a cause of poverty is one of the reasons why the lethargic public has not mustered the collective will to demand for deep

and fundamental changes to the profligate manner of public leadership. Most governments since independence in 1960 have mismanaged the opportunity to transform Nigeria, with its enviable caches of petrodollars, by translating these into world-class human capital of its male and female population, quality critical infrastructure and dynamic institutions. The missed opportunity explains why, according to the International Monetary Fund, economic development research shows that poor human development is a key driver of multi-dimensional poverty. The IMF projection showed that Nigeria has about 87 million people in extreme poverty over India's 73 million. Nigeria is the current World Capital of Extreme Poverty and according to a 2020 household survey data from the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics, there are 82 million poor people or more than 40 per cent of the population.



According to the data, more than 60 per cent of these poor people in Nigeria are women.

The failure to address the negative effects of poor oil revenue management falls within the realm of Nigeria's thorny political economy challenges and it needs urgent focus. To correct the deep problems of misgovernance that hobble Nigeria requires an empirical evaluation and redesign of its power relations, political institutions, political actors, and their incentives. In sum, Nigeria's political culture distorts governance outcomes and must be interrogated.

A relevant question for a publication that documents the role of women in mining would be, "what role do women play in the governance of Nigeria?" A corollary question could be, "Would governance outcomes have been this dismal or improved if women were as equally represented as men are in decision-making?"

Nigeria has one of the lowest participation of women in political leadership at less than 6 per cent, compared to the African average of 23 per cent. Poor political representation means that women, who constitute 50 per cent of Nigeria's voting population, are absent where decisions are made on how proceeds from natural resources are made at the federal, state, and local levels of government. One strong reason for the alienation of citizens from the activities of the oil and gas sector is the enclave nature of the sector. On the business, as well as the public governance sides of the sector, citizens, broadly, and women, especially, are excluded and therefore seldom have any influence over decisions that affect them and their families.

The solid minerals sector is different from the petroleum and gas sector in the direct impact it could have on poverty reduction.

The occurrence of minerals endowment in Nigeria, for example, is spread across 430 locations in the country, with the diversity of as much as 34 types of commodities. Such spread naturally offers mining opportunities or supply chain activities in the sector to people in local communities. It is empirically proven that mining has a higher probability of benefitting people in local communities, where opportunities for small scale sustainable mining standards are promoted, with barriers to entry deliberately removed, so that women can participate in exploration and beneficiation activities.

As Minister of Solid Minerals Development in 2005, the major thrust of the reform of the sector was to maximise the opportunity it could have to produce inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction, when policies are deliberate, intentional and strategic for achieving such outcomes. At that time, we designed a sector that could offer quantifiable economic benefits to local communities in a way that oil and gas had failed to do.

Our measures included clauses in the new minerals act specifically recognising small-scale sustainable mining under a new open and transparent licensing system. It was the reason we innovated on the Mining Cadastral System and Office to enable equal opportunity and a "first come-first served principle" in licensing. As a result, many more women than in the past - in a purely discretionary regime - applied for and were issued exploration licenses.

To support and assure women's sustained participation in the sector, the Ministry launched a massive partnership with the organised private sector and especially the

financial and banking industry to encourage specialised technical and funding schemes for women-in-mining. Had there been policy consistency, the sector would have developed and expanded economic opportunities and jobs nationwide, thus helping reduce poverty. Unfortunately, political economy variables, even though different from the kind that happens in the oil and gas sector, interfered and stagnated the institutions building reforms in the minerals sector. In other words, or put simply, bad politics upended the impact that responsible mining would have had on the wellbeing of citizens.

Institutions, especially that of quality of leadership, are often identified as key determinants of the success of a few natural resource rich countries like Botswana, Norway, and Chile (after the Pinochet era). The distinctive political processes that produced a pattern of good governance in these three countries, in contrast to Nigeria, are widely

documented in the studies of resources endowed countries. Nigeria's political practices and governance are historically weak, fractious, and replete with elite contests to gain control over the colossal rents that the country earns from oil. Women have fortunately been at the margins of spaces that created these massive failures.

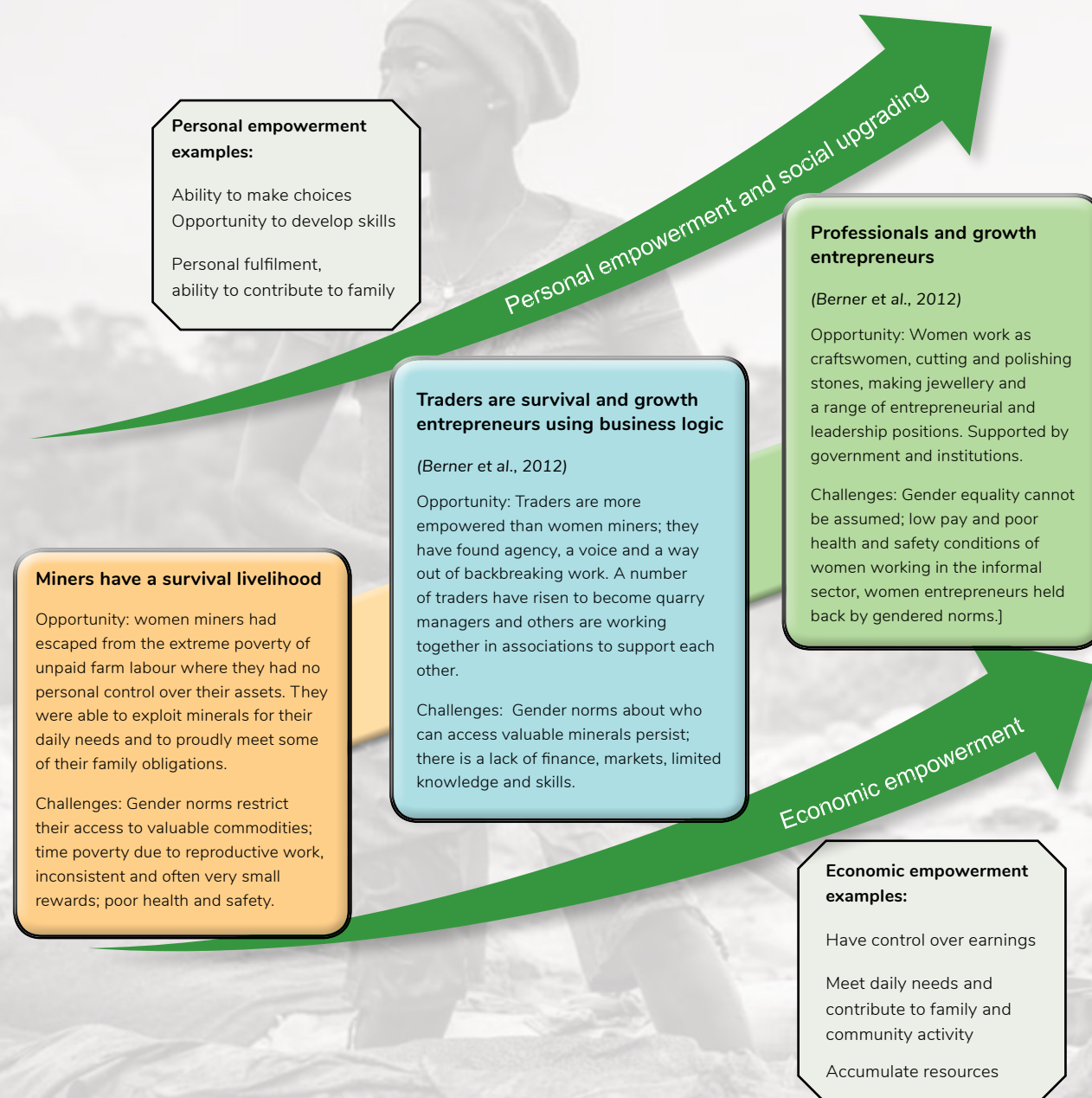
It is time to correct the mistake. Women must now fully take their place in the mining sector in both the business and policy sides. More women, not only in mining, but in politics, may be just what finally breaks the protracted cycle of failure of leadership in Nigeria to make the "earth of Nigeria work equally for all". As Ruth Bader Ginsburg famously said, "Women belong in all places where decisions are being made. It shouldn't be that women are the exception."

### **Oby Ezekwesili**

Former Nigerian Minister of Solid Minerals



# The Mineral Value Chain: Providing A Ladder Of Opportunities For Women



Source: Adapted by Dr. Lynda Lawson from Goger et al. (2014)



## ‘Changing the Negative Image of the Mining Sector...’

Interview with Nere Teriba



**Fati: Could you introduce yourself please?**

**Nere:** My name is Nere Teriba. I am the Managing Director of Kian Smith Trade and Co. It is a company that is involved in gold mining, exploration and exploitation.

**Fati: What inspired your interest in the world of solid minerals?**

**Nere:** My background is in electrical and computer engineering, which I trained

**“...I found out that gold actually satisfies my pluralistic parts: the creative side of me, the business side of me, the science student in me, and the engineering student in me.”**

in; but I guess I have many interests. You know how they make you choose a track in secondary school... I found it difficult when I had to decide to choose between science and art subjects. While at the University, I switched courses: from Chemical Engineering to Material Science, to Mechanical Engineering, and then to Electrical Engineering.

And, I said: Let me add Computer Engineering, before my parents stopped me, that I should finish with that one.

The truth of the matter is: If I want to think back on how I am wired, I have always had

interest in many fields. I feel like the interest in mining was chosen for me; I just had dreams and saw myself mining and doing many other things. There were some previews. I did a lot of research about mining, but



at the initial point I had no real interest yet; I was just gathering information, doing research, and studying it. I thought it was crazy, because I found out that mining is an incredibly difficult and capital-intensive field. But anyway, the long and short of it was that with little steps, somehow we entered the sector.

**Fati: But why the interest in gold and why exploitation, which is the more difficult part of the industry?**

**Nere:** I found out that gold mining satisfies the part of me that is into many things. There is the financial aspect of gold as a financial instrument and there is the creative part of gold, in which it is made into jewellery; and because I design clothes and jewellery, gold fits into that. There is also the technical aspect of gold; there's the alchemy and chemistry part of gold, and I have always been a chemistry person. So, I found out that gold actually satisfies my pluralistic parts: the creative side of me, the business side of me, the science student in me, and the engineering student in me.

**Fati: So, naturally, my next question is: How has the**

**journey into gold been for you? Certainly, it has not been a road paved with gold dust?**

**Nere:** The journey has been interesting. It's been unpredictable and definitely

**“We say that we want finance, we say we that want investors, but if you google anything about Nigerian mining and read what we say, there is no reason for anybody to invest their money in or give any assistance to the sector, because most of what you read about the sector is bad news.”**

not boring. What I would say about the journey, for sure, is that it's been a journey of encounters. There is no way to talk about the journey without the people. The way I got into gold is about a woman I have not met till now. I called her for feedback on the opportunities in the gold sector in Zamfara State, but instead she recommended that I call another man who had 'rescued her' from a bad mining investment. Within



a day of speaking with him, I was on the way to Ilesa to meet him. This was the serendipity and adventure of our entrance into mining.

All the advice the man has given me have proven their weight in gold. He also introduced us to our mining consultant. Since that fateful day in 2012, he is one of the people I always call for advice and counselling on mining matters.

Within a few weeks of speaking to him, I started the process of getting an exploration licence, and the first experience was very rough. It took almost two years to get our first exploration licence. There were lots of emotions and frustrations, to the point of almost seeing the difficulties as a sign not to venture into mining. That was the story of my first licence, and the second licence was a similar story too. The long and short is that when I look back, everything we have ever had, every licence, every opportunity has not been easy; but I remember our consultant said, “because of the tears you have cried and how you have struggled for this, you will never treat it casually; because of the



hardship and struggle to get it". Nothing has come easy for us, and we got used to the hardship and it's helped us build resilience.

**Fati: I want us to look at some specific issues affecting the industry now.**

**Nere:** To be fair, I can't say the challenges I'm having now is about the industry; but I can say it is about Nigeria and human nature. There's a distrust and fear of innovation and pioneering efforts. Coupled with the challenges of entrepreneurship in present day Nigeria.

The additional challenge of pioneering in Nigeria is that it involves having to push for policy and regulation in an unregulated area. And, because the suggestions came from the private sector, there was a lot of mistrust in the beginning. We were fortunate for the timing of the Economic Recovery Growth Focus Labs that gave our project and others the opportunity to have several roadblocks addressed.

**Fati: What, in your view, were the five major constraints in the effort to build your business, and have these changed over time?**

**Nere:** I don't know whether to call the biggest one advocacy, the media or PR; maybe it's more like PR. I still ache from this and feel a bit of frustration. I wish there was a way I could tell everyone who has a platform in the mining sector, to use their platform to speak about the potentials and good of the sector, especially to the public. We say that we want finance, we say we that want investors, but if you google anything about Nigerian mining and read what we say, there is no reason for anybody to

**"I think the Ministry should really strengthen the Mines Inspectorate; that is the strongest thing, the best thing to do. The Mines Inspectorate is the backbone of the sector."**

invest their money in or give any assistance to the sector, because most of what you read about the sector is bad news. And it could just be about changing the language we use.

