

Women in Mining: An Assessment of Workplace Relations Struggles

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ABSTRACT In 1994, the newly elected democratic government of South Africa adopted a number of strategies to open up the mining sector to historically disadvantaged South Africans which include women, as part of its economic empowerment policy. Although well intended, the integration of women into the traditionally male-dominated workforce created many challenges. The main objective of the study on which this paper was based was to critically analyse workplace relations struggles, accompanying the deployment of women in the core business of the mining sector. Quantitative and qualitative research paradigms were used. The research revealed numerous workplace relations challenges including, among others, acceptance by male co-workers, inequality issues, discrimination and sexual harassment. The paper concludes by making recommendations that can be implemented and used by employers, employee relations practitioners and labour experts to create a work environment free from conflict and conducive to constructive and harmonious workplace relations.