THEME 1: THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN CONFLICTS RELATED TO EXTRACTIVISM AND LAND GRABBING

THE PREVALENCE OF CUSTOMARY RIGHTS IN THE CONTEMPORARY DECISION-MAKING PROCESS FOR MINING PROJECTS WITHIN MALAGASY SOCIETY

Summary

This report explores the conflicts linked to extractivism and land grabbing from a gender perspective. It highlights the marginalisation of women in decision-making on mining projects, despite the fact that Malagasy law does not officially discriminate between the sexes. In practice, customs favour men, relegating women to a passive role in land management and mining negotiations. Women are in the minority, or even do not participate in the various stages of the decision-making process (environmental impact assessment, public consultation, environmental and social monitoring, exploitation, evaluation, etc.). In the absence of a national gender policy, existing sectors, particularly the extractive sector, do not automatically take gender relations into account in their actions. As a result, women and young people are victims, when on the contrary they should be key players for change, provided that their voices are recognised and their rights respected. For real justice to be done, it is essential to include these perspectives in decision-making processes and in strategies for defending the environment.

Introduction

General context

The extractive sector groups together economic activities linked to the extraction of natural resources according to the following classifications:

- The mining sector (extraction of minerals and precious materials from quarries, including open-cast and underground mines)
- The oil and gas sector: extraction of crude oil and natural gas both onshore and offshore.
- The forestry sector: extraction of timber or other wood products
- The water sector: extraction and management of resources water (often considered separately)
- Quarries and building materials: extraction of stone, sand, gravel and other building materials

The extractive sector encompasses economic activities focused on extracting natural resources from the Earth. These activities are systematically categorized using various industrial classification systems. As an example of categorization, according to the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC), Revision 4, the extractive sector is primarily classified under Section B: Mining and Quarrying, which includes:

- **Division 05:** Mining of coal and lignite
- **Division 06:** Extraction of crude petroleum and natural gas
- **Division 07:** Mining of metal ores
- **Division 08:** Other mining and quarrying
- **Division 09:** Mining support service activities

These divisions encompass activities such as the extraction of minerals, oil, and gas, as well as related support services.

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- The forestry sector: extraction of timber or other wood products
- The water sector: extraction and management of resources water (often considered separately)

- Quarries and building materials: extraction of stone, sand, gravel and other building materials [1]

The extractive sector is strongly influenced by geopolitical, economic, environmental and technological dynamics. Mining in particular plays a major role in the global economy due to the growing demand for jewellery and raw materials such as copper, gold, cobalt, nickel, rare earths, gemstones and precious stones. These resources are essential for energy production, technology and infrastructure. However, this intensified extraction leads to environmental, social and economic problems, in particular conflicts linked to land grabbing, which refers to the appropriation of vast tracts of land agricultural or forest by industrialists or governments, often to the detriment of local communities. Women are particularly affected by these practices, as they often depend on the land for their livelihoods and economic activities, such as family farming, especially in rural areas. Mining, combined with infrastructure projects, deprives them not only of the occupants of their land, but also of their access to the natural resources necessary for their human well-being.

These dynamics, amplified by customary practices that favour men and exclude women from land management (especially in rural areas), lead to increased marginalisation of women, preventing them from accessing compensation or decisions of land use. They are often excluded from consultation processes and decision-making, which reinforces gender inequalities and economic insecurity. There are many issues at stake: loss of land rights, environmental degradation, lack of access to resources, and exacerbation of poverty, particularly for rural women.

About Madagascar

With a surface area of 591,896 km², making it the fourth largest island in the world, Madagascar is a large island in the Indian Ocean off the south-east coast of Africa. Its capital is Antananarivo, located in the central highlands of the island. Madagascar has a population of around 31 millions and is characterized by great ethnic diversity. The country has a high proportion of women and young people, with 50.7% of the female population and around 50% under the age of 25.

The country is renowned for its subsoil and exceptional biodiversity, with over 80% of its animal and plant species endemic.

Particularly when it comes to mining and strategic resources, the country's subsoil is rich in mineral resources, including nickel, cobalt, zircon, graphite, titanium, ilmenite and cobalt (in the form of mineralized sands), as well as gold and precious stones (sapphire, emerald, tourmaline, etc.), not

[1] https://siccode.com/isic-code-lookup-directory

mention to oil and natural gas (reserves mainly offshore) that are coveted by investors around the world.

At present, Madagascar's extractive sector has experienced significant growth, such that by 2022 it will account for 43% of the country's total exports, with revenues reaching 327 billion Ariary, or around 70 million dollars (according to the 11th report on transparency in the country's extractive industries, published in December 2024).



