

Ivory Coast: The Impacts of Artisanal Gold Mining on Local Livelihoods and the Mining Industry

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ABSTRACT

In Ivory Coast, mining is one of the major sources of income for local people. Because of mining, jobs have been created thus increasing employment opportunities in rural regions. Moreover, this is a job that does not require a lot of skills, so a lot of people are able to join at the same time earning huge money within a short amount of time. Not only does this occupation attract adults, children are also interested in this activity. However, the negative social impacts caused by this activity remain indisputable. Chemical products used by miners and unsanitary conditions are harmful not only to miners themselves but also to innocent local people. There is a large destruction of lands, and also prostitution, which leads to the spreading of many contagious diseases. The paper mainly focuses on the impact of artisanal gold mining and its affects to local livelihoods and the environment in Ivory Coast. Some key recommendations for addressing artisanal mining activities in order to have good options for sustainable management of mineral resources in the country will be discussed.

KEYWORDS

Artisanal Mining, Environments, Ivory Coast, Mining Industry

1. INTRODUCTION

Africa has a large portion of Birimian geological formations that make west Africa an excellent mining region (Figure 1). The Birimian rocks are major sources of gold and diamonds that extend through Ghana, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Mali and Burkina Faso.

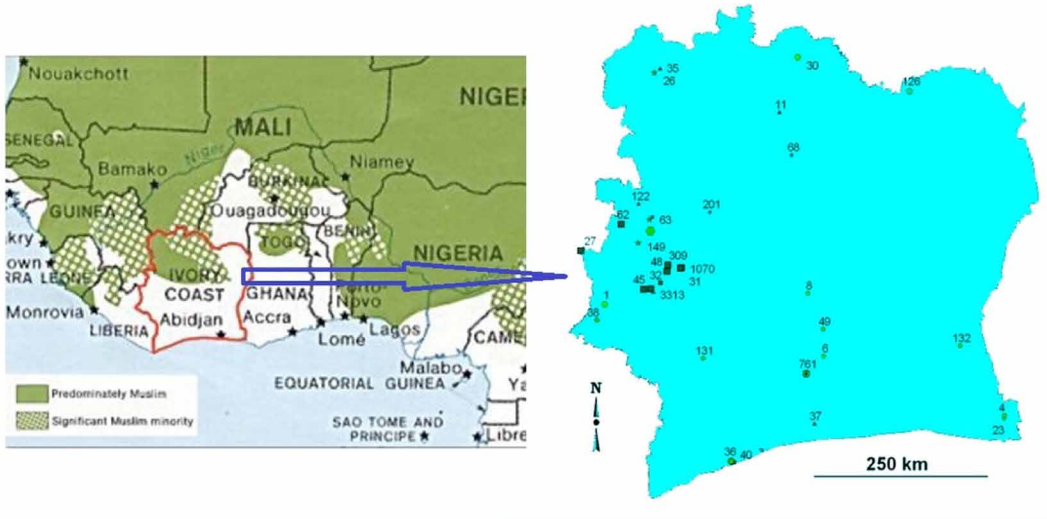
Many efforts were made to promote and transfer Artisanal mining to small-scale mines by West African states. These states sought – to no avail, to use projects and multi-sectorial funding programs geared towards optimizing national investment and promoting socio-economic welfare through a number of initiatives such as the fight against poverty campaigns, assistance with community settlements and on the improvement of quality of life.

The term Artisanal and small-scale mining generally refer to mining practiced by individuals, groups or communities, often occurring informally in developing nations. A formal definition of this

DOI: 10.4018/IJSSMET.2017100103

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Figure 1. Legend and ore deposit mine in Ivory Coast



sector has not yet been adopted and legal status and local definitions vary from country to country. Miners are using minimal mechanization generally in the informal sector of the market (Hentschel et al. 2002, Banchirigah, et al., 2010; Basu et al., 2015; Yager, 2013). It is therefore difficult to estimate the extent of artisanal mining in a developing context at this time due to lack of common definition, its use of seasonal workers and a lack of official statistics. Both Artisanal and large scale mining continue to be debatable over the world due to the varying risks and potential benefits involved. While the introduction of technology has made the mining process more efficient over the last ten to fifteen years, the concept of Artisanal mining remains a rather risky activity.

ASM (Artisanal and Small-scale mining) is analogous to informal mining activities due to the fact that the miners don't use sophisticated machinery and high technology combined with the lack of (or very minimal use of) machinery is prevalent across the country (Ivory Coast) and some developing countries (Africa, Oceania and Central and South America) over the world with an estimation of over 100 million people involved in this activity (Manu et al., 2013; Hilson et al., 2014; Cuvelier, 2016; Dastranj, 2016).

Artisanal mining is the new important source of livelihood for many people today in the Ivory Coast (Figure 1). Indigenous and foreigners have been attracted to this lucrative activity due to the high price of gold. Over 5,400 people (Indigenous, foreigners, old, women, men, children) are actively working in or around any of the 300 illegal mining sites; located in 21 of the 36 regions of the country according the national society SODEMI (Kouame et al., 2015; Bolay, 2013; Xia, 2015).

The increasing poverty rate of the population is a clear sign and is mainly attributed to the increasing number of youths, men and women entering Artisanal gold mining activities (Erb, 2016; Gupta, 2015; Kouame et al., 2017; Wahi et al., 2015). The challenges relative to mining in Ivory Coast became widespread 2002 and 2011 when the state authority was absent and the rebels occupied the northern parts of Africa. Many children became orphans during the rebellion in 2002 and post electoral era. Hence, these individuals viewed working in the Artisanal gold mines as the perfect opportunity to provide for themselves and to support their families. In Africa, children are usually the

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