Ladies in Hats
Opportunities for Women in the Sapphire Value Chain

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Pathways, opportunities and challenges for women working across the sapphire value chain
Area of Study

- Work is based in Sakahara, Madagascar, one hour from Ilakaka on the RN7 road to the southwest.

Ilakaka, Madagascar  Photo credit: L. Cartier
Colored Gemstones

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Research to date

• 173 stakeholder interviews and 20 + hours of observations with 5 extended visits to the region.

The heart of my research has been:

• 23 life histories of women sapphire miners (Lawson 2017)

• 12 interviews and 6 life histories of women sapphire traders who are the focus of this talk

Methodology :

The Life Course (Giele & Elder, 1988)
Research Questions

- **RQ1.** How and why do women miners of gemstones become traders?
- **RQ2.** What are the opportunities for women to participate in the sapphire value chain activity beyond extraction and what role do institutional factors play?
Now I have to look after myself, my husband is polygamous and I am the second wife.

The good thing is we are not exhausted.

I bought a two gram blue sapphire from a quarry miner and sold it for roughly four times the price. I bought stock to set up my business.
Barriers to Market Participation

- Deep seated cultural gender norms constrain women’s access and capacity
- Business Practice marginalises women
- No financial institutions
- Lack of reliable knowledge and equipment
Enablers to Market Participation

- **Access** social resources of industry knowledge
- **Leverage networks** of other women traders, of local miners and African traders
- **Learn** from other successful traders
- **Use** their human resources of youth, energy, hard work and health
Effectuation strategies (Sarasvathy, 2008)

- **Starting** with the means in mind not the end
- **Making do** with what is at hand
- **Knitting together** family responsibility and business needs
- **Applying affordable loss** instead of expected return when evaluating options
- **Exploiting and not avoiding** contingencies
- **Leveraging relationships**

*Photo credit: Pactworld*
THANK YOU!

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Blogs:

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