Map of Madagascar

A brief overview of extractivism in Madagascar

Madagascar joined the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) in February 2008 with the aim of promoting open and responsible management of natural resources. Broadly speaking, the initiative aims to make transparent the revenues collected by the government and provide visibility on the mining sector, including estimates of the amount of government revenue that could be lost as a result of illicit gold exports.

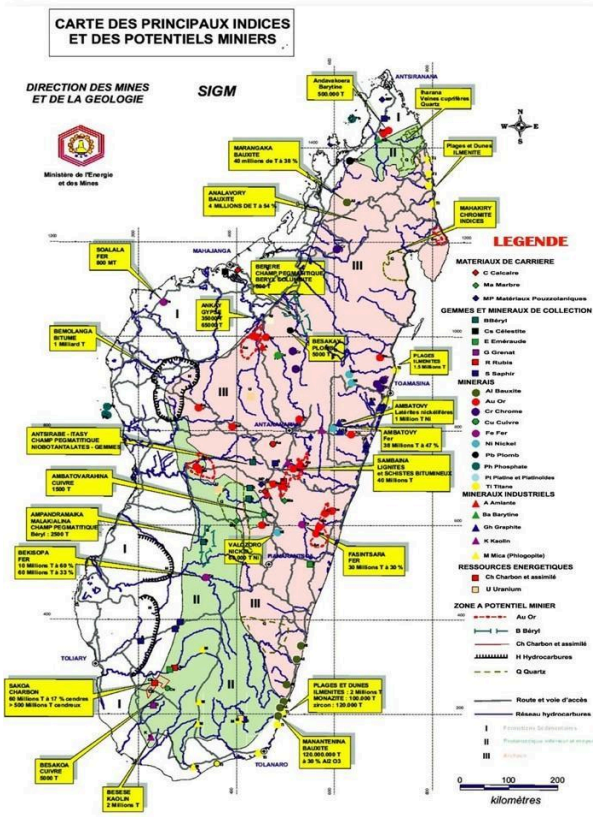
Over the past decade, the mining and strategic resources sector alone has accounted for around 30% of the country's GDP. However, the understanding/interaction/overlay between rights land ownership (especially the issue of customary land rights) and the mining perimeter is based on a complex balance (even imbalance).

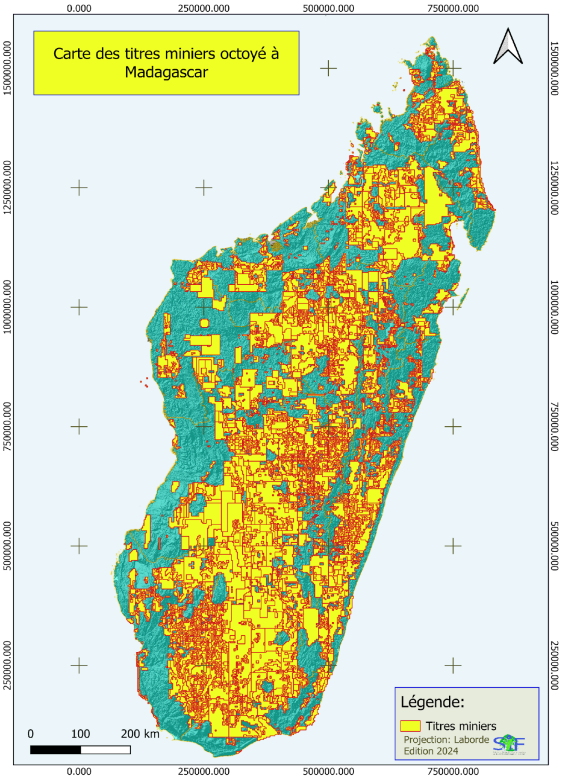
In the case of Madagascar, when examining the subject of "gender and land perspectives linked to extractivism and land grabbing," the mining sector emerges as the most significant area of focus. This is because, in the context of Madagascar, the other extractive sectors—namely oil and gas, forestry, and the extraction of building materials such as stone, sand, and gravel—are either considered separately or have comparatively minimal impact in relation to gender and land dynamics.

The oil and gas sector, for instance, is primarily offshore and therefore tends to have limited direct interaction with land-based communities, particularly in terms of land access, use, or ownership conflicts. Similarly, the forestry sector and quarries/building materials sector are less influential when it comes to large-scale land appropriation or gender-specific impacts tied to land tenure systems.