The media has also partnered in highlighting the ills of the

sector to the extent that many people I meet here believe anyone mining in Nigeria does so illegally.

I think the second constraint is the lack of patience and continuity, which is because the private sector doesn't take ownership of a lot of things. I find that in every conference we go to or everywhere we are, we are spending time talking to government about what they should do. But the point is that we are never talking to the private sector about what we should also be doing. We should take ownership of our sector, including being good ambassadors for others to enter or support the sector. In Nigeria, every four years or, if we are lucky, eight years, we have a change in government. With every change in government is a change in roadmap, focus or policy. Mining is a long-term venture; it sometimes takes up to 10 to 20 years for full exploration to be done. It requires continuity in policy. It is left for us in the private sector to be the custodians of continuity.

The third, I think, is data. Data is an issue. But data for me is not really so much geological data; sometimes it's just commercial data,

because one will make the other get generated. If there's geological data, there will be more exploration and more mining, and there will be more confidence. If there is actual production data, which is very accurate and well recorded, it will actually encourage more investment in geological data and exploration in the sector.

And the fourth problem is funding, because mining is capital intensive.

**Fati: How do you think we can remedy these problems?**

Nere: I think I have offered remedies with the problems. When I see a problem I also see a solution.

**Fati: If the Ministry, as a regulatory institution, were to play a more empowering role for the industry, what will be your recommendations?**

**Nere:** I think the Ministry should really strengthen the Mines Inspectorate; that is the strongest thing, the best thing to do. The Mines Inspectorate is the backbone of the sector. Government should create more ways in which the Inspectorate will be more empowered to gather information on the field and on production. If the Mines Inspectorate is really strengthened, it will help us all in the sector, in terms of the production data we are looking for, information on mining issues, issues with licences, etc., to enable activities move forward.

**Fati: Let us move a little bit to the international environment; how competitive can the Nigerian gold investor like yourself be in a very competitive global market today?**

**Nere:** Like what we are doing now, you have to just build your business according to international expectations and standards of credibility, transparency and doing due diligence, and responsible sourcing. Fortunately or unfortunately, international communities set the guidelines across the world for gold trade and refining. Standards have already been



set, and it is left for us to implement according to these standards, to be reckoned with.

**Fati: Lets go back to where we probably should have started from: What best practice regarding mining host community engagement will you recommend?**

**Nere:** What the Mining Cadastre is doing regarding community consent is interesting. Overall, I think it is good. It is not perfect but it is good, because what it does, at least, to start with, is that you get to have an initial discussion with the community about what your intention is. I feel that community engagement, which is carrying the community along, understanding their needs, what they want, and making them understand what you are trying to do in their community, is really good. And you then have your Community Development Agreement (CDA). I think the general process is good. You can't mine in any community if they don't give you the go-ahead, and if you don't give them incentives or reasons to keep working with you, they won't. I feel that we have learnt from the oil and gas

sector to prevent the activism that is going on there. There is no way you can work in a community, if the community is not empowered.

**“For me, being a woman is just what it is. I would actually say that in relation to mining, I haven't thought about it. To give you a background: Growing up, back to my family, I never thought of being a woman as a constraint. I only actually started paying attention to this constraint in more recent years.”**

**Fati: Is the Africa Mining Vision an adequate international instrument and pathway for an African investor like you?**

**Nere:** I think it is adequate and a very good starting point.

**Fati: I want to take you back to the West Africa mining conference you organised in Lagos in 2019; obviously it was impressive and successful. Are we having**

**enough of such events and what role do they play for the industry?**

**Nere:** Let me speak specifically for gold. The importance of the conference for gold is because of its high value, low volume and because of the way it is transported. It goes across borders and already you can look within ECOWAS and see that most of the countries produce gold. We have ECOWAS; we have our policy that allows us travel through open borders, through transferring. The truth of the matter is that whatever Nigeria or any West African country wants to do for the gold value chain, it won't be successful if other West African countries are not involved. If you have conflicting policies, it's going to affect all of this. Gold is a financial instrument; people look at it as money. We have 13 of the 15 ECOWAS countries producing gold and there are open borders for easy transportation, and we have to do it collectively.

**Fati: I will consider it defeating not to ask a clear gender question: How has your gender constrained or enabled your path in the unique journey you have taken?**

**Nere:** For me, being a woman is just what it is. I would actually say that in relation to mining, I haven't thought about it. To give you a background: Growing up, back to my family, I never thought of being a woman as a constraint. I only actually started paying attention to this constraint in more recent years. Growing up with my father and with the way he empowered us, he didn't make his daughters feel limitations. And I look back in school, science and engineering; I was one of the few women among many men (engineering being male dominated). I have been used to that world and I never thought about it. I just functioned in it. Whatever people think, when they see your performance, they get convinced (about what you are capable of). At some point I didn't pay attention to that, I just focused on doing my work.

But more recently, now in Nigeria, I feel it...being in a position where I feel for other women. Because, like I said, coming to this place in my life and functioning in a certain way, I don't feel it, but I see it.

However, more recently, I feel like people actually say

negative things to me due to my gender and youth. And, I find it very fascinating and silly that for all science has proved, gender remains fundamental to some people. So now it is coming more to my face and it makes me humbled to have been raised in an environment where there were no restrictions to

**“Developing the gold value chain of West Africa has been our priority. In that vein, we believe that Kano can become a hub for national economic recovery and growth by establishing its place as an international destination for gold. The inherent wealth of the region has unbreakable links between culture and gold.”**

my thinking or ambitions. For many women, the journey has been limiting and we are determined to help other women see no limitations.

**Fati: Has family life slowed you and your dreams down in any way? How do you**

**balance the delicate family, social and business divides?**

**Nere:** It's a hard one, honestly. I have been thinking: What is the (right) amount of balance? I mean, how to equate balance. But what I will say is: I'm grateful that I have a supportive family and conducive environment. I look at my family, friends, and I find that they are a supportive group. Sometimes they are also good at pulling me out and saying: "Nere we haven't seen you in a while." So, I will say having a good support is a good reminder. They will be like, "We haven't seen you in a while", I will then say, "I saw you two weeks ago", and they will reply, "That was two months ago, not two weeks." Overall, I think I try my best to balance, but I allow my family and friends to call me out when I go off balance.

**Fati: Are there any initiatives or projects that you'd like to speak about?**

**Nere:** Developing the gold value chain of West Africa has been our priority. In that vein, we believe that Kano can become a hub for national economic recovery and growth by establishing its place as an international destination for gold. The inherent







wealth of the region has unbreakable links between culture and gold. Hence, promoting and developing Kano's gold industry and economy will also provide economic empowerment across artisanal and cultural economies following a tourism boom. In collaboration with the government, we hope to have duty-free gold markets in Kano and in Ouagadougou in 2020.

**Fati: Lastly and specific to Kian Smith refinery, where you are the Vice President and pretty much the public face. I'm truly mystified how a 36-year-old Nigerian lady got it so adequately. I know you spoke a bit about this already, but what are the challenges and major lessons you want to share**

**about this truly impressive journey?**

**Nere:** Let's add one. I'm now 37 years. Whatever you do, one is never going to achieve things from the crowd. There is something one has to do: You have to do away with public opinion and do it by yourself. When I say by yourself, it is not like you won't carry people along, but you can't get public opinion to determine what is possible or else you won't do it. If I had listened to even my supportive family, I would never be doing this. So, I think public opinion will tell you that something is not possible.

Whatever you're dreaming or hoping for, find people who are like-minded, people who believe that all things are

possible, who will encourage you and ask how you think this is possible, and give you strategy on how to achieve it, especially in rough sectors like mining. Gather around people that think like you, leave the frustrating voice that keeps telling you how bad it is, but rather move with people who see opportunities in the rough

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**“There is something one has to do: You have to do away with public opinion and do it by yourself. When I say by yourself, it is not like you won't carry people along, but you can't get public opinion to determine what is possible or else you won't do it. If I had listened to even my supportive family, I would never be doing this.”**

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sector. The next thing is to be able to stand your ground; it won't be easy. Like the story I shared of how we got our first exploration licence, it was a unique situation. When I got discouraged, the people in my life encouraged me. Stay the course, keep the courage and get around you people who will encourage you.



## ‘The Challenge of Funding In a Capital Intensive Sector...’

Interview With Funmilola Zainab Cole





**Fati: Can you please introduce yourself?**

**Zainab:** My name is Funlola Zainab Cole and I am the Managing Director of Almond Maritime Nigeria Limited. I joined mining in 1988 by buying topaz and garnet, which I exported to Thailand. Thereafter, I stopped exporting to Thailand in 1989 and shifted my export to Germany because of better pricing. This I did till the year 2000, when the price dropped. That same year (2000), I got a contract from a company in Estonian to supply tantalum, which I did successfully, but not without difficulty. This made me quit gemstones. I then went into lead and zinc mining in Isiagwu. I did zinc in Abakaliki, but there was much problem in that region, so I moved to the northern part of the country.

**Fati: What year was that?**

**Zainab:** Abakaliki and Isiagwu were 2002 to 2003. I was shuttling between the two sites. Since then, I have been mining lead and zinc.

**Fati: You have your own mining sites now? How many are they?**

**Zainab:** I have lead and zinc sites in Nasarawa State, a tin

site in Plateau State, and a gold site in Zamfara State.

**Fati: And they are all still functional till date?**

**Zainab:** Yes. For the Jos mining site, I'm in partnership with South Africans. But most times I have to be on the sites because of the Nigerian factor surrounding the business. I try to add value to my products to attract good prices; so, I stand to benefit in the market by giving my products better grades. When I supply my

**“Mining is capital intensive, but our banks are traders, they don't give enough time to refund the loan, and at times it might take a year before you start realising substantial returns...”**

clients, they are always 78 to 79 per cent of pb content. Last year was when I went into another partnership.

**Fati: With the Chinese, right?**

**Zainab:** Yes, with the Chinese.

**Fati: How has partnership with the Chinese been?**

**Zainab:** They are still doing exploration and they have not reached the depth they are going.

**Fati: Is it a 50/50 sharing formula?**

**Zainab:** No, it's 70/30.

**Fati: Who owns the 70; you or them?**

**Zainab:** They own the 70 per cent since they are investing. In the past, it was very tough, especially for women, to access funds. I used money from my import business, because when I started, banks were not ready to give loans to miners, just because they didn't understand mining. Not until now when Baba Buhari (the President) started the initiative. Mining is capital intensive, but our banks are traders, they don't give enough time to refund the loan, and at times it might take a year before you start realising substantial returns to continue (with the business), let alone loan repayment.

**Fati: What is your educational background?**

**Zainab:** I studied Business Administration.

**Fati: How did you get into mining?**



**Zainab:** It is a long story. In 1988, a brother to my friend came and said, “Madam there is a business going on; it is called topaz.” And he brought some cards from buyers in Thailand. I followed him to Jos and bought topaz. I took a risk. Fortunately, I met the right person; the late Alhaji Kalumbu. In those days, it was very difficult to get a mining licence; you had to go through three old miners to get a consent paper before you are issued a licence. I think I paid N20.00 for the licence. The Ministry of Mines was then at Ikoyi in Lagos. I was given Form K, which authorised me to possess and to sell (solid minerals). So, I went back to

Alhaji Kalumbu, who gave me a consent letter, because you were not allowed to buy from anybody but from the

**“The Minister of Mines should invite stakeholders to come together to brainstorm on the way forward. There shouldn't be any bottleneck to funding in the sector.”**

issuer of the consent paper. It was very tough to get a mining licence then, unlike now that everybody can apply for licence without any

bottleneck. I used to drop money for him and he would say, “Go to Lagos, when I am ready, I will call you.” So, I travelled with the topaz and that was when I made my first million. But not without mentioning Hajiya Hauwa, who also made it possible for me as well.

**Fati: Before then, what had you been doing?**

**Zainab:** I was into the importation of pharmaceuticals.

**Fati: You are not into gold mining?**

**Zainab:** I'm starting gold. I have a gold site I'm starting



soon; maybe in January 2020, because I just got my equipment.

**Fati: What is the greatest challenge you have faced in the sector?**

**Zainab:** The greatest problems here are the communities and funding, as are usual for miners, and security. Community members have been the greatest

**“With proper infrastructure, and the right government policies, we can rid ourselves of our limitations. I believe the government can do better by paying more attention to mining activities across the country.”**

challenge to miners. I used to tell people that partnering with a community is the most difficult thing to do because they are not consistent. It is better to obtain a licence and operate the mine yourself.

Now that Baba Buhari is trying to diversify from an oil based economy, I would like to state that the government should look into the area

of funding for small scale miners and buying off their products. This, I believe, will stop foreign illegal miners from operating in the country. I know there is a division of the Ministry of Mines that is responsible for small-scale miners. Years back, I heard people say they gave them N5,000,000 to N10,000,000; what can this money do in mining? The Minister of Mines should invite stakeholders to

come together to brainstorm on the way forward. There shouldn't be any bottleneck to funding in the sector. If truly government wants to help, they should create data on the mineral resources in every state, where we can access these data, and afterward do comprehensive reporting, which can be bankable to access funds, instead of being subjected to the request for loan collaterals, which is the



biggest problem faced by miners.

