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Artisanal mining communities in eastern DRC: seven baseline studies in the Kivus

A summary by Global Witness, June 2012

Seven baseline evaluations of artisanal mining communities in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) reveal that local communities rate insecurity as the main reason for sustained or increased poverty. The studies found that other interconnected factors, including population displacement and access to land and markets, also contribute to the poverty and hardships endured by mining communities in North and South Kivu.

The studies were authored by three international non-governmental humanitarian organisations, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Catholic Committee Against Hunger and for Development (CCFD), and Solidarités International and one Congolese organisation, the Commission on Natural Resources of the DRC Bishops' Conference (CERN).

In South Kivu four mining communities (Luttwinja, Ninja, Nzibira and Mukungwe, all in Walungu territory) were surveyed jointly by CRS, CCFD and CERN between August and October 2011. In North Kivu, Solidarités International surveyed six mining communities (Mubi, Banamutabira, Banamatumo, Walikale Centre, Ndjingala and Banabuhini/Kibua, all in Walikale territory) between December 2011 and January 2012.

The situation in artisanal mining communities has often been inaccurately represented in the international 'conflict minerals' debate. These reports evaluate a range of factors that affect mining communities in North and South Kivu, including the impact of industry response to the U.S. Dodd-Frank conflict minerals law. They highlight the fluidity of local economies and community responses to these rapidly changing local dynamics. In the communities surveyed, armed group activities often had the greatest impact on daily life.

Insecurity was the main reason for sustained or increased poverty over the past two years

71 percent of communities surveyed in South Kivu where household income has remained constant or decreased in the past two years blamed their increased poverty on insecurity.ⁱ Insecurity has a negative impact on movement of goods and on community access to markets. More distant markets become inaccessible, restricting the sale of goods to local outlets, which stifles farm production and economic activity.ⁱⁱ As respondents in South Kivu reported, up to 90 percent of the agricultural goods they produced were sold at local markets, making access to these markets critical to their household revenue.ⁱⁱⁱ Limited access to their fields also affects the volumes of agricultural goods produced.^{iv} In communities surveyed in North Kivu, the studies found that reduced access to fields combined with an increased demand for available agricultural produce reduces the purchasing power of local residents and pushes food prices up on local markets.^v

The communities surveyed are isolated and economically disadvantaged because of the presence of armed groups, including those in mining sites, and a lack of basic infrastructure

Some armed groups active in the Kivus continue to fight for control over mineral-rich areas.^{vi} Lack of infrastructure in turn makes it harder to establish state authority.^{vii} Without security and an ability to rid the mines of armed groups, communities remain isolated and possibilities for economic development are extremely limited. In these areas 80 percent of the population has a daily income of around 1 USD where the national average for a similar population is 2 to 2.5 USD per day.^{viii}

Population displacement caused by threat or attack from armed groups puts further pressure on local markets and causes inflation

Displaced populations typically have limited access to their fields and can suffer from malnutrition. Their presence places additional pressures on host communities already contending with the challenges of daily life in the Kivus, for example by increasing pressure on a community's food resources because they cannot access their own fields.^{ix} Displaced people are often hired for casual daily work, an unreliable and poorly paid form of employment.^x

A town surveyed in North Kivu in January 2012 contained 1904 displaced households of which 603 were families that had very recently arrived. The town has experienced three waves of displaced people since 2010 and the surveys found that only 24 percent of households were living in acceptable circumstances.^{xi}

Fighting between armed groups in the area included that motivated by control of mines.^{xii} In another North Kivu town the fight for leadership in nearby mines between October and December 2011 caused violence against women, systematic pillage, killing of civilians and arson and resulted in further waves of civilian displacement.^{xiii}

Households rely on agriculture as a main source of revenue

Agriculture is the primary and preferred source of income for more than 80 percent of the families surveyed in mining communities in South Kivu.^{xiv} In communities surveyed in North Kivu household revenue is derived from a wide portfolio of sources including agriculture, mining, commerce, fishing, mineral transportation and other daily work. In the trading town of Ndjingala for example, 47 percent of households depend on daily agricultural work compared to a majority of households in Walikale centre.^{xv}

Farming was considered a more reliable source of income than the 'inconsistent' revenues generated by mining and business. Respondents in South Kivu stressed in addition that mining was often subject to illegal taxation. Those for whom mining was the primary source of income in South Kivu (about 13 percent) were those without access to land.^{xvi}