As a result, any analysis of the intersection between extractivism, land grabbing, and gender issues in Madagascar should prioritize the mining sector. This includes understanding how mining projects impact women's land rights, access to resources, participation in decision-making, and their overall socio-economic well-being. Mining operations often lead to the displacement of communities, reconfiguration of land use, and shifts in traditional governance systems, all of which have gendered consequences.

Focusing on the mining sector offers a clearer and more direct lens through which to explore these complex relationships in the Malagasy context.





hese two maps illustrate the challenges the mining sector currently facing in Madagascar. The first map shows the country's mining potential (Source: Direction des Mines et de la Géologie) and the second map shows the mining areas or mining titles granted by the State (2014), which represent just over 50% of the country's surface area.

Land tenure and gender in Madagascar

The issue of gender and land in Madagascar is shaped by a dual legal system: formal civil law, which governs land ownership; and customary practices, which remain highly influential, particularly in the southern and southeastern regions of the country.

Malagasy law[2], through mechanisms such as titled private property and land certificates, guarantees equal land ownership rights to both men and women. Under the Civil Code, women and men alike are legally entitled to acquire, sell, or lease land, provided they follow the appropriate administrative procedures. Women also enjoy equal inheritance rights and can pass land on to their descendants without any explicit legal discrimination. National legislation thus aims to promote gender equality in land ownership.

However, a significant gap persists between legal provisions and the lived reality of many women, especially in rural areas. Customary law continues to dominate land-related matters in many communities, and these practices often discriminate against women. In such settings, land is frequently regarded as a male prerogative, and women are largely excluded from decisions related to its management.

Inheritance practices under customary norms typically favor men, with women — even if married or widowed — often denied formal recognition or rights over family land. Patriarchal structures reinforce this exclusion, concentrating land ownership, control, and decision-making in the hands of men, thereby restricting women's access to a crucial asset for their livelihood and economic autonomy.

In short, although Malagasy law ensures equal land rights for men and women, customary practice and deeply rooted social structures in certain regions of Madagascar continue to perpetuate inequalities.

A patriarchal society and an ethnic tribe that has legitimised polygamy since time immemorial

Moreover**, deep patriarchal norms continue to prevail** in Malagasy society, although certain social and legislative developments are tending to favour gender equality. The **"fomba malagasy"** (Malagasy customs) often give men predominant authority, particularly with regard to the passing on of names, inheritance and family and community decisions. . In the decision-making processes of the extractive and mining sector, particularly in the acquisition of an operating permit by the investor, the development of an environmental impact assessment, and the drafting of the environmental and social specifications, participation and decision-making remain largely dominated by men. Women are not directly integrated into the circle and are unable to have a say in the future of their land. Patriarchy in Madagascar remains rooted in social and cultural structures, although gradual changes are visible. In the case study we are going to look at, male domination is palpable.

Polygamy in the Anosy Region, is still prevalent the location of this case study. Polygamy in Anosy, although prohibited by law, is still practiced in some rural communities for cultural reasons, economic and social. It has positive aspects such as financial security for the women, if the man has sufficient resources, strengthening alliances between families, and broadening the family structure for work and mutual aid.

- **Research question and methodology**

The challenges highlighted in this case center on the reconciliation between customary laws and practices and formal legislation that guarantees equal rights for men and women, particularly

[2] Law no. 2005-019 setting out the principles governing land status and Law no. 2022-013 revising the rules setting out the legal regime for untitled private land ownership

regarding access to land. This tension underscores the broader issue of legal pluralism, where multiple legal systems—customary and statutory—coexist, often in conflict. In this context, the study focuses on how to bridge this gap to ensure that women can fully participate in land-related decision-making processes, especially those linked to the extractive industry. The goal is to promote their role not only as stakeholders but as active architects of both local and national development.

The objective of this report is to analyze the challenges posed by legal pluralism in the areas of land tenure and extractivism, with the aim of protecting local communities—particularly women—under Madagascar's Mining Code. Through this case study, the report will examine the socio-environmental impacts of extractive activities, assess their effects on climate resilience, and propose practical solutions to strengthen the recognition and enforcement of women's equal rights within both the land tenure system and the extractive sector.

The methodology used to draw up this report is as follows:

- Review of the literature and collection of secondary data :
  - Compilation of existing literature on the theme
  - Analysis of data socio-economic and extractive sector available from local, national and international institutions.
  - Analysis of national and local policies and programmes through interviews with government officials and representatives of technical and financial partners (TFPs).
- Semi-structured interviews: Interviews with ministry officials, experts from related bodies, international organisations and women from various socio-economic groups to gather their personal experiences, perceptions and strategies for dealing with the climate impacts.