If, in case they can't fund miners, the best thing to do in order to avoid devastation of the land, is to purchase core drilling machines for each state's Mines Office, from where miners in each area can lease the machine at subsidised rates, thereby creating revenue for government as well. In this way, we can witness proper mining in Nigeria.

What we have now are small-scale miners, who are scratching surfaces and opening pits in trial-and-error forms, because they don't have proper reports on where the minerals are deposited.

**Fati: Are you into Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)?**

**Zainab:** In the community where I work, I give them electricity, and I send some of them to school. Before, they had one or two graduates, but now they have a lot of graduates in a small village. Before going to site in the mornings, I used to teach English in the village primary school and with other miners, we built a town hall for them.

**Fati: What do you think are the factors affecting mining?**

**Zainab:** Funding is the greatest factor, because mining is capital intensive. Another factor is logistics, such as transportation. I did mining in Sierra Leone, and I have also visited mining sites in Congo Brazzaville and in many other countries. In these places, they have rail lines to

**“I don't know about other women, but I don't have any constraint. I believe that you are respected for your competence, and the results you produce.”**

the port. In Nigeria, we still have a long way to go. But thank God, the government is doing something about the rail system. Logistics is a major problem: Imagine having a product of \$90 per tonne and trucking this from the site to the port in Lagos costs N300,000! For instance, in 2017, when I moved manganese from Gusau, the truck collected N450,000 for transportation to Lagos. Whereas by rail, it would cost only about N35,000 per coach.

**Fati: Any issue with government?**

**Zainab:** Government has not given us any problem; they have not created any regulation that has affected us. To me, the government is fair to miners in terms of obtaining licences. The major problem of every miner in this country is funding.

**Fati: Have the products of Nigerian mining been competitive in global markets?**

**Zainab:** No! But I believe we have potentials. I also believe that having potentials is not enough to move us to where we should be in the global markets. With proper infrastructure, and the right government policies, we can rid ourselves of our limitations. I believe the government can do better by paying more attention to mining activities across the country. It saddens me when I hear the mention of (prominent) countries in the world on mining matters, and some of these countries do not have the mineral resources that are abundant in Nigeria; yet we are not known in the world as such. This is why I like what our able Minister of Mines, Architect Olamilekan Adegbite is doing to make sure that Nigeria is among the nations known for their

abundant mineral resources, especially now that there is need for diversification of our economy.

**Fati: What best practices have you adopted on health issues in the communities where you are mining?**

**“There is never a day one does not feel anxious about the future, because everyday news about climate change, floods, hurricanes and natural disasters are rampant. I am in support of every policy and practice that will minimise the damage to the climate by any form of activity.”**

**Zainab:** In my site, I have put in place a potent first aid system to attend to any accident. I also have health personnel who come to treat those in the community, which I pay for monthly; should anyone be sick. And for the community, we mine far away from the residential areas. We also have a planned site, such that our use of water does not contaminate the streams and flow of water to the

community. Safety gears are a must for everyone working on the site, and we make adequate provisions for these.

**Fati: Has your gender constrained your path on this unique journey?**

**Zainab:** I don't know about other women, but I don't have any constraint. I believe that you are respected for your competence, and the results you produce. I like to encourage those in mining and prospective miners to follow their passion in mining and not be deterred by gender-based issues.

**Fati: What of family; hope this is not slowing you down?**

**Zainab:** My children are all living abroad. I balance work and family successfully, and I have a very good husband who is very supportive.

**Fati: Do you employ women in your sites?**

**Zainab:** I am open to employing women but so far I have only met one lady who is agile and zealous about working on a mining site.

**Fati: Do you engage in mentoring other women?**

**Zainab:** I have mentored both men and women who, to God

be the glory, are successful today. One of them is the most successful woman in gold mining today. Some of them have been lied to that mining is not good, but with proper mentoring they have engaged in it and succeeded. With proper mentoring, I think mining is one of best businesses in the world, which you can conveniently leave behind for your children to carry on, as it is done in other parts of the world.

**Fati: Since you have been in mining, have you ever encountered dubious people?**

**Zainab:** There are a whole lot of them. When I started mining lead in Isiagwu, I lost N12 million then; in 2002. My family was like: What is wrong with you? That is like throwing money away! But because of the passion I have for mining and its potentials,



I refused to listen to them. Today I thank God I didn't listen to my family.

**Fati: Do you stay on the site?**

**Zainab:** Yes, I stay in an apartment close to the site with my geologist. My driver takes me to site every morning. When I am there, stealing is minimised and I also control the quality of the output. I stay for two weeks, leave for Lagos, and then return there.

**Fati: How do the security challenges in the country affect your operations?**

**Zainab:** Seriously. I have a gold site in Zamfara and it is a place I had wanted to start when I bought some equipment, but because of what is happening in the State, I can't commence mining there. But I plan on starting in Minna next year.

**Fati: What will be your advice to the government on how to tackle illegal mining in the country?**

**Zainab:** My advice is for the Mines Officers to step up on their inspections because that is the reason why the Ministry established the State Mines Offices. Illegal

mining is not only on site. The people involved who are taking our mineral resources away through the air and sea are also illegal miners. The Ministry (and relevant agencies of government) should collaborate to make sure that anybody taking minerals out of the country must produce the royalty receipts paid on these to the government. Most times the illegal miners, through the ports and the sea, are the ones encouraging the

**“...with the new drive by the Honourable Minister, very soon Nigeria will be on the map of countries with abundant solid mineral resources. Also, every state with mineral resources should help the Mines Office by creating their own outfits to see that illegal mining is eradicated.”**

illegal miners on site. I will give the example of a Swiss company buying lead in Lagos; if you cannot produce the royalty receipt paid to the government, it will not buy from you. This act of illegal

mining is really affecting the revenue of the government. Anybody caught carrying out illegal mining, be they foreigners or locals, should be prosecuted. Most of the foreigners coming to mine in Nigeria are not real miners. The real miners are yet to come, but with the new drive by the Honourable Minister, very soon Nigeria will be on the map of countries with abundant solid mineral resources. Also, every state with mineral resources should help the Mines Office by creating their own outfits to see that illegal mining is eradicated.

**Fati: What is your stand on concern about the environment and climate change?**

**Zainab:** There is never a day one does not feel anxious about the future, because everyday news about climate change, floods, hurricanes and natural disasters are rampant. I am in support of every policy and practice that will minimise the damage to the climate by any form of activity.

I advise miners to make sure that they follow the rule on the environmental impact assessment process to help in controlling climate change.



**Fati:** *Where do you see yourself in the next five years in the mining sector?*

**Zainab:** I wish to own the largest indigenous mining company by then, God willingly; without foreign partnership, employing expatriates to work on my mining site, like most of

the women in mining in the developed world. I really admire them a lot.

**Fati:** *Would you say you are a successful miner?*

**Zainab:** Yes, I am a successful miner to the glory of God. I believe success is not a destination but a journey. I believe I am successful

because I am still moving from one level to the next level. You measure success also by how many lives are impacted by your work, of which I can say many have for years. And also to the glory of God, from the mining of metals, I have diversified into other areas in the extractive sector, for instance, oil and gas.



## ‘The Necessity of Price Control In the Solid Minerals Sector..’

Interview With Hajiya Hauwa Ibrahim Aliyu



**Fati: Can you briefly introduce yourself?**

**Hajiya Hauwa:** My name is Hauwa Ibrahim Aliyu. I grew up seeing my grandparents in mining activities; the mining of tin and columbite. After my marriage, I came back home with interest in the mining business; that was after the death of my grandfather.

Thirty years ago I started with the buying and selling of gemstones, which include

Himma Merchant Complex at No C2 Gangare Road, Jos.

I also worked with a company known as Afri-Concern, which was owned by one Alhaji Abdullahi Halilu from Kano, who had a mining site in Toro LGA of Bauchi State. Later on, I worked with another company known as Aldan Hass Nigeria Limited, owned by Alhaji Danjuma Hassan, which was the last company I was with before acquiring my own licence.

LGA, particularly Nandu village, and acquired a mining lease for emeralds. But due to the violent nature of the area, and that no mineral was won there, we decided to leave the area.

For more than 20 years now, I have been exporting minerals to Germany and Thailand, and sincerely in the mining business I have progressed tremendously. For this I give thanks to God Almighty. This is the only business I

**“First of it all is insecurity and that is what always gets us afraid while in the field. But presently, my sites in Benue and Taraba States have been mobilised with twelve policemen, with the approval of the Inspector General of Police...”**

have been doing for the past several years.

**Fati: Did you study Mining or Geology at the tertiary level of education?**

**Hajiya Hauwa:** I grew up seeing my aged grandfather mining. I am neither a geologist nor an engineer; but due to the progress made



topaz and other minerals, around Magama Local Government Area (LGA) in Bauchi State, Bassa LGA in Plateau State, and Akwanga LGA in Nasarawa state; then I was without an office and doing the business from home. Later when the business progressed, I decided to open an office in

I registered my company, which is about 29 years old now, because I decided to start mining myself. I acquired a mining lease in Bomu village, Bassa LGA of Plateau State, where I started mining topaz and aquamarine. With the progress of the business, I later came to Kaduna State and to an area called Sanga



in my mining business, we have employed those in the field. We acquired sites in Taraba and Benue States, where we mined lead-zinc, and I had a partnership with some Chinese, who carried out the geological mapping, induced polarisation (I.P) and core drilling, but at the end of the day they left the site. Later, I went into partnership with another Nigerian and the company is called Japaul-Hahaibs. We are now working together with a Canadian company called Matrix, which is the first mining company that's flying drones and carrying out geological mapping; when they are through with the mapping, we will seek more foreign partnerships, if the result of their findings is good; but if not, God knows best.

**Fati: What are the challenges you have encountered so far in the mining business?**

**Hajiya Hauwa:** First of it all is insecurity and that is what always gets us afraid while in the field. But presently, my

**“...we as serious miners are not supposed to acquire more mineral titles than we can handle; we should go for what we can operate for the benefit of our family, state, and country at large.”**

sites in Benue and Taraba States have been mobilised with twelve policemen, with

the approval of the Inspector General of Police, and we were given a letter to the Commissioner of Police in Taraba State. No mining activity will progress without security.

Secondly, mining is a risky business, most especially in relation to gemstones and precious minerals. For instance, you can invest one hundred naira and get a one hundred thousand naira return, while most times you can invest one hundred thousand naira and get nothing in return.

Thirdly, the lack of organised mining, without the use of the required equipment – particularly during the rainy season – poses a lot of challenges in the field. Thank God, in some of the sites, they have the necessary equipment. Mining is capital intensive and with the availability of funds for the purchase of the required equipment, it's a good business that can provide for one, be it as a regular family or an extended one.

**Fati: Are you facing any challenges with the government, especially the Ministry of Mines and Steel Development, in the cause of your mining activities?**







**Hajiya Hauwa:** The Ministry has its mining laws, which as a citizen, we have to abide by. But what pains me most is that at the peak of the rainy season, between July and October, we cannot operate on sites, but the Ministry is not considerate towards that. What they care about is their annual service fee at the end of the year; so, I would call on the Ministry to look into this.

Secondly, there are areas of insecurity. If you listen to the news or read newspapers, you will know that if you get to such areas, you will be kidnapped and the government doesn't appear to be serious about protecting these areas. And despite the fact that one has not been

on site, the Mining Cadastre Office never cares about this; at the end of the year, what

**“There are two problems with Nigerian miners, when it comes to the marketing of minerals: One: If you don't know anything about the mineral you are investing in; two: If the minerals are exposed in places...where their mineral products are cheaper than those of Nigeria.”**

they are after is payment of the annual service fees. We

are using this medium to call on the Federal Government of Nigeria to properly put up security measures in areas like Zamfara, Yobe, Borno and parts of Niger State, because people there are also citizens of the country. I have the hope that one day those areas will be free of insecurity, even the mine sites, so that one would not just abandon or relinquish his/her mineral titles. And we as serious miners are not supposed to acquire more mineral titles than we can handle; we should go for what we can operate for the benefit of our family, state, and country at large.

**Fati: What is your experience of the solid minerals trade outside the**



**country and the competition around the minerals you take out? Do you manage to make decent profits in the trade?**

**Hajiya Hauwa:** Yes, profit is certain by God's grace, if you know your products well and also package them very well. There are two problems with Nigerian miners, when it comes to the marketing of minerals: One: If you don't know anything about the mineral you are investing in; two: If the minerals are exposed in places like Kenya, Nairobi, Tanzania and Madagascar, where their mineral products are cheaper than those of Nigeria. But again if you can prepare your minerals very well, you can still make some profit.

