

The Economic and Environmental Effects of Gold Panning in an Armed Conflict Zone in the Circle of Gao

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ABSTRACT

Since 2015, the Gao region in northern Mali has been the subject of a massive flow of people from all walks of life in search of gold nuggets that would make them rich. Indeed, gold was discovered on various sites in the region and successively. In a context of insecurity and occupation of the sites by armed groups, the exploitation of the sites is carried out in an anarchic manner with little regard for the environmental regulations in force. The objective of the study is to describe the practice of gold panning in the context of armed conflict in Gao; the study also seeks to analyze the economic and environmental effects of this practice. The methodology adopted consisted in carrying out surveys with artisanal gold miners and local authorities in the region. From the analysis of the results of the surveys, it appears that the positive consequence has been the drop in the unemployment rate, organized crime and armed robberies on the main roads. However, the anarchic exploitation of the sites with inappropriate machinery and techniques poses serious environmental problems, particularly with regard to water, soil, flora and fauna resources. This has serious consequences on the renewable natural resources and, therefore, on the sustainable management of the natural resources of the area. Non-compliance with the texts in force or even their ignorance by operators in an insecure area is one of the main factors favoring gold panning. The Malian State must seek to secure these areas in order to enforce the appropriate exploitation measures and better organize the sector. This will have the double advantage of bailing out the coffers of the State and the communities and also ensuring the safety of the artisanal gold miners on the sites.

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