Results: presentation of the case study

In 2013, the ilmenite mining project undertaken by QMM S.A. in the Anosy region, located in southern Madagascar, gave rise to tensions between the mining company and local land occupants. These conflicts stemmed from legal uncertainties surrounding the reconciliation of the local population's customary land occupation rights with the implementation of the mining project. The affected site, situated in the area of Mandena, spans 2,873 hectares and extends across three communes: the Urban Commune of Fort-Dauphin and the Rural Communes of Ampasy Nahampoana and Mandromondromotra. In response to these tensions, SIF[3] intervened as a mediator between the investor and the local communities, working to facilitate dialogue and promote conflict resolution.

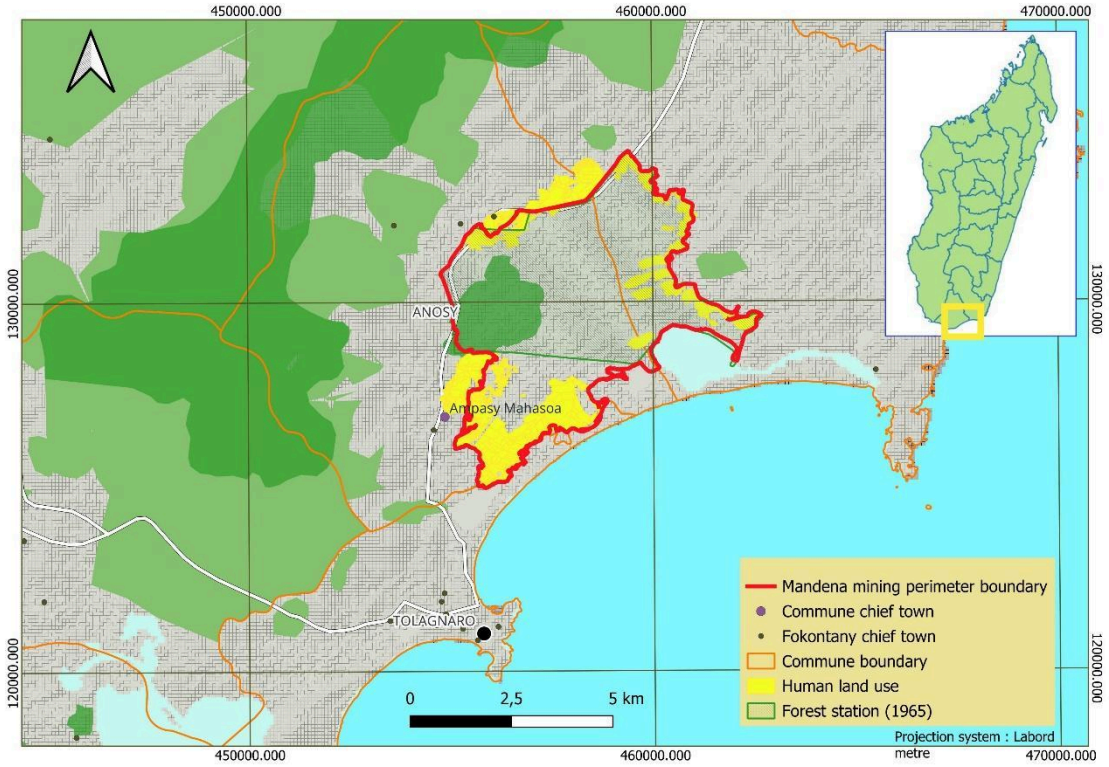
It should be noted that the gender situation among the Antanosy[4], between customary practices, land management and gender equality, highlights the tensions between tradition and modernity, and the obstacles to equitable land management. The gender situation among the Antanosy is marked by a complex mix of customary practices and legal challenges, which perpetuate gender inequalities in land management. Women are often excluded from decision-making processes and do not have equal access to land, which hampers sustainable and inclusive land management.

[3] Solidarité des Intervenants sur le Foncier
[4] Ethnic groups in the Anosy region

At first glance, the cause of the conflict lies in the legal uncertainties between the operators and the land occupants, particularly regarding the reconciliation of property rights. This issue is especially sensitive in terms of gender and the regulations governing the mining project, creating uncertainties and tensions between the different stakeholders.

In this context, SIF's intervention aims to clarify and strengthen the legal framework to ensure that women enjoy equal recognition of their rights to land and can fully exercise their role in sustainable and equitable land management. This involves not only revising existing laws, but also taking into account cultural realities and customary practices, with the aim of actively and meaningfully integrating women into decision-making processes relating to land use and management in the face of the mining project.