Note that it is only in Nigeria that we have varieties of minerals, such as garnet, tourmaline, tourmaline blue, green rubellite, aquamarine, topaz, magnetite, industrial minerals, etc. Some other countries just have two or three minerals. If you are to

**“There are a lot of issues involved. No association controls miners, and those who buy and sell minerals in Nigeria... there is no price control, no strong union or association to fight it.”**

go out of the country with minerals, the most important thing is for you to know how to prepare these minerals very well, create value addition, so that whichever office you take the minerals to, you will make profit, even if not as expected. I call on serious miners to take time and learn how to prepare minerals very well before thinking of taking them out of the country.

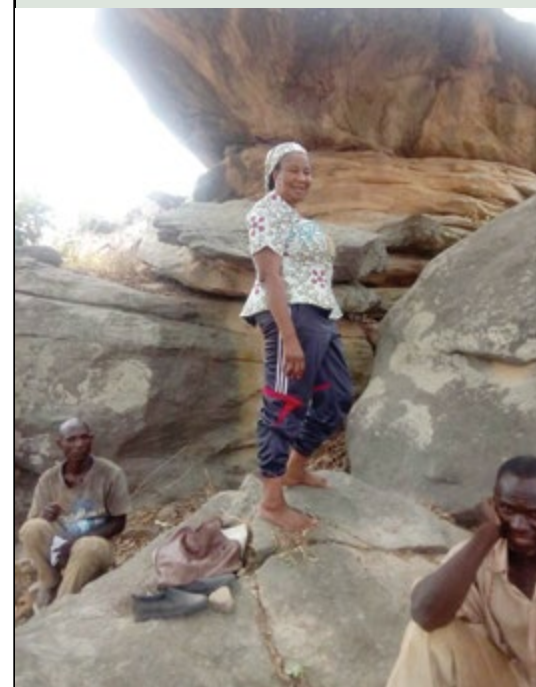
**Fati: What is the cause of the lack of price control of minerals in Nigeria?**

**Hajiya Hauwa:** There are a lot of issues involved. No

association controls miners, and those who buy and sell minerals in Nigeria. Today, if you mine a mineral and someone comes for it and prices it for one thousand naira, and some other person prices it for one thousand, five hundred naira, you tend to get confused. Later, you'll start demanding for five thousand naira, because there is no price control, no strong union or association to fight it.

**Fati: As Vice President of Women In Mining, it would not be fair to come to the end of this interview without asking you how many women you have employed in your mining business?**

**Hajiya Hauwa:** 'Mining is a very difficult business and it is one you have to develop interest in and be ready to learn about. Being a member of Women In Mining is different from being a miner in the field. It is only a few women who have interest in mining, but there are many women in jewellery making, etc. Women entering the field are few; and for me, sometimes I spend thirty days in the field. How many women can do that? It is about interest and perseverance, and not everybody's wife can go to the field. In Argy, which







is between Benue and Taraba States, I stayed there from January 2011 till September 2013 to learn the Chinese technology being introduced into the mineral sector; how many women can stay in the field for such period of time? I stayed to learn what I didn't know and thank God I have acquired some knowledge in this regard. When the Canadians came, I also contributed from the little knowledge I had acquired from the Chinese, and they appreciated my contribution.

**Fati: Is mining with Chinese expertise profitable or are they just muzzling others out of the business?**

**Hajiya Hauwa:** Sometimes in 2017, I participated in a taskforce workshop as a miner, and I heard from quarry owners that the Chinese-owned quarries had

brought down the prices of their products to less than 50 per cent. In the mining sector, how many investors can invest their money in proper surveys, such as data acquisition, which will interest investors to come down? It is the Chinese who can do that,

**“I am a Muslim woman from the North, and anybody who knows the culture of the North, which is mostly from an Islamic background, would know that for a woman in the mining business, there will be problems.”**

except for a few investors who are not Chinese. Still, they liaise and work with them, as the Chinese can easily mobilise excavators, and other required equipment to site. The Chinese are the ones growing the sector, enabling youths within rural communities to get employed. In life you feel joy knowing that you alone do not want to live, but you also want to touch the lives of other persons.

When my Chinese expatriate partners were carrying out

surveys, they employed 170 youths and every week these youths were paid N4,000 each, and in a month each person received N16,000. The village head was called upon to intervene because of the population; some of the youths even passed their nights under trees because they needed the job and enjoyed it. This resulted in the fact that crises within villages drastically reduced because the youths were engaged. At the end of the day, the youths went into contributions to help themselves. Some bought motor bikes, some erected local buildings in their villages, and they were very happy with the sector. The Chinese later left after the survey and the youths were not happy. But now that the Canadians are around, we hope they would do better than the Chinese.

**Fati: Have there been any family problems in the course of your mining business?**

**Hajiya Hauwa:** I am a Muslim woman from the North, and anybody who knows the culture of the North, which is mostly from an Islamic background, would know that for a woman in the mining business, there will be problems. But it is a personal

issue. Thank God I have achieved what I wanted to and I would not say more than that.

Fati: Can you please confirm the number of sites you have acquired?

Hajiya Hauwa: There is the lead-zinc one, which I am partnering on with a Nigerian man from Lagos. I also have

**“I am a member of the trade mission and also a member of the organisers of the Thailand Gem shows. In February 2020, I was honoured with the “Thailand’s Friend Award 2020” at the 65th edition of Bangkok Gems and Jewellery Fair.”**

two 15 Cadastral Units (CU) Small-Scale Mining Leases in Jos. I have sites in Niger, Taraba and Kaduna State; all making six sites.

**Fati: Can you please talk more about your journey to Thailand?**

Hajiya Hauwa: I have been going to the Gem Show in Thailand for about 15 to 20 years now. I go for the exhibition of mineral products and at the end of the day, I meet with different people from different countries and we exchange ideas about the mineral sectors in our countries. Thank God, in February I went to





Thailand with the Ministry's delegation and it was a successful meeting with the GIA (Gemological Institute of America) and trade mission, and they were invited to attend the AGJES (African Gems and Jewellery Exhibition and Seminar) conference that took place recently in Nigeria, and they attended. One of them was from Thailand and the other from America.

**Fati: Is there any other reason why you always travel to Thailand?**

**Hajiya Hauwa:** I primarily travel to Thailand for

exhibitions, the marketing of my mineral products and to showcase our Nigerian products too. There are books on solid minerals in the Nigerian embassy in Thailand and during the exhibitions, the books are given by the Ambassador for free, for people to see what Nigeria has in her solid minerals sector. And anyone who needs these products will book by exchanging cards and hotel contacts, and after the exhibition, those interested in my products come to my hotel to purchase them. There is a 5 per cent charge that the Thai

authorities remove and then you are given your cheque with the embassy stamp to take to bank for payment.

**Fati: Do you have any particular relationship with the Thailand embassy?**

**Hajiya Hauwa:** They are my friends. I am a member of the trade mission and also a member of the organisers of the Thailand Gem shows. In February 2020, I was honoured with the "Thailand's Friend Award 2020" at the 65th edition of Bangkok Gems and Jewellery Fair.



# ‘Rallying Other Women for Economic Empowerment...’

Interview With Mrs Janet Ahiaba





**Fati: Can you please introduce yourself?**

**Janet:** I'm Mrs. Janet Ahiaba, a mining operator from Kogi State. For over 15 years, I have been mining granite and feldspar. I am also the president of the Kogi Women Miners Cooperative Society. We mine feldspar and other minerals in the cooperative. In time past, all we did was to dig the ground in different places, which people call illegal mining, but we are now working to make sure we are legal miners.

**Fati: Do you have a mine site too?**

**Janet:** No, I have a quarry lease (QLS) and a Small Scale Mining Lease for feldspar.

**Fati: What's your background; did you study Geology or Mining Engineering?**

**Janet:** Not really. I read Education and I was a teacher for some years. But I like mining, especially the end products. As a Christian woman, I started praying and I had a revelation that I was working inside a stone. I met one Mr. Smith who works for Julius Berger and I started going to their mining site,

buying their products and selling these for about 10 years. When Julius Berger was about leaving Kogi, Mr. Smith gave me some guidelines and I started

**“We are over three hundred women, and we have formed more than three cooperatives. In Kogi State, women are the major feldspar miners. They go out every morning to mine and then load these in as many trucks as are available.”**

attending seminars and reading. I started my own production in 2008, when some Chinese came to fix a power line. I worked with them, then I purchased a mini crusher for my production. Some organisations came to Ajaokuta to work, and I liaised with them, to supply them feldspar. That was how I started producing feldspar, until 2015 when I saw some women who were into feldspar, and who died as a result of an accident. That was what motivated me to start the women's cooperative and since then I have been

helping other women by educating them and helping them get their licenses; and today we are all working.

**Fati: How many women formed the cooperative?**

**Janet:** We are over three hundred women, and we have formed more than three cooperatives. In Kogi State, women are the major feldspar miners. They go out every morning to mine and then load these in as many trucks as are available.

**Fati: How did you register them? Did you take them to the Artisanal and Small Scale Mining department (ASM)?**

**Janet:** They are all legally registered under this cooperative, and we have about two or three of them who have been taken to the Artisanal and Small Scale Mining (ASM) department of the Ministry. The job they are doing is not something that fetches them good money, but it is rather something to feed their families with. The major thing is to look at how to help them. For instance, if they are paid N10,000 or N12,000 per truck, this implies that if 10 people load a truck, they will share a minimum of N1,000

each. By the time they buy pain relief drugs and eat out of the money, there is nothing left for them to keep. How do we now approach such a person to contribute money for ASM registration, when the registration costs N5,000? At convenient times, I assist with the registration of groups like that.

**Fati: You know that registering them with the ASM department of the Ministry does not give them the license to mine?**

**Janet:** Yes, I know. The two licences we have are from the Mining Cadastral Office (MCO). That will save them from any embarrassment, so that they can operate as a group which uses the head-pan to fill a truck with sand, which will add to their incomes.



**Fati: For how long have you been mining?**

**Janet:** Up to 20 years. I have been in mining for a long time, but my licence came out in 2007, and I started operation in 2008. But before then I had been a sales representative for Julius Berger and other companies.

**Fati: How has the journey been so far?**

**Janet:** So far, I think I have the joy to say I have been in the place where I want to be, although it is not easy, especially in the midst of men. But I still summon the courage that with God, all things are possible. I have a huge problem with the engineering part, particularly when you call on men for maintenance. If you are a Nigerian, you will understand what that implies. But I thank God for the grace to work.

**Fati: What, to you, are the major constraints in the industry?**

**Janet:** The drilling aspect is still a problem; anything technical is a major problem. The major challenge here is the financial aspect of procuring good equipment. I know that one day government will remember the mining sector and give us equipment. If we have new equipment, it will take a long time before we have any mechanical issue.

Secondly, there is the difficulty in getting blasting materials. Since the Boko Haram activities commenced, it has been difficult getting blasting materials, but thank God that people have been coming to help once they know that one is serious about mining; they approve some materials for you once they inspect your site. The major thing is to get new equipment, such as pay loaders and drilling machines. You will notice that foreigners do better than us in mining, because they come with their equipment and spare parts for repairs.

**Fati: Have you faced any challenges with registration at the Ministry?**

**Janet:** Yes, when I wanted to renew my licence. It took



me almost three years to sort that out. Whenever I went there, they would tell me that they couldn't find my file and other documents. One day, one of the directors said, "This is rubbish, how can one be submitting documents and you say it is missing?" And since then, renewal hasn't been a major issue for me.

**Fati: Are most of your equipment from Nigeria or you import some of them?**

**Janet:** All are Nigerian. I make use of what is available.

**Fati: How many employees do you have?**

**Janet:** Initially, I had about 21 staff members, including three women. But as time went on, things got difficult and there were demands from the state government, for tax and other things.

**Fati: Have you had any challenges with your host community?**

**Janet:** What helped was that I bought the site and I have the State's Certificate of Occupancy (C of O), but that doesn't stop me from doing the necessary things for community development.

**Fati: How many women do you employ?**

**Janet:** I initially said that I have three women employees, because the perspective before was that the job is tedious, which it actually is; it is not easy work... In the real sense of it, people are just showing interest in the job. And, as I also said earlier, we have over 300 women in the

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**“I will plead with the government to give miners the necessary tools to make their work easy, as this will encourage them and more women to participate in mining.”**

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cooperative, who are currently into mining different minerals in their little ways to pay fees, for feeding, and other forms of sustenance.

**Fati: Do you face any challenges in balancing work and family?**

**Janet:** It calls for understanding. I spoke with my husband in the beginning that I wanted to go into mining, and he said he would give me time to see if I can cope. What I did was to double my strength. I started waking up around 5 a.m. to

prepare the children for school and cook. And as we went along, the children coped with it. My last child is in the university now.

**Fati: If you were to advice the Ministry, what would this be?**

**Janet:** The Ministry should keep up with checking on miners. The last time they came over, they gave workers wheelbarrows and protective equipment. I think doing that will give people some sense of belonging, that the Ministry recognises their existence. I will plead with the government to give miners the necessary tools to make their work easy, as this will encourage them and more women to participate in mining.

**Fati: What advice will you give upcoming miners, people who are just starting the business?**

**Janet:** Well, for those I have met, I told them that the journey isn't easy, though the first step is the determination to do it. I want them to develop their minds that they can do it, and they should start from somewhere and not see mining as a difficult task.



