

Multidisciplinary Analysis of the Impacts of Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining in Upper Guinea (Republic of Guinea)

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ABSTRACT

The Guinean economy is highly dependent on the mining sector: in 2018, mining products accounted for 90% of Guinea's total exports and 22% of its GDP (2021, IMF Report No. 21/147). Mining is divided between industrial forms, some of which date back to colonial times, and centuries-old artisanal forms, in particular for gold in the historic area of Bouré. This communication with a multidisciplinary vocation proposes to update the recent socio-technical evolutions of this last form of exploitation, its spatial reconfigurations, as well as its environmental impacts. The Upper Guinea region, in the northeast of the country, concentrates most of Guinea's gold potential. Three companies mine gold there industrially: SAG (AngloGold) and SMD (NordGold) and SMM (Managem). At the same time, several hundred artisanal and small-scale sites exist in this region. These sites have a specific socio-spatial organization, since they are based on an ephemeral temporality and are constantly reconfigured according to the mobility of gold miners. These mobilities, historically seasonal (mainly in the dry season) have undergone major transformations since the gold boom of the 2000s due, among other things, to the mechanization of techniques. The increasingly generalized use of crushers, detectors and other equipment is thus tending to reconfigure the ways in which spaces are used and to transform the very morphology of sites. These recent socio-technical and spatial changes will be discussed first. In a second step, it will be a question of bringing to light the first results on the environmental impacts of this activity, little studied in this region. However, the artisanal and small-scale gold activity leads to notorious and visible effects, in particular in terms of deforestation and risks of soil and water pollution. These two axes will be based on the combined mobilization of satellite images and first-hand qualitative field data which will make it possible to give a diachronic analysis of these different evolutions. The objective of this communication is therefore to provide initial analyzes of the environmental and social impacts of gold panning in order to propose initial lines of thought on the development of a strategy shared by the actors for the sustainable development of mining, artisanal and small-scale mining in Guinea.

Keywords: Artisanal gold, Environmental and social impact, Upper Guinea, Mining



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