Localisation map of the Mandena mining perimeter



This map shows the Mandena mining site delineated in red, with a surface area of 2,873 hectares, and the yellow delineation shows the occupants affected by the project, including 456 households living and using the land within the perimeter.Farmers have come close to losing their rights to their land because the state authorities have misapplied the legislation in force.

- According to the administration, without proof of land ownership, you are not the owner of the plots you occupy (presumption of private ownership),

- whereas according to law 2005-019 and law 2006-031, it is occupation that creates land ownership rights.

SIF acted as mediator for the rights of the local people living within the perimeter in order to reach a fair agreement agreed by all stakeholders (local/central authorities, investors, CSOs and the local population).

The perimeter covers 4 villages including Mangaiky, Mandromondromotra, Ampasy and Maroamalona in the 3 Communes of the Anosy Region, such as the Urban commune of Fort-Dauphin, the rural communes of Mandromodromotra and Ampasy Nahampoana.

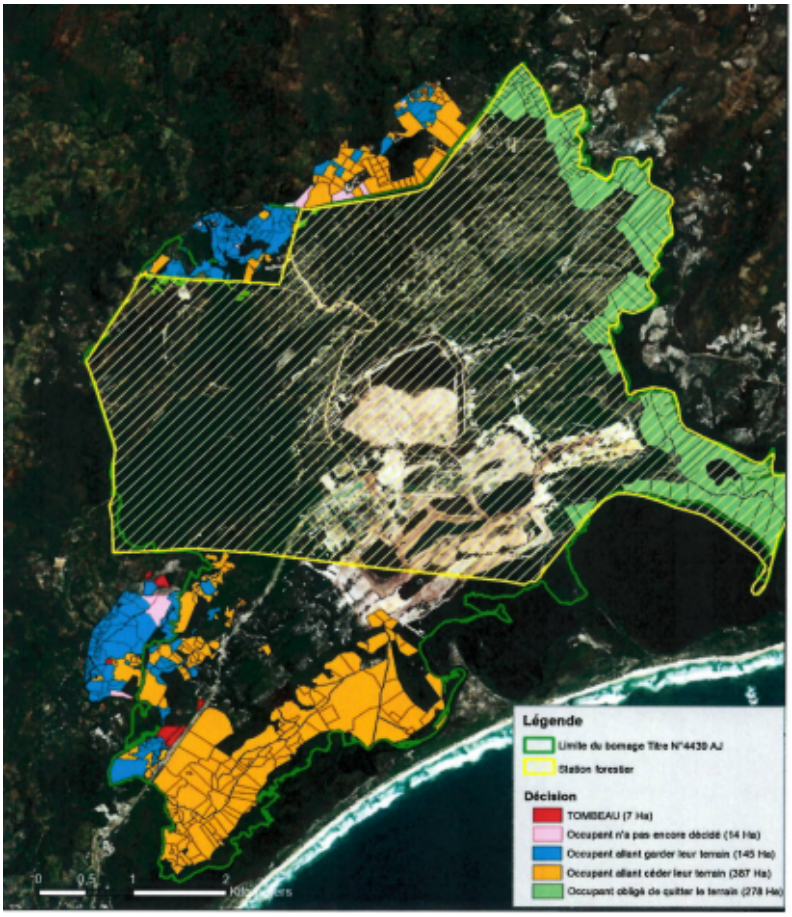
Of the 456 households surveyed as owners and traditional occupants, 28.93% are women and 71.07% are men. According to the third general population and housing census[5], the proportion of female heads of household in Anosy is 29.2%.

Census of landowners on the Mandena mine site

Village	**Land Status**	**# Household**	**% Male**	**% Female**
Mandromodromotra	untitled private property	67	65,67%	34,33%
Maroamalona	untitled private property	86	82,56%	17,44%
Mangaiky	untitled private property	129	68,22%	31,78%
Ampasy	untitled private property	174	67,82%	32,18%
Total		**456**	**71,07%**	**28,93%**

Spatial map of land-use situations linked to agreed decision-making between stakeholders

[5] Recensement général de la population et de l'habitat, RGPH-3, INSTAT 2018



Joint resolution :

Following the intervention of the SIF, which included carrying out a land inventory, reconciling the rights of operators and occupants, especially women, collecting the opinions of the populations concerned and organising the public consultation, here is the joint resolution of the stakeholders:

a) The occupants located within the State's reforestation perimeter (in the south-eastern part of the area on the map) will be obliged to leave the area permanently and will be forced to negotiate with QMM SA the principles and conditions for the recognition of the loss of use of the land, being a private domain of the State.

b) 456 occupants, including 135 women, who are the rightful owners of the land are free to choose between the following two options:

_ Keeping land under contract on a compensation basis during the mining circuit and restoring land after mining.