## ‘Paving the Road to Success With Gold...’

Interview With Bose Owolabi

**Fati: Could you introduce yourself in a way that helps us understand your journey into the solid minerals sector?**

**Bose Owolabi:** Dukia Gold & Precious Metals Refining Company Limited (“Dukia Gold”), is one of just two licensed precious metals refiners in Nigeria, and I’m Bose Owolabi, the Managing Director. I am an alumnus of Cranfield University, UK; Lagos Business School (LBS); and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. I am also a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria. Our journey into the minerals sector began about seven years ago in Nigeria and some other West African countries. In Nigeria, we discovered that enough interest was not being generated in the sector despite its huge potentials. We also realised that it was almost impossible to get the international community to participate in the mining sector for various reasons, which include the capital-intensive nature of various aspects of the sector, the absence of facilities, inadequate studies on the sector, etc. So, we decided to take a step, realising that until we begin to put in infrastructure and facilities as

citizens, it will be difficult to attract the kind of attention that is required to fully develop the entire value chain of the mining sector. We were frontline participants in the

**“Gold is and has historically always been the benchmark of true monetary value the world over, from time immemorial. Remember Mansa Musa, the fabled and legendary emperor of ancient Mali, who is still the wealthiest human ever?”**

Focus Labs of the Federal Government, with regard to the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP), and we continue to key into initiatives of the Federal Government, which include the Federal Gold Reserve Scheme and the

Presidential Artisanal Gold Mining Initiative. Through the Nigerian Canadian Investment Summit, we have leveraged international economic diplomacy to reach our current level of operation. These are the nodes by which our momentum is to be appreciated at this time.

**Fati: What fired your interest to start up the Dukia Gold business?**

**Bose Owolabi:** The identified gaps, identified opportunities, the huge potentials, the need to create a win-win platform and solutions for various stakeholders, and the growing attention and support from the Federal Government, which was further showcased during the FGN ERGP Focus Labs. We have simply developed and run with these opportunities, and will continue to do so. This way we believe that the mining sector in Nigeria can



be jumpstarted and begin to contribute to the GDP. Nigerians can also begin to get jobs, fair values and other benefit from the gold and other precious metal resources in Nigeria. We also believe that this will serve as a major source of export revenue and a foreign exchange generator for the country.

**Fati: What is the nature of Dukia’s collaboration with Heritage Bank?**

**Bose Owolabi:** Our relationship with Heritage Bank Plc is an organic one. It is premised on shared perspectives developed within the purview of the underscoring pre-eminence of Messrs Heritage Bank Plc as a clear leader in the commodities banking sector. Gold and precious metals are commodities. There’s a mutual leveraging of our respective skill sets. It is unheard of for an enterprise such as Dukia Gold to launch without a strong inaugural financial partner. Messrs Heritage Bank Plc is expected to lead other banks as our business develops. They accommodate the physical statutory Buying Centres (defined under the Mining Act) and provide the required full complement of

banking services. They also provide us with best-in-class financial advisory services and deal-making.

**Fati: This is a new vista of commercial banks getting actively involved in the mineral sector at a quasi-operational level. How do you understand this development?**

**“We at Dukia Gold have leveraged our professional and executive resources and economic diplomacies to develop a set of international grade/ world-class enterprise verticals for the gold and precious metals industry.”**

**Bose Owolabi:** It is to be expected, given the various trajectories of diversification, market opportunities and analysis, and the general pioneering spirit of enterprise, which is in fact characteristic of the Nigerian business economy. Nothing is ever lost on regulatory requirements. Indeed, our business at Dukia Gold is premised on

the best available functional collaborations of this nature and quality.

**Fati: But why gold and why the refining process? Which is the more difficult part of the industry?**

**Bose Owolabi:** Gold is and has historically always been the benchmark of true monetary value the world over, from time immemorial. Remember Mansa Musa, the fabled and legendary emperor of ancient Mali, who is still the wealthiest human ever? Nigeria happens to have commercially competitive deposits and reserves of native gold waiting to be exploited. We at Dukia Gold have leveraged our professional and executive resources and economic diplomacies to develop a set of international grade/ world-class enterprise verticals for the gold and precious metals industry. It is a complete mutualised ecosystem that we’re delivering. You’ll be informed of its crystallisation. What we have is a set of solutions that will cover a fully funded best-in-international class refinery, metals inspection and testing laboratory for both geophysical and geochemical requirements,





which have arisen in both Nigeria and the surrounding region, and a precious metals trading platform, amongst other solutions. Our partnerships are with world leaders. As to which aspects of the ecosystem are facile or demanding, these are matters not for us to rationalise in that way for at least two reasons: First, there is a value chain which depends on overall continuity for its sustainability and; second, decision-making and management typically arises on a case-by-case basis. What may seem complex may well be more operable than apparently simple procedures. The refinery, laboratory, and transparent community-trading platform are the centrepieces of our endeavour.

**Fati:** So, naturally, my next question is: How has the journey of gold been for you and Dukia? Could it have been a road paved with gold?

**Bose Owolabi:** There has been a learning curve, no doubt at all about that. Seven years of gestation in a new territory has had its points requiring real objectivity. God has been good and He continues to be good.

**Fati:** I want us to look at some specific factors affecting the industry now.

**Bose Owolabi:** Yes, let us do so.

**Fati:** What, in your view, were the five major constraints in the effort to build your business, and have these changed over time?

**Bose Owolabi:** I probably wouldn't use "constraints" as the noun for the benchmarks

**“Gold is an international business commodity involving a certain amount of geopolitics. We have overcome this factor through economic diplomacy and our exercise of well-informed choices.”**

of the progression that has brought us this far. I am also very mindful of what lies ahead. In broad terms, and I reiterate that these aren't or weren't constraining factors, I would identify required synergies with rural artisans as one of such factors. They are accustomed to unmonitored and significant profit shortages. They were also sceptical of inclusion and change from outsiders. Another factor would be the persuasion of some of our then envisaged foreign technical partners, who felt threatened by our business. Gold is an international business commodity involving a certain amount of geopolitics. We have overcome this factor through economic diplomacy and our exercise of well-informed choices. I hope that the two kinds of factors that I have referenced will give an adequate idea of what

may have occasionally kept us at the drawing board along the way. You might add a third type of factor, namely the appearance of local competition. We will let the next few years answer that. Regulatory framework development is also important as the sector moves one step at a time. I wouldn't call them restrictions at all. We visibly work transparently well with all of our sectoral regulators and enablers. I wouldn't call it luck.

**Fati:** How do you think we can remedy the problems?

**Bose Owolabi:** I have addressed the remedies that we at Dukia Gold have applied to these issues. I would like to add that we have recorded desired successes. Artisans are firmly onside. Our foreign partnerships are well-developed and we have enjoyed tremendous cooperation and continuous support from the Federal Government of Nigeria i.e. the Ministry of Mines and Steel Development (MMSD), which is a very key factor.

**Fati:** If the Ministry, as a regulatory institution, were to play a more empowering role for the industry, what will be your recommendations?

**Bose Owolabi:** We already have effective liaisons with the MMSD, and with other regulatory agencies. We believe the Ministry is on the right track and making several efforts, which

**“In life one has to live, study, work, etc., so gender is not really a determining factor at how successful one performs in all these. God did not give a specific set of brains to women, different from those of men”**

include ensuring that the right enabling environment and protection is created for private sector participation, alongside incentives and also through policies. Our paths frequently cross because of the relative impetus that the solid minerals sector now has, as part of the diversification of the national economy.

**Fati:** Let us move a little bit to the international environment; how competitive can the Nigeria gold producer like Dukia Gold be in a very competitive global market today?

**Bose Owolabi:** Nigeria is blessed with human, as well

as natural resources. With careful engagement and responses by all parties, the sky truly is the limit.

**Fati:** Let's go back to where we probably should have started from: What best practice, regarding refining, as against mining, will you recommend in interfacing with host communities?

**Bose Owolabi:** The answer is a short one: Responsible sourcing, including a transparent and effective programme of corporate social responsibility. Dukia Gold rates community engagement as highly as accurately determining the global price of gold. Not because our various international sectoral guidelines ask us to do so, but because it is integral to our own corporate DNA to be this way. We have not imbibed the ethos and culture of international gold for the last seven years to come up short of optimal requirements made of what we do. Host communities are our priority. We will deliver jobs, inclusion, community development projects, fair-trade in real time, and other initiatives, via direct collaboration with host communities.

**Fati:** Is the Africa Mining Vision an adequate





**international instrument and pathway for an African investor like you?**

**Bose Owolabi:** Without putting too fine a point on it, the only answer is “Yes.” We are taking our destiny in our hands. We eagerly expect the vindications of history, in the shorter, medium, and longer terms of this auspicious journey.

**Fati: I want to bring you back to the ZOOM launch of the buying centres. Could you speak a bit about the purpose and meaning of this? Are we having enough of such events and what role do they play for the industry?**

**Bose Owolabi:** Before the pandemic showed up as the disruptor that it is, Dukia Gold was on the verge of launching its business. Our unique proprietary technologies are primed for deployment at the points of aggregation of raw materials (both urban and rural mining) and at the DukiaHB Buying Centres, which are enabled for purity certification, and primed for direct integration with solid minerals databases. We had to get the show on the road and to the knowledge of the

participating public and all stakeholders. We did that on Tuesday June 9, 2020 and, if I may humbly say so, we did it well. As to the consequences of these so-called “new realities” tied to the pandemic, we see an entire raft of sterling new opportunities, rather than a plethora of such. Please stay tuned.

**Fati: I will consider it defeating not to ask a clear gender question: How has your gender constrained or enabled your path in the unique journey that you have taken?**

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**“Balance with work at Dukia Gold is deeply respected and prioritised. I achieve balance by personal prioritisations.”**

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**Bose Owolabi:** In life one has to live, study, work, etc., so gender is not really a determining factor at how successful one performs in all these. God did not give a specific set of brains to women, different from those of men, and as such there are women in basically every field I can think of. I have been working with deeply self-

respecting individuals and teams for over two decades. I can sincerely say to you that it is not something that ever arises, so much so that I honestly neither know nor think that my being a woman or a mother has howsoever been a criterion. And it isn’t just a personal journey, albeit that there are distinct personal benchmarks. It is a corporate journey with manifest public interest attributes and credentials. Perhaps with a little luck, a positive footprint in respect of gender will ensue from Dukia Gold enterprise. But that is not exactly a driving factor. I say this without prejudice to the nobility of gender issues in a cultural environment such as ours in Nigeria.

**Fati: Has family life slowed you and your dreams down in any way? How do you balance the delicate family, social and business divides?**

**Bose Owolabi:** Family life is integral to what we all do. You might recall that our Constitution enshrines it as sacrosanct. Balance with work at Dukia Gold is deeply respected and prioritised. I achieve balance by personal prioritisations. To the Almighty God be all the Glory.



## ‘Leveraging Mining and Its Value Chain...’

Interview With Josephine Emotan Shine Aburime





**Fati:** I'll like to start by thanking you for finding time to sit with me for this interview. So, could we start by asking you to provide an introduction of yourself?

**Emotan:** My name is Emotan Shine. But my full name is Josephine Emotan Shine Aburime. I've been back in Nigeria since January 2019. Before then, I was coming in and going back to the U.K., where I grew up. I've been involved in mining now and I think it's going on to five years that we started.

**Fati:** How did you find out about the mining sector, or have you always been in the mining sector?

**Emotan:** No. In my family, we are into export, and in a completely different sector.

**“...we started buying stones and from there the opportunity came one day regarding a mine. So, that's how I got into that. It wasn't something I planned from day one. It was: as you are progressing in the work, doors open and opportunities come to you.”**

It was by chance, although I have always collected stones. I had a fascination for stones

and I think, at some point, I was on holiday in an area and I kept buying the stones there, and by chance, you know, opportunity knocks. I found out that I should get a buying licence, which I got because I like to do everything properly. So, we started buying stones and from there the opportunity came one day regarding a mine. So, that's how I got into that. It wasn't something I planned from day one. It was: as you are progressing in the work, doors open and opportunities come to you. That's how I gradually became more and more involved in mining.

**Fati:** Do you have a mine site?

**Emotan:** I have several mine sites. I think we have about eight or nine mine sites.

**Fati:** What kind of minerals do you mine?

**Emotan:** Mostly gem stones. In the FCT (the Federal Capital Territory), we have one site under Emotan, where we are focusing on metals. We have completed the mining lease application. While our other sites are registered under our other company, Pirama Ventures Limited. We've been exploring the FCT site for gold and lead and stuff. And then there are the other sites we

have in other towns, including the sapphire site, and for ruby, aquamarine, and topaz. We have various sites.