Income generated by mining often doesn't benefit family or community development and doesn't have a sustained positive impact on local economies

Overall, the 'comptoir' model^{xvii} that traditionally dominates the region's tin, tantalum and tungsten artisanal mining sector discourages investment and development at community level because there are no tangible incentives for traders to invest in infrastructure there. The bulk of their profits are invested in the provincial capitals or abroad.^{xviii}

Respondents surveyed in South Kivu reported that revenue generated from mining was largely used to fund 'immediate' consumption, including alcohol and prostitution.^{xix} Whereas in one town in North Kivu, recent mine closures (following the 2010 Congolese president's ban on mining and exports) were cited as the main reason why parents were less able to pay school fees,^{xx} in other communities the surveys found that students had abandoned schooling to pursue the possibility of an income from mining.

"Mubi, a commercial centre in North Kivu, serves several mines and has a population that depends upon agriculture, mining, and animal rearing [...] [Mubi] supplies nearby towns and villages with agricultural goods and is a place of economic exchange for manufactured goods arriving from the large towns of Kisangani, Butembo and Goma. At the beginning of 2012 heightened insecurity led to increased hardship for the population of Mubi. The local population could not access either the mines or their fields, which severely limited economic activity [...] The presence of newly displaced people also had a negative impact."

Solidarités International RRMP Rapport d'Evaluation Multisectorielle, Mubi, P3

Miners are typically geographically mobile and in some mines the majority of diggers have come from other provinces to find work

Young men, attracted by the possibility of quick cash returns or stymied by a lack of alternative livelihoods, dominate the workforce demographic in mining areas. Miners are often described as floating between mining activities and other forms of income generation. Artisanal mining can be carried out on a seasonal basis, during school holidays or in combination with other activities and is often not a permanent activity. In some mines only a fraction of the diggers are local people. In some mines, for example Bisie, the region's largest tin mine, the majority of diggers arrive from other provinces with the hope of earning a livelihood.^{xxi}

Mining zones surveyed in South Kivu were described by the studies as areas of migration. Here, respondents noted that young men typically leave mining zones to find employment in urban areas (often leaving their wives and children behind) and young women leave to marry outside of their families. Some young people leave in pursuit of secondary education. Physical insecurity was also cited as a reason for departure from mining communities. In the areas surveyed in South Kivu, those coming from other areas to work in mines or related activities were primarily male (between 60 and 70 percent).

Mineral exports have decreased but not stopped; production statistics are not consistently available

Official Congolese government statistics show that between March and September 2011, tin ore exports from North and South Kivu averaged at 28 percent of 2009-10 levels. This figure increased to 58 percent for North Kivu in April 2012.^{xxii} Reliable production figures are often not available and site-specific research is required to allow for proper interpretation of production levels. For example a study of the largest tin mine in North Kivu estimates 10 tonnes daily production before the presidential ban compared to around 500 kg per day in April 2011.^{xxiii} Another report states that tin ore production volumes recorded since April 2011 in the same mining zone are much higher than export volumes. Global Witness findings and a recent UN Group of Experts report also documented a gap between production and export figures, attributed to smuggling. In South Kivu, statistics for cassiterite production increased sevenfold between late April and August,^{xxiv} suggesting that production and export volumes have not fallen exponentially.

The real number of artisanal and small-scale miners in North and South Kivu is unknown

Although artisanal mining generates much activity across the Kivus, the actual number of people employed directly in mining is unknown. The 'carte de creuseur' system used to manage formal registration of artisanal and small-scale miners (ASM) is currently dysfunctional. A 2009 mapping project, one of the only reliable baseline studies available, provides a minimum figure of 20,000 miners in both North and South Kivu.^{xxv} The last census in DRC took place in 1984.

ⁱ CRS, CCFD, CERN *Etude des Besoins: Communautés minières de Lutwinja, Mukungwe, Ninja et Nzibira, Sud Kivu RDC*, page 9.

ⁱⁱ CRS, CCFD, CERN *Etude des Besoins: Communautés minières de Lutwinja, Mukungwe, Ninja et Nzibira, Sud Kivu RDC*, page 9.

ⁱⁱⁱ CRS, CCFD, CERN *Etude des Besoins: Communautés minières de Lutwinja, Mukungwe, Ninja et Nzibira, Sud Kivu RDC*, page 9.