_ Voluntarily cede their land directly to the farmer under a compensation contract, after which the land will be returned to the State (the State's private domain) to a management committee for restoration of resources naturaland zebu grazing after the mining project.

Below are tables summarising the decisions of the legal owners (untitled private property) of the land and a table showing the decisions of women in particular.

Table showing the number of landowners and the proportion according to their decision

Village	# Owners	% who decide to stay	% who decide to give up
Mandromodromotra	67	44,78%	55,22%
Mangaiky	129	65,89%	34,11%
Maroamalona	86	0,00%	17,44%
Mampira	174	60,92%	39,08%
Total	**456**	**59,73%**	**40,27%**

Table showing the proportion of women who decided to stay and give up their land to the project

Village	# Women owners	% who decide to stay	% who decide to give up
Mandromodromotra	23	34,78%	65,22%
Mangaiky	41	51,22%	48,78%
Maroamalona	15	0,00%	100,00%
Mampira	56	62,50%	37,50%
Total	**135**	**37,13%**	**62,87%**

Of the 40.27% of people who decided to leave their land voluntarily and receive compensation, 62.87% were women. The principle of making a decision following a free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) did not arise because, as mentioned above, the consultation is belated. The choice given is not completely free. The woman, brought up in a purely patriarchal society, doesn't know what to think about what's going on. As head of the household, she has not had the opportunity to be included in the various consultation and decision-making committees, despite the fact that the process does not follow the norms. Most prefer immediate compensation and to hear no more about the problem.

Decision-making following a CLPE

Adhering to the FPIC means committing to following the essential principle of ensuring that local communities are actively involved in decisions concerning extractive projects likely to affect their land, resources and way of life. Madagascar has not yet incorporated the FPIC as an explicit obligation in its national legislation. However, several pieces of legislation take account of elements of this principle:

- **The 2023 Mining Code.** The new Mining Code emphasizes community involvement through the establishment of the Mining Fund for Social and Community Investment and mandates Environmental Impact Assessments. But the absence of explicit FPIC provisions raises concerns about the extent to which Indigenous rights are protected in the context of mining activities.
- The decree N°2025 - 080 on the implementation investment compatible with the environment called[6]

[6] A kind of Charter about the environment that sets out the requirements for environmental monitoring and control

- **2015 Land Policy Letter** recognizes and protects the land rights of local communities and customary land without physical proof of ownership.
- **International commitments signed to move towards good governance and transparency**:
  - Madagascar is a signatory to the **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)**, which recognises the right to **participation in decision-making** in matters that affect their rights, through representatives of their own choosing, **FPIC** before the approval of any project affecting their lands or resources. While Madagascar has endorsed UNDRIP, the implementation and legal recognition of indigenous rights—especially in contexts like land ownership or extractive industry projects—can vary and often face challenges in practice.
  - The country joined the **Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) in 2008**, which encourages consultation and transparency.

The issue of FPIC is crucial for ensuring the ethical and responsible management of land and natural resources. In this case, it was carried out post mortem, because the operation was already under way when QMM thought of expropriating the land from the local populations. The MECIE Decree even mentions sanctions in this regard in the event of failure to follow up. Hence the negotiations that led to the two options for the future of the land.

According to a field study conducted by SIF, a significantly higher proportion of women choose to relinquish their land compared to those who decide to retain it. Of the 40.27% of individuals who voluntarily gave up their land, 62.87% were women. This statistic highlights a marked reluctance among women in the affected communities to assert their land rights. It also reflects deeper challenges such as limited awareness, education, and access to information, all of which hinder their ability to fully defend and exercise those rights.

Many women tend to opt for what seems like the simplest solution to relieve themselves of immediate burdens, particularly when supported by an organization during the negotiation process. However, they are often excluded from the key stages of decision-making related to land use and development, such as mining projects. They also lack the necessary training and have not benefited from capacity-building initiatives that would equip them to negotiate for fair compensation or defend their rights effectively.

Customary land tenure systems, typically dominated by male authority structures, provide inadequate protection for women's land rights. Women are consistently under-represented in local leadership and decision-making bodies, limiting their ability to influence outcomes. Deeply entrenched gender norms and social expectations further discourage women from asserting themselves or challenging existing power dynamics, increasing their vulnerability in land-related matters.

What’s more, although national laws may prohibit gender-based discrimination, the social reality tells a different story.