**Fati:** Apart from the FCT, where are your other sites located?

**Emotan:** We have sites in Zamfara and other states.

**Fati:** What's your background? Did you study Geology?

**Emotan:** No, not at all. With every new challenge you have to educate yourself. I actually did business studies and philosophy when I was

younger, but then I lost interest in that and decided to do beauty, and studied beauty for a while and got lots of certificates in it. And then in the U.K., I had a salon and did all that kind of stuff for a year, then got into fish importation because that's what my family does; bringing in vessels to Nigeria and those kinds of stuff. I did that too. So, I've done various things, and each time you have to learn, you have to study, and if you're passionate about something, you would learn about it. Fati: So, you've been mining for five years now?



**Emotan:** About that time. Yes.

**Fati: What have been your challenges?**

**Emotan:** As always, the main challenge is security, which is obviously the sadness that we are not free here in this country, unlike in some other countries where you can walk to your own mine, which we all would love to be able to do; you understand? To be able to go to our site without feeling threatened, and those kind of stuff. So, that's a disadvantage because, obviously, I have to rely more on people going to the site and doing stuff for me, because I don't have the opportunity to go to the site as much as I want. That's one of the challenges.

As you know, mining requires a lot of money. I've spent a lot of money in setting up now. All I've been doing is setting up in the background really; I like to keep quiet in the background and do the work, because until it's all set up, you don't really want to make too much noise about what you're doing... I noticed a lot of companies come along and they get the site and then it's all about raising capital; they want to raise billions but they can't do much. And you know, I didn't go with that model. I

don't like loans that much. So my plan was: get my licence, get started, and just do as much as I can daily. So, that's what I'm still doing.

**“...I'm still wondering whether I want to partner with a big company, and if it's going to work because I'm scared about the kind of damage we can do to the environment, or if we should focus more on finding ways to still keep it locally controlled, and work with the communities more...”**

We are trying to set up the market in this place that we got, because when that Sheraton place burnt down, I was very distressed about the fact that now in Nigeria, we don't have anywhere, even in the capital, that shows that we're selling gemstones. And I feel that is a disadvantage for the country, so I was motivated to try and have a market that I felt would be protected, secured, where we can sell gemstones. Once it's going, hopefully people can come in and know that it is

safe. So, that's what I've been trying to build.

In terms of other challenges with regards to gemstones; you put workers on a site,



but you get very little return... You know, people take a lot. So those are the kind of challenges we have. But then as the next stage for us, I just ordered – which is what I'm waiting for, to arrive – the drilling machine. I'm buying the equipment, one at a time. After that, the next stage is to get a proper washing machine, so that it is not all done manually, because that's where they steal a lot of the time... with whatever we have now, we're going to try and get one or two big washers that we can put on site, so



that it can become a bit more mechanised. And then we can move this from site to site, to do as much as we can with whatever we've got.

**Fati: Are you thinking of partnering with people?**

**Emotan:** Oh yes, definitely I'm going to partner with people in the sense that I want to protect the communities that I'm committed to. So, it's not just about mining and getting the money, it's also about being responsible; making sure that first of all, it's good that it's in our hands, rather than those of foreigners, and making sure that those communities eventually benefit from whatever is leaving their place, in the end.

So, yes, I do want to partner because I know I cannot go to mine in those sites (by myself), and I have to rely on companies that know what to do. But I'm two ways about it at the moment because on one hand, if they want highly industrialised and mechanised, big, huge mines, this can be very good for me as a company and very bad for the environment. So, I've had very mixed feelings about how many of these (partnerships) we can afford to bring into the

country, because we have to be careful; we have to learn from other countries. Most of the things that we're mining right now are even better when they are rare. We don't want to over-mine the whole thing at once, and then leave the soil in bad shape, with erosion and all the other kinds of problems associated with climate change coming in. So, I'm still wondering whether I want to partner

**“I guess it's a success story in the sense that so far I've achieved all of these and I haven't borrowed money from any bank. I still have a long way to go because we need to get the marketplace going; we need to get all the mines going to the kind of capacity we want.”**

with a big company, and if it's going to work because I'm scared about the kind of damage we can do to the environment, or if we should focus more on finding ways to still keep it locally controlled, and work with the communities more, so that we set up a system where

the communities are more involved. And then we partner with the communities and share the gains. So that way, whatever is actually coming is also going partly to them. Those are the two options I'm looking at, at the moment.

**Fati: Right now you don't have problems with the community; like your Community Development Agreement (CDA) is smooth and going on well?**

**Emotan:** There's no place that I'm working in that I have any problem with the community. We made sure we did all the stuff we're supposed to do with everyone from the beginning. We paid compensation to the farmers and all the stuff we were supposed to do. So, I have not hurt anybody and I don't have issues. I'm lucky in the sense that I've tried to do it right from the beginning. I'm not into illegal mining. So, I'm trying to make sure everything I do is justified. That way there's nothing for me to hide. So far, so good. We thank God, everything is going smoothly.

**Fati: Do you have any challenges with the Ministry when you go to register your licence, etc.?**



**Emotan:** Well, the challenge we had was with the Emotan application, which after we had explored, done all the work and submitted the application, two months later they brought a new condition that we should get clearance from the FCT. This created a huge problem for us, which was later resolved amicably. In the beginning we were extremely upset about that turn of events, but apart from that, majority of the time, everything has been smooth. Fati: So the Ministry has been helpful?

**Emotan:** Yes.

**Fati: What have been your successes in the sector?**

**Emotan:** I don't know if I'm the champion of success right now, because I'm still just starting. Five years seems like a long time, but it's not in mining because the majority of time you're just exploring. And it's only now that you want to start to find the stuff, and getting ready to start to mine. We have two sites for which we have two mining leases already. That's the sapphire site, and the other site where I have fluorite and lead. So, in these two sites we're doing manual mining at the moment, because we're

building up capital, as we are not borrowing and all that kind of stuff. So it's good. I will say it's successful, even though we have not started selling. At least we're getting some stuff out of the ground that we can hopefully start to

**“Men are good... but this sector obviously comprises mostly men at the moment. But I think the more women we can encourage to come into it, the better, because that will add a different dimension to the industry.”**

sell. And, I guess it's a success story in the sense that so far I've achieved all of these and I haven't borrowed money from any bank. I still have a long way to go because we need to get the marketplace going; we need to get all the mines going to the kind of capacity we want. It does take time, and a lot of efforts. So it's a gradual process, really.

**Fati: How many people do you employ?**

Emotan: Well, I've had to do a rescheduling of my staff. At

some point, we were at least 50 people, and I think the office people were maybe 30 or so. And then the number depends on which site we're mining in. We obviously have labourers and other people on sites as well. So, it's between 30 to 50 people.

**Fati: And in terms of the environmental issues and safety of the people working, do they abide by the rules of putting on their PPE, and do you make sure they comply with the safety guidelines?**

**Emotan:** Well, like I said, I'm not on site with them usually. You know, I can only rely on my site people to try and manage things and do the site work for me. So, hopefully, they're doing what they're supposed to do; but what is helpful, usually, is for us to have more interactions with the Ministry and for us to be educated more on how we can help ourselves and our staff. So, those kinds of things will always be useful because the more you educate us on what to do, the more we're able to implement those things.

**Fati: Do you have women working for you?**

**Emotan:** I have women working for me, mostly in the office. I haven't gotten many women working on site. But like I said, I'm a very big advocate for women, and I encourage women in every single sector. I want to encourage women for training. In my lapidary, I normally have four people working, but I've not been happy with these people. So, I'm just about to change them. The person bringing in new people will do so in the next day or two. I have two trainees. We should have a full capacity of at least 10 to 20 people working in that lapidary we get on with it properly. So, hopefully half of that number will be encouraged to be women, because I think that women are very careful, and pay more attention to details sometimes. For me, it is a lovely sector for women to get involved in. And I always trust women. Men are good too, but this sector obviously comprises mostly men at the moment. But I think the more women we can encourage to come into it, the better, because that will add a different dimension to the industry.

**Fati: So, you don't just mine, you also do value addition as well?**

**Emotan:** That's the hope. When we started originally, we just wanted to mine and sell, but then because of the challenge of people offering us ridiculous prices, it's not being worth it for us because you end up working for nothing. Because you are competing with illegal miners who don't pay anything, who don't have any overheads or bills to pay. And so when you are trying to just sell rough stones and people have the ability to go into the bush themselves, and there are

**“There are not enough...people here who are fast and well trained. So, it's very important that we start to set up really big training centres for this industry, while encouraging people, because the more trained workers we have, the more the sector is going to boom.”**

stones bought directly from illegal miners, then it is a very difficult market for you to succeed in on that level. But when you start to add value to it, whereby you say, 'I'm

not going to sell on the job; my focus is not to buy it and sell it rough, my focus is to buy it and add value to it,' that changes the perception of things.

It means it takes longer, which is why I'm saying you have to be quite settled to be able to do this, because many people can't achieve this, as we need money to grow, and to be able to hang on to things. It requires a lot; it's not easy for most people to do this. So, it's been tough. But yes, the idea is to cut the stone, and then that already changes the value, and gives more flexibility to who you can sell to. And then there is also the fact that I'm making jewellery. That's my dream, so that Nigerians will start to enjoy our benefits, and be able to buy cheap jewellery that's worth something. People would have an excuse to come from another country, because they know that they can get fine jewellery and stuff here at a good price. That will bring in tourism, and so much more into the economy, as well. We are working so hard on achieving that.

**Fati: Can you tell us about the market that you are opening?**



**Emotan:** I'm setting up an outdoor market, with an indoor market on the other side. And we will have some stores that we will be giving to vendors; and we will be selling the stones and stuff there.

**Fati:** *You have a massive investment in the sector and this is the sort of stories that need to be told. People should know about this...*

**Emotan:** I'm one who doesn't like to make too much noise until I'm done with everything. So, I tend to just think of doing things first. We've been cutting our stones. I'm changing people at the moment, which is a problem with the industry; it's an issue we have – getting enough trained workers at hand. So now, I have to start to consider: Who do I bring in? From Sri Lanka or from India? And then they said it should be from another African country; whether it is Namibia. Someone was telling me they have good cutters there. We have a shortage of good skilled workers in this industry.

There are not enough trained people here who are fast and well trained. So, it's very important that we start to set up really big training centres for this industry, while encouraging people, because the more trained workers we have, the more the sector is going to boom. I've been training two people as a start and I'm so pleased with the

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**“I'm quite familiar with the media and stuff, and I use the media, even in-house. I have an in-house PR team. Our website... is almost ready, where we would have the mining, the gemstones, the jewellery and the music. You'll get to see all the parts of what I'm doing there.”**

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way they have picked up, and they're also happy about the skill they have acquired. That has encouraged me that once I settle in, I will have more permanent people. Next, we

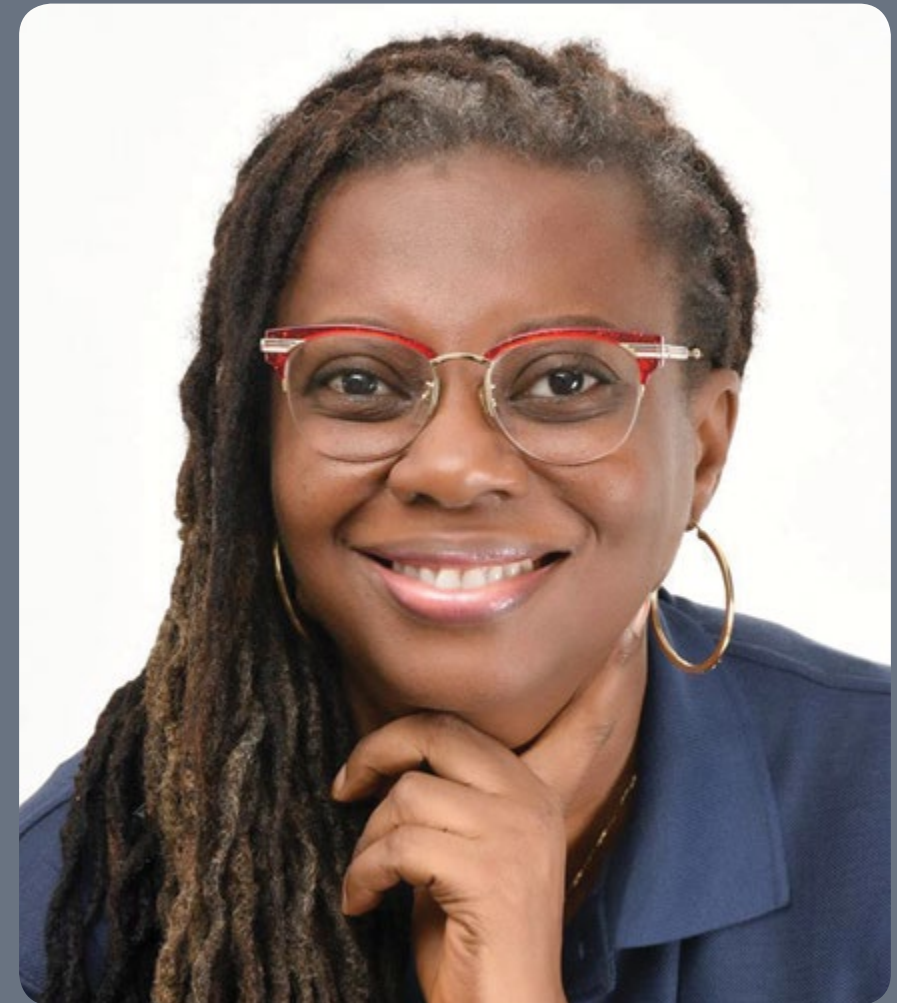
will start to do it as a more proper training programme, because lots of people always come in to inquire about this from me.