^{iv} Solidarités International *RRMP Rapport d'Evaluation Multisectorielle, Banamatumo*, page 3

^v Solidarités International *RRMP Rapport d'Evaluation Multisectorielle, Banamatumo*, pages 3 and 32 and Solidarités International *RRMP Rapport d'Evaluation Multisectorielle, Kibuha*, page 33

^{vi} Solidarités International *RRMP Rapport d'Evaluation Multisectorielle, Banamutabira*, page 3. See also the *Rapport préliminaire de la mission d'enquête du Bureau Conjoint des Nations Unies aux Droits de l'Homme sur les viols massifs et autres violations des droits de l'homme commis par une coalition de groupes armés sur l'axe Kibua-Mpofi, en territoire de Walikale, province du Nord-Kivu, du 30 juillet au 2 août 2010*

^{vii} The CRS, CCFD, CERN report notes that Lutwinja, South Kivu, lies within an industrial mining area where a mining company has built infrastructure locally. Here, those surveyed noted that family income had risen in the past two years and 28 percent of participants surveyed attributed this to improved security. 66 percent of people surveyed said that their income had risen due to improved security resulting from the presence of private security and infrastructure built by the company. CRS, CCFD, CERN *Etude des Besoins: Communautés minières de Lutwinja, Mukungwe, Ninja et Nzibira, Sud Kivu RDC*, page 9.

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- ^{viii} CRS, CCFD, CERN *Etude des Besoins: Communautés minières de Luttwinja, Mukungwe, Ninja et Nzibira, Sud Kivu RDC*, page 6.
- ^{ix} Solidarités International *RRMP Rapport d'Evaluation Multisectorielle, Banamatumo*, pages 3 and 32
- ^x Solidarités International *RRMP Rapport d'Evaluation Multisectorielle, Ndjingala*, page 35
- ^{xi} Solidarités International *RRMP Rapport d'Evaluation Multisectorielle, Walikale Centre*, page 8.
- ^{xii} *Rapport préliminaire de la mission d'enquête du Bureau Conjoint des Nations Unies aux Droits de l'Homme sur les viols massifs et autres violations des droits de l'homme commis par une coalition de groupes armés sur l'axe Kibua-Mpofi, en territoire de Walikale, province du Nord-Kivu, du 30 juillet au 2 août 2010*, page 5.
- ^{xiii} Solidarités International *RRMP Rapport d'Evaluation Multisectorielle, Mubi*, page 4.
- ^{xiv} CCFD, CERN *Etude des Besoins: Communautés minières de Luttwinja, Mukungwe, Ninja et Nzibira, Sud Kivu RDC*, page 7.
- ^{xv} Solidarités International *RRMP Rapport d'Evaluation Multisectorielle, Ndjingala* page 35, *Walikale Centre*, page 35.
- ^{xvi} CCFD, CERN *Etude des Besoins: Communautés minières de Luttwinja, Mukungwe, Ninja et Nzibira, Sud Kivu RDC*, page 7 - 8.
- ^{xvii} The 'comptoir' model is typically used to trade minerals in North and South Kivu, whereby minerals are bought from artisanal miners by middlemen, or 'négociants' who then sell the minerals on to traders – the comptoirs - typically based in trading centres such as Bukavu or Goma.
- ^{xviii} *Upstream Pilot Implementation of the OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas*, page 7.
- ^{xix} CCFD, CERN *Etude des Besoins: Communautés minières de Luttwinja, Mukungwe, Ninja et Nzibira, Sud Kivu RDC*, page 5 - 7
- ^{xx} Solidarités International *RRMP Rapport d'Evaluation Multisectorielle, Walikale Centre*, page 19
- ^{xxi} 'Upstream Pilot Implementation of the OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas. Baseline Report on the Supplement on Tin, Tantalum, and Tungsten' 2011, page 55
- ^{xxii} Official North Kivu trade statistics obtained by Global Witness, March 2011 to April 2012.
- ^{xxiii} Pole Institut *Etat des Lieux Après la Réouverture des Activités à l'Est de la RDC*, page 33.
- ^{xxiv} *Upstream Pilot Implementation of the OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas. Baseline Report on the Supplement on Tin, Tantalum, and Tungsten* 2011, page 7.
- ^{xxv} IPIS 2009 <http://www.ipisresearch.be/mapping.php>.