The influence of religious and traditional authorities often reinforces male dominance, granting men the final say in land-related decisions, regardless of what legal frameworks stipulate. For example, in

some communities, religious leaders interpret sacred texts—such as the Bible, the Quran, or other spiritual doctrines—in ways that emphasize patriarchal values, often placing men as the heads of households and primary inheritors of property. These interpretations, whether rooted in doctrine or shaped by cultural norms, can discourage women from asserting their land rights, even when the law allows them to do so. In practice, this means that women may be denied land ownership or inheritance under the belief that it contradicts religious teachings, despite there being more gender-equitable interpretations available.

On the traditional side, customary practices are often deeply rooted in patriarchal social structures where land is considered a family or clan asset passed down through the male line. In many rural areas, land tenure is not formally registered, and decisions over land distribution or inheritance are made by customary authorities—usually male elders or chiefs. These leaders may favor male relatives when resolving disputes, even if a woman has a legitimate claim under statutory law. Moreover, women are frequently excluded from village councils or customary courts, denying them both a voice and representation in land governance. As a result, their rights are systematically undermined by a cultural system that prioritizes male authority and lineage.

Compliance with the law on mining and land tenure

With the aim of attracting investors and maximising economic and social benefits, the Malagasy government has overhauled existing legislation.

Law 2023-007 on the overhaul of the Mining Code was enacted in 2023: "Loi n° 2023 - 007". It incorporates provisions aimed at strengthening the participation and consent of stakeholders, particularly local communities, in mining activities. Although the exact term CLPE is not explicitly mentioned, several articles of the code establish mechanisms to promote this approach.

Relations with landowners :

The regulations concerning the relationship between permit holders and landowners (in Title VII Chapter I of the document: Article: 298-307) the principle has not been changed, i.e. the two persons concerned (natural or legal) will have to find compromises to mutually respect their respective rights; on the other hand, it provides much more precision and clarification on the previously obsolete arrangements between the permit holder and the holder of the right of ownership.

- **Mandatory written agreement**: Article 299 stipulates that the holder of a mining permit and the owner of the land must agree in writing on their respective rights and obligations. This requirement ensures that landowners are informed and consent to planned activities on their land.

- **Prior information**: Under article 301, the holder is obliged to inform the landowner of its right to occupy the portion of the property covered by its mining licence, in particular the land required for its activity and related industries. This provision ensures that landowners are fully aware of the planned operations.

Once again, the situation was not discussed in advance. The mine operator did not contact the owners of the land before they made any representations. Nor was prior information provided. Hence the fury of the local population, which led them to strike. The mediation operations helped to make

up for all these lost steps. However, this did not convince the majority of the women, who preferred to give up their land and receive compensation.

Protection of human rights and gender equality :

Recently, the Malagasy government adopted a series of reforms to the law governing the mining sector in order to modernize obsolete legal frameworks, attract investors and maximize economic and social benefits. CSOs, and in particular SIF, played an active role in the consultation process for the drafting of this new law, and contributed their expertise. Subsequently, a new mining code was promulgated in 2023: “Law n° 2023 - 007”. The reform of this new mining code includes the following points in particular

- A dedicated Chapter IV under Title V of Law no. 2023-007 focuses on the promotion of human rights, including the rights of women, particularly in the context of the mining value chain. This chapter addresses human rights considerations in the issuance of permits, as well as within all stages of mining operations. It also explicitly condemns acts of gender-based violence occurring within the mining sector[7].
- Articles 263 and 264 of Madagascar's Mining Code focus on promoting gender equality and human rights within the mining sector, which is a positive step toward ensuring inclusivity and responsible practices in the industry. These provisions require license holders, subcontractors, and other stakeholders in the mining value chain to actively encourage diversity, prevent any form of discrimination, and respect human rights in all operations and activities.

By focusing on gender mainstreaming, these articles aim to ensure that women and other marginalized groups have equal access to opportunities within the sector, whether it’s in employment, decision-making, or benefits. The emphasis on human rights also seeks to safeguard the well-being of local communities, workers, and other affected parties, ensuring that mining operations do not violate basic rights or contribute to harm.

These provisions encourage a more equitable, fair, and socially responsible approach to mining, aligning with global trends that push for greater corporate social responsibility, ethical standards, and sustainability in the industry.