**Fati:** *So, you need to publicise it.*

**Emotan:** I've been doing a lot of TV, you know. I'm also a singer and I write music. That was my main thing; that's what I was promoting on TV and stuff before I got distracted and got carried away by this mining stuff. So, I'm quite familiar with the media and stuff, and I use the media, even in-house. I have an in-house PR team. Our website (emotan.com) is almost ready, where we would have the mining, the gemstones, the jewellery and the music. You'll get to see all the parts of what I'm doing there.

**Fati:** *When do you think you will launch the market?*

**Emotan:** I want to re-do the floor; so as soon as it's ready. We will be launching it soon.



# ‘Creating A Space of their Own For Women In Mining...’

Interview With Georgette B. Sakyi-Addo



**Fati: Could you introduce yourself please?**

**Georgette:** I am the current President of the Association of Women In Mining in Africa. I was selected as a Global Inspirational Woman in Mining by WIM UK (2016). In 2018, I was awarded the Female Entrepreneur of the Year by Invest in Africa (IIA), a non-profit championing African-owned SMEs across the continent.

I am also a mining entrepreneur who has established her own locally-owned mining and exploration supplies company, Georgette Barnes Ltd. I completed a B.A (Hons) degree in French with Linguistics, post-graduate diplomas in Communications and Financial Management (ACCA), while also holding post graduate certificates in Mining Law and Policy (UG), and Principles of Mining Engineering and Surface Mining Operations at UMaT. I established and volunteer for Women in Mining - Ghana and The Accra Mining Network. My interests include local content, economic linkages, value addition in the mining sector, and diversity. I have co-authored four publications in artisanal and small-scale mining.

**Fati: What fired your interest to start up the Women in Mining Group?**

**Georgette:** I have worked in the mining industry since

**“The good news is that there is a global understanding of the need for the WIM advocacy. Multinational mining companies have instituted gender, diversity and inclusion policies and these have really helped professional women, but there’s still so much to be done. We need to build the female talent pipeline and advocate for more women on the board level, in C-Suite and decision making roles.”**

1994, and the absence of women always struck me and I always wondered: Why? This is what started my interest in forming a women in mining group.

**Fati: What are the categories of members in the group?**

**Georgette:** Women In Mining - Ghana comprises of women along the mining value chain; mining professionals (geoscientists, mining engineers, surveyors, geotechnicians, operators, drillers, small scale miners, mine support professionals, service providers etc.)

**Fati: How has the journey been so far?**

**Georgette:** There is a lot of work to be done and not enough funding to get the requisite skills to achieve these goals.

**Fati: I want us to look at some specific factors affecting women in the mining industry now.**

**Georgette:** Socio-cultural myths and stories about women in mining; insufficient female talent; where talent is available – organisation prefer male workers; access to opportunities; favourable working conditions; access to technology; access to finance for female entrepreneurs in the sector.

**Fati: What, in your view, were the five major constraints in the effort to build the WIM organisation, and have these changed over time?**

**Georgette:** Financial support was one of the biggest challenges, as everything costs money. Time is money and volunteers give their time with no compensation; this is challenging because it costs money to move from Point A to Point B. Who pays for these costs? Also access to investment funds at reasonable interest rates for women who are building businesses in the sector, irrespective of in which part of the value chain. Whether as service providers, mine owners or product buyers, financial support is key.

Also, the awareness of issues affecting women in the sector, and convincing people that there are even issues, has been challenging. I believe that now the concept and the need for WIM advocacy is better understood in the mining sector.

Socio-cultural perceptions, myths, and the attitude that women do not belong in the sector is always a stumbling block. This comes up a lot when we undertake mentoring drives within communities and we engage young girls and their parents.

Things have improved as there is more awareness but

the financing of plans and projects is still a major hurdle. The good news is that there is a global understanding of the need for the WIM advocacy. Multinational mining

**“The vision of the Association of Women in Mining in Africa (AWIMA) is to build a strong, responsible and more inclusive African mining industry for women.”**

companies have instituted gender, diversity and inclusion policies and these have really helped professional women, but there’s still so much to be done. We need to build the female talent pipeline and advocate for more women on the board level, in C-Suite and decision making roles.

**Fati: How do you think we can remedy the problems?**

**Georgette:** We all need to get involved, and we need to recognise the value that the diversity of ideas, skills and talents bring to the table and to profit and loss bottomlines.

**Fati: If the Ministry/ government, as a regulatory**

**institution, were to play a more empowering role for the industry, what will be your recommendations?**

**Georgette:** A combination of favourable work place policies, alongside effective country and regional laws, and education.

**Fati: Is the Africa Mining Vision an adequate international instrument and pathway for an African investor like you?**

**Georgette:** The AMV is a well thought-out framework and road map for us to work within. Some countries have domesticated the vision, but the implementation has been slow. The vision of the Association of Women in Mining in Africa (AWIMA) is to build a strong, responsible and more inclusive African mining industry for women.

The introduction of the African Continental Free Trade Area (ACFTA) agreement also offers a further possibility to access markets within the framework for women mineral producers, processors, jewellery designers and manufacturers, because it could open up regional markets. The current COVID pandemic has confirmed the



need to build complete value chains within the African continent.

AWIMA's mission is to promote leadership, alongside inclusive and sustainable empowerment of all women in the mining sector in Africa. AWIMA is passionate about creating opportunities that enable women to be independent, thriving and resilient.

It is about creating employment opportunities, promotions for professional women – especially those working in the large scale mining sector, and appropriate working conditions that would help attract and retain female talent, also how to make our female work force future fit.

To build a sustainable responsible mining sector, both males and females should be equitably represented to have a diversity of thought and effort. The AMV should be dynamic and adapt to industry trends.

The current AWIMA team has started The AWIMA Jewellery

Project. We are currently looking for funding for this but the aim of the project is to create a transparent, responsibly sourced, profitable, regional jewellery value chain that economically

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**“It is about creating employment opportunities, promotions for professional women – especially those working in the large scale mining sector, and appropriate working conditions that would help attract and retain female talent, also how to make our female work force future fit.”**

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empowers African women in the gemstone, metals and jewellery industry. We started the project by undertaking a research by way of an online survey (<https://form.jotform.com/200837963591060>) to solicit information to help us move forward. We hope that

the journey of this project would help us effectively map the journey of our minerals from mine to market.

**Fati: Has family life slowed you and your dreams down in any way? How do you balance the delicate family, social and business divides?**

**Georgette:** My family have been very supportive. Social and business divides are choices you have to make sometimes on a daily level to achieve your goals. You have to be flexible and balance your needs as and when they come up; my introduction to mining was in exploration and so very early in my career, I was introduced to extensive travel and working away from home.

**Fati: Where do you want to see yourself/your organisation in the next years to come?**

**Georgette:** I am looking forward to a time when there will be no need for WIM advocacy!



## ‘Ensuring Women’s Representation In Mining Sector Decision-Making....’

Interview With Janet Adeyemi



**Fati: Could you introduce yourself please?**

**Janet:** I am Engineer Janet Febisola Adeyemi. I trained as a geologist at the University of Ife, now Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), and further trained as an engineer at Loughborough University U.K. I obtained a PhD in Political Management from Columbus International University U.K. and a Law degree from Open University in Nigeria. I am a Fellow of Nigerian Mining and Geoscience Society (NMGS), the Council for the Regulation of Engineering (COREN) of the Nigerian Society of Engineers (NSE), and the Council of Nigerian Mining Engineers and Geoscientists (COMEG) of NMGS.

I am a professional who is committed to the inclusion of women in industries formerly classified as the “exclusive club of men.” Also this fact fuelled my passion for the creation of Women in Mining in Nigeria. I was equally drawn into politics for the same reason, through which I was able to contribute in the House of Representatives by championing the insertion of gender clauses into some of the bills e.g. that of Federal Roads Maintenance Agency (FERMA), and by striving for

the inclusion of women in the board composition of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

I am a seasoned, astute, and goal-oriented executive, with proven leadership, and a management career in the private sector, various development agencies, multilateral institutions and global non-profit

**“WIMIN has successfully carved out an identity for women; and by influencing policy formulation and implementation, and supporting gender mainstreaming, more women are getting interested in the mining sector.”**

organisations. My passion for the emancipation and rights of vulnerable persons and women is on record.

**Fati: What fired your interest to start up the Women in Mining Nigeria group?**

**Janet:** The visit to the city of Jos in 2004 with a good friend of mine and a miner, Dr. Emeka Okengue, to

appraise the role of women in the mining industry. Seeing their plight, how they were being exploited made me weep bitterly and I vowed to stop the exploitation. This led to the formation of the Association of Women Miners. I then attended a conference in Denver, Colorado, where I met Susan from Canada and Louise from Australia, and they encouraged me to rebrand into Women in Mining. The role of Hajia Hauwa Ibrahim, who was introduced to me by Engineer Amate at the formative stage of the association, and subsequently others such as Emily Achor, Hannatu, Ngosichi and Mr. Shobayo keyed into the vision that drove the association. Fati: What are the categories of members in the group?

**Janet:** We have corporate members who are into trading, exploration, processing, etc.; career professionals who are in public service or private service as consultants; and women in local communities who are married to miners, or who are living in communities where their rights are infringed upon. The membership also includes environmentalists; those protecting the rights of



vulnerable persons, such as children and disabled persons in mining communities; students who we tag “Girls in mining” to be mentored for growth in the sector, etc. See [www.wimng.org](http://www.wimng.org) for more information.

**Fati: How has the journey been so far?**

Janet: Nigeria is a patriarchal state with diverse cultures and traditions. The complexity of this mixed with the poor financial capacity of women made penetration in the sector extremely challenging when compared to other sectors, for the kind of effort we have deployed as a group. We are beginning to stabilise, with a functional structure. Despite the paucity of funds, we have been able to create a desk with the Economic

Services unit of the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, and become associated with sister organisations i.e. Women in Mining West Africa (WIMOWA), African Women in Mining (AWIMA), International Women in Mining, among several others. Women in Mining Nigeria has participated in several conferences and speaking engagements. The Nigeria Bar Association invited me in my capacity as WIMIN president to be a lead speaker in 2018

WIMIN has successfully carved out an identity for women; and by influencing policy formulation and implementation, and supporting gender mainstreaming, more women are getting interested in the mining sector. The awareness

generated by WIMIN is yielding positive results, for more women are now willing to invest in the sector and are asking (the necessary) questions.

**Fati: Can we look at some specific factors affecting women in the mining industry now?**

**Janet:** I will highlight these factors since there are various categories of women in the industry. For the corporate group, this includes inadequate experience, and there is need for a lot of capacity building programmes and projects. The mining sector is extremely technical and it requires a lot of mutually beneficial collaborations beyond the one-man business approach we are used to. Second,

the initial capital cost of investment is high; it is capital intensive. Third, the gestation period is long, and quick-wins or low hanging fruits are not available. Fourth, access to funds is scarce or almost non-existent, and women hardly have their own capital. Fifth, poor infrastructural facilities make site-travels challenging and more expensive. It is very difficult for women, especially young nursing mothers, to embark on journeys (to sites) due to the rough terrains. As such, all arms of government should support women mining groups, as other countries do for their women, to expose them to the dynamics involved in the minerals sector. For career professionals, the 35% mark for gender inclusion is not effectively implemented. Women in senior positions are very few in the industry and most times they are edged out tactically even when qualified. An analysis of the (federal) budget will show the poor implementation of pro-gender projects or the presence of female consultants engaged to work in the sector, even despite their qualifications. The working environment should be made more gender-friendly for nursing mothers, also through continuous training, which is essential for development.

For community women, and women married to miners and environmentalists, some of the challenges include the lack of education about and knowledge of the risk they are exposed to through mining activities in their localities; the lack of capacity to be able to demand adequate payment for services rendered, and

**“Over the years, the activities of WIMIN have influenced policy changes. Generally, people don’t see accomplishments from afar; and we are encouraging individuals to get more involved as we pursue the changes we desire for the sector.”**

to be able to demand for their rights as citizens who can negotiate with fellow men on projects/corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects from prospecting mining companies, and also to get employment i.e. gender quota for work. There is the inability to protect their social environment from male predators, etc., and to enforce

gender justice. Simply put, women should know their rights.

Also, there is need for engagement with mining companies and government, which is essential to women for good host community relations. And since they cannot be separated from their children, therefore they should be trained on how to engage safely, while with their children in the mining environment. This must include health tips and safety operation protocols.

For students-girls in mining, we have to get them interested in STEM courses, and expose them to mentors who will guide and infuse confidence in them

All these highlighted factors are the issues we are deliberately working on. Our progress may be slow but we are on course to improve the sector.