Decree 2025-80 lays down the rules and procedures for environmental and social assessments to ensure that investments are compatible, which came into force on 29 January 2025. The environment requires environmental and social impact assessments to be carried out before industrial projects are implemented, sets out the terms and conditions for public participation, and requires the principles of social inclusion and gender equality to be applied throughout all phases of the project (Article 159). It also suggests that the involuntary resettlement of populations affected by investment projects should be carried out in a way that respects human dignity, gender, fundamental rights including the right to fair and equitable compensation, the right to consultation and participation in informed decision-making, and the livelihoods of those affected.

[7] Title V, Chapter IV: Articles 263–265 of Law no. 2023-007

Madagascar's 2015-2030 Land Policy Letter recognizes the importance of the FPIC in ensuring that development initiatives respect the rights of local communities and contribute to equitable and sustainable development. However, in practice, peasant farmers, who make up 80% of the population, and particularly women, are vulnerable due to the lack of an FPIC.

● Conclusions

Madagascar's legal pluralism creates a complex environment where state and customary laws clash, often to the detriment of local communities and particularly women. In the context of the extractive sector and land grabbing, women's rights are often given less consideration than those of men due to the Malagasy culture, which minimises the place of women in our society. Women's access to property is often limited by customary law in Madagascar. Extractive companies exploit these conflicts to strengthen their control, while women remain particularly vulnerable due to their low representation in local power structures and in the decision-making and consultation process for mining projects

In the case of the conflict between QMM and the local population, women—already underrepresented in land ownership and decision-making—were more likely to voluntarily relinquish their land. This decision was driven by several interconnected reasons. First, there was a significant lack of prior information about the mining project and its long-term impacts, which left many women unaware of their rights, the value of their land, or the potential consequences of giving it up. Unlike men, women were often excluded from early discussions or public meetings where such information was shared.

Secondly, there was no specific consultation process targeting women, despite their distinct roles and interests in the use and management of land. This meant their concerns, perspectives, and needs were largely overlooked during negotiations with QMM. In addition, the failure to respect the presumption of untitled private property—a principle that should recognize land occupied and used by communities, even without formal documentation—further disadvantaged women, who are less likely than men to hold official land titles due to historical and systemic inequality.

Perhaps most critically, there was a lack of access for women of all ages to participate in decision-making spaces, legal support, or compensation mechanisms. Young women, widows, and elderly women were especially marginalized. Without access to legal advice, civic education, or representation in local governance, many felt they had no choice but to accept the loss of their land, hoping to avoid conflict or further hardship.

Furthermore, the predominance of men in collective decision-making processes heightens women's apprehension and marginalization. Customary rights systems that exclude women and favor men in accessing property and managing land—combined with a widespread lack of knowledge among women about their legal rights—result in women being limited in, or entirely excluded from, decision-making spaces, as was the case in this conflict.

This exclusion is particularly evident during critical phases such as the preparation of the Environmental Impact Study (EIS), which is essential for granting operating permits to investors. Consultations organized by investors or government authorities often fail to consider women's

specific needs, perspectives, and rights. In extractive projects, consultation efforts tend to focus on men, while women—who play central roles in domestic life, subsistence agriculture, and natural resource management—are sidelined. This is despite the fact that women are frequently the most affected by the environmental degradation and social disruptions that such projects cause.

As a result, gender considerations, as well as women's access to land and resources, are frequently neglected in the Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) and during the implementation and monitoring of the operator's obligations and specifications. This systemic oversight perpetuates gender inequality and leaves women without the tools or support needed to defend their rights or benefit equitably from development projects.

Conflicts related to land grabbing have a particularly severe impact on women, who are often the primary managers of agriculture and household subsistence. In many communities, women are responsible for growing food, collecting water and firewood, and ensuring the daily survival of their families. When land is taken over by mining projects, this foundation of family subsistence is threatened. The land that once provided food and basic resources is reallocated for mineral extraction, leaving women without the means to fulfill their essential roles. This not only undermines food security but also deepens women's economic dependence and social vulnerability.

Women are often excluded from the decision-making processes surrounding mining projects due to the patriarchal structure of society in Madagascar. In most cases, it is men who participate in every stage of negotiations, while women's roles are relegated to the background. As a result, women areleft to bear the negative consequences of these projects without having had a say in their development.

To improve this situation, it is crucial to strengthen national laws that protect and promote women's rights, and to foster inclusive land governance that respects customary systems while ensuring gender justice. Raising awareness of gender equality among all stakeholders—government, investors, communities, and traditional leaders—is essential to ensure that gender justice is not just written into legal texts, but actively practiced and enforced.

Meaningful participation of women in all consultation and decision-making bodies not only promotes equity, but also boosts their self-confidence, empowers them to take ownership of the process, and ensures that decisions reflect the interests of future generations