**Fati: What, in your view, were the five major constraints in the effort to build the Women in Mining Nigeria (WIMIN), and have these changed over time?**

**Janet:** We have built Women in Mining Nigeria (WIMIN),

and it has a foundation. The foundation for a superstructure is the most difficult thing to achieve and the challenge is not in Nigeria alone. Over the years, the activities of WIMIN have influenced policy changes. Generally, people don’t see accomplishments from afar; and we are encouraging individuals to get more involved as we pursue the changes we desire for the sector.

Some of the challenges are: First, staffing, because in Nigeria it is extremely difficult to find individuals who wants to volunteer their time as members of staff, like they do in other countries. Also, the resources are very lean but it is difficult to engage someone who is not knowledgeable. Secondly, funding is a challenge, and a take-off grant is essential for a fully well structured and functional team. Thirdly, there are the discriminatory tendencies towards women in a sector that is perceived as an “exclusive club “ for men. However, the barriers are gradually breaking. Fourthly, very few women are actively involved in the mining sector. Some are interested but yet to understand the workings of the sector. Finally, there



is need for cooperation from professionals in government, and their serving as ambassadors to WIM, deploying ‘Ubuntu’, goes a long way in accomplishing success.

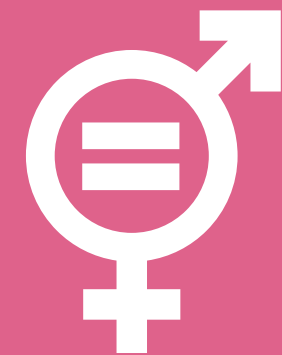
**Fati: How do you think we can remedy the problems?**

**Janet:** The problems are usually associated with the teething phase of any organisation; they will naturally be overcome through dedication and inclusion of more vibrant hands in the executive through proper elections, amendment of the constitution and by-laws. Remedies include identifying fee paying members and encouraging membership subscription. Payment will attract some benefits, which shall be unveiled after the COVID-19 interregnum. Also, improving our advocacy and sensitisation to government

officials in relevant agencies and parastatals; devising strategies of holding meetings and recognising the various focal groups with the contact persons; and organising monthly capacity outreaches for familiarisation with planned and ongoing developments in the sector.

**Fati: If the Ministry of Mines and Steel Development, as a regulatory institution, were to play a more empowering role in the industry, what will be your recommendations?**

**Janet:** It is impossible for a nation to develop by ignoring the female population. This has been proven in Japan, where the terminology “womeconomics” was first used in 2013 when their GDP dropped grossly until women were drafted back to work. Here in Nigeria, the population is almost ratio 1:1





of women to men, so diversity of workplace and the sector should be promoted by the government. International investors often look critically at the gender index amongst 13 other indicators to offer access to mining funds, so government should work with WIMIN to provide a safe and strong mode of engagement with indigenous communities, as well as women and children. The Ministry may not have the capacity to do this effectively on its own. Equally, government should support WIMIN with funding to strengthen its structure and objectives, as it is done in other countries. This will bring about efficiency and quick implementation of strategies as it pertains the critical areas of growth within the sector.

**Fati:** *Has family life slowed you and your dreams down in any way? How do you balance the delicate family, social and business divides?*

**Janet:** My family has always been extremely supportive and has contributed to my career, both morally and financially. I have an empty nest because my children are all adults. Building WIMIN incapacitated me from engaging in other business

activities, however I have absolutely no regrets. I will always be committed to the growth of female miners, WIMIN and the mining industry. WIMIN is an association that will assume its own life and my joy is

**“I look forward to WIM taking the lead in ensuring that the CSR of mining companies satisfy the international protocol of including women in decision taking processes; that societies are protected from environmental degradation, of which women and children suffer the most consequences...”**

that someday long after our time, the pioneers may be remembered and history will be kind to us.

**Fati:** *Where do you want to see WIMIN in the next years to come?*

**Janet:** Women in Mining is a broad-based organisation,

which if well supported will guarantee the full inclusion of women in the mining sector and will diversify the economy by reducing reliance on oil and gas. This will significantly grow the economy's GDP.

I look forward to WIM taking the lead in ensuring that the CSR of mining companies satisfy the international protocol of including women in decision taking processes; that societies are protected from environmental degradation, of which women and children suffer the most consequences; that more women are in the mining sector as entrepreneurs and investors, and that the WIMIN structure is strong and indivisible, with many more subdivisions across the region.

Also, I want to see that the representation is strong in bodies such as WIMOWA, AWIMA and IWIM; that more women occupy strategic offices and board level positions in the sector; that we have a Gender and Welfare Departments in the Ministry on the basis of our strength; and that we produce a quarterly journal to communicate our activities and ongoing projects.



## The Mineral Value Chain Can Provide a Ladder of Opportunities For Women

By Lynda Lawson

**What makes change happen for the better in women's lives? (Cornwall & Edwards, 2014)**

*Throughout the narratives collected in this volume, we can see example of positive change in women's lives and this resonates with my own recent work, which examined the challenges opportunities and pathways for women as they move along the mineral value chain. I interviewed women miners, traders and then those who became successful craftswomen and business owners.*

The mineral value chain can offer a ladder of opportunities for women and their empowerment progresses, as their participation moves from extraction to trading and value addition.

Understanding empowerment is a valuable concept that can help in framing one's thinking and understanding.

### Empowerment

Economic empowerment is about having the financial means to support oneself and one's family but personal empowerment goes to the heart of institutional disadvantage. It is a more nuanced and complex concept to capture than economic empowerment and it is about our capacity to choose. It is defined by leading feminist scholar Kabeer (1999) as "the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability" (p. 435). In Figure 1, the parallel lines represent these two important distinctions in empowerment: personal empowerment and economic empowerment

Empowerment relates closely to women's identity, their perception of themselves, and how they are viewed by others in the family

and community, their capacity for personal agency and voice, their knowledge of their rights, and their participation in community life. Access to minerals in the value chain provides them with the opportunity to earn income through participation in survival or growth entrepreneurship activity. For many women, the income they have generated from minerals is the first money of their own they have to spend. Particularly empowering is the chance to take some control over the way this income is spent, for example, to provide for families and to undertake symbolic community obligations, such as pay for funerals or to buy land (Kabeer, 2012).



Women learning to use gemmological tools to understand the value of the minerals they are mining is personally and economically empowering. (Source: Lynda Lawson)





## Women Face Systematic Disadvantage that Retards their Empowerment

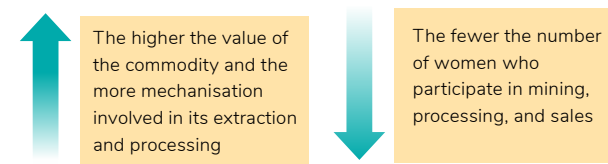
In my research, I found systemic institutional barriers, which prevent women from capturing a more substantial share of gains (Gereffi, 2018). These are:

- Traditions and inequality limits women's control over land and curtails their access to equipment and valuable assets such as higher quality mineral. Evidence is in the research by Malpeli & Chirico (2013), which found that in the extraction of high value products, men have greater control over the sites, while women have greater control of the land and more involvement in decision-making processes in the extraction of low-yield commodities.
- Time constraints, typically the result of reproductive commitments, significantly curtail women's growth as entrepreneurs (Berge & Pires, 2019).
- Structural inequalities, such as the lack of education and low levels of literacy, prevents women from accessing finance and formalisation initiatives.

### Mechanisation Can Mean More Exclusion

Hinton (2016) notes a concerning trend: as ASM becomes more mechanised and formally organised, women's participation tends to decrease. Instead of reducing women's work and increasing incomes, women's labour becomes redundant and they miss out to more powerful actors who own and control operations (Hinton, 2016, p. 3). In moves to upgrade ASM, mechanisation and formalisation go hand in hand but their impacts for women and other marginalised groups must be carefully considered. A simple way of encapsulating the institutional disadvantage women face is given in Figure 2

Figure 2: Women's Participation in Mining as a Function of the Value of the Commodity and Amount of Mechanisation

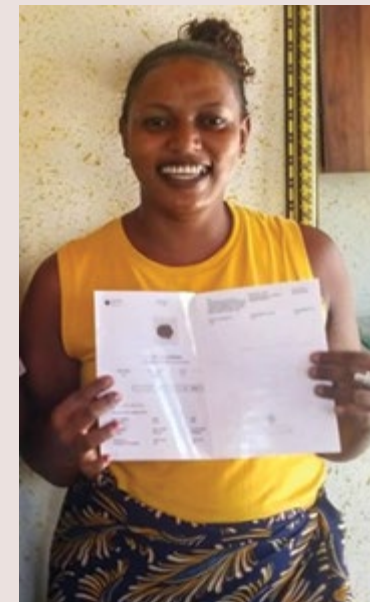


(Based on author's experience and the literature for example, Hinton, 2016)

Progress needs to be made to address the structural issues that underlie such disadvantage before personal and economic empowerment can be achieved. One of the indicators of progress in achieving the empowerment envisaged in Sustainable Development Goal 5 - is the "proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex" (Indicators 5 b, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata?Text=&Goal=5&Target=5.b>). But this asset-only focussed approach to empowerment can also fail to acknowledge the individual, personal, and relational aspects of work that must be done by women to take decisions and make changes in their lives. For example, for women traders, a mobile phone



Malawi mine owner (Source: Lynda Lawson)



One of the female miners with the Provenance Proof block chain report she has created for her stone. (Source: Lawson Gems )



The Roam women's lapidary centre in Sakaraha, south west Madagascar. (Source: Lynda Lawson)

could be a valuable tool enabling them to capture an image of their stones and send it to a trusted buyer and also to record their assets on block chain. However, without institutional work and systemic change, the phone will quickly be sold to raise cash. What is needed are approaches that shift the dial on women's capacity to make decisions and change their lives and that of their children for the better. One way of shifting the dial is by using technology to overcome disadvantage in new and innovative ways.

### Overcome Disadvantage With Technology

The following is an example of institutional work<sup>1</sup> that has the potential to bring about lasting change. In 2018 a lapidary centre was opened in the heart of the sapphire mining area of south west Madagascar and women miners learnt how to cut and polish

their stones and a retail space was created, with the cooperative called Roam, which in the local language signifies independence. In March 2020, Gubelin, one of the world's most prestigious gem houses, sponsored the teaching of blockchain to these women miners in rural Madagascar. Block chain is a system for creating a digital ledger of transactions, which could be used as a traceability mechanism for gemstones. Being able to document the origin of gemstones can be can add value at the point of sales for some customers. Women miners learnt IT and photographic skills to record their stones in Everledger's Provenance Proof blockchain system. This training put these disadvantaged rural women at the forefront of trends in the gemstone industry and also gave them transferable skills in IT and photography, which create confidence and social capital to overcome powerlessness and disadvantage.

1. Institutional work can be defined as purposeful, reflexive efforts of individuals, collective actors, and networks of actors [that] shape the institutional arrangements within which they live, and which influence their experiences, opportunities, and actions (Lawrence & Phillips, 2019, p. 190).



As you read through the narratives in this book think about the enablers of personal and economic empowerment.

What makes change happen in women's lives and how can we help enable change in each other's lives ?

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- Dr. Lynda Lawson** is the knowledge transfer and training manager at the University of Queensland's Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining (CSRm). She has designed and led training programmes in the extractive industry in Africa, Asia, Australia and South America in the area of local economic and social development, gender and the extractives.



## About the Interviewer

**Fatima Ibrahim Maikore was appointed as a Geologist in the Ministry of Mines and Steel Development in 2012, and has worked in the Artisanal and Small Scale Mining Department of the Ministry, where her schedules included the carrying out of baseline studies on mining issues. Some of the issues pertain to the use of mercury in mining, the environment, child labour and gender, and intervention activities to stop the further occurrence of lead poisoning in parts of North Western Nigeria. Also, the provision of extension services to mining cooperatives on mine closure, environment, safety and health.**

Promoted to the post of Senior Geologist in 2016 and redeployed to the Mines Inspectorate Department, where she works in the Explosives Unit. She was transferred to the Investment Promotions and Mineral Trade Unit in 2019 as a Principal Geologist. Fatima is a Fellow of Nigeria Institute of Management Consultants, a member of Nigerian Mining and Geoscience Society, Member of Council of Mining Engineers and Geoscientists, a member of Australia Alumni Association of Nigeria, and a member of Association of Mine Closure Ambassadors.

She was elected as the Financial Secretary of Australia Alumni Association of Nigeria (AAAN) and the Treasurer of Association of

Mine Closure Ambassadors. Fatima is also a member of Women In Leadership and Women in Mining Nigeria. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Geology from the University of Maiduguri, a Certificate in Executive Course in Oil, Gas and Mining Governance in 2019 from Blavatnik School of Government, Oxford University, United Kingdom; a Post-Graduate Diploma in Applied Geosciences at the Laser Petroleum and Geosciences Centre, Port Harcourt; and a Post-Graduate Diploma in Environmental Resource Management from the Nasarawa State University, among other certifications. Fatima has contributed articles on developments in the extractive sector for the Nigerian online newspaper, *Premium Times*.



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