Fact Sheet: How should companies manage security and human rights challenges related to artisanal and small-scale mining?

Preview – Toolkit on Addressing Security and Human Rights in Complex Environments, new edition

The Challenge

Artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) activities are frequently intertwined with large-scale mining (LSM) operations in numerous contexts around the world. ASM is often cited as a major cause for security and human rights incidents that seriously threaten the rights and dignity of individual miners and their communities. Tensions between ASM and LSM also lead to company-community conflict.

Security and human rights challenges relating to large-scale and small-scale mining include:

- In some countries, national and/or local laws and regulations lack clarity regarding where, how and how much artisanal mining can legally be undertaken. This ambiguity may result in local miners trespassing or accessing mining concessions illegally. Companies, through their public or private security providers, sometimes respond with the use of force; this creates company-community conflicts.

- Limited socio-economic development and unemployment can narrow alternative economic options for local communities. Under these circumstances, local populations tend to continue to engage in ASM, even if it is illegal, and companies occasionally react by seeking to take restrictive measures.

- The discovery of minerals that can be extracted through ASM can create a 'gold-rush scenario' where there is a large in-migration of people into existing communities in search of economic opportunity. This causes strain on community resources and conflicts with residents.

ASM is a reality in many mining contexts. The approach a company takes to manage community relationships, and in particular the role played by its security set-up vis-à-vis artisanal miners, can exacerbate or mitigate the escalation of conflicts.

ASM-LSM: What Should Companies Do?

In situations where the company manages an ASM site on its concession, **engage with ASM actors and representatives before organising security arrangements** to ensure that community concerns are addressed and human rights of artisanal miners are respected.

When companies do not manage an ASM site on their concession, but ASM nevertheless takes place around the company premises, wider security dynamics can be complex. Some minerals that are mined through ASM outside of the concession might nevertheless make their way into a company's supply chain. In such cases, companies have a responsibility to ensure human rights are respected even outside of their direct control.

Implement gender differentiated policies. Develop all policies keeping in mind that a large percentage of ASM workers are women, who suffer specific human rights impacts.

Train private security providers, and/or ensure that public security providers are trained on how to interact with ASM miners and communities. Security personnel are in a complicated position, at times under threat when ASM workers insist on entry or might be offered bribes and asked for favours by ASM workers, which may be hard to resist, especially when coming from their own communities.

Engage with and participate actively in multi-stakeholder working groups on business and human rights. These working groups can support monitoring security and human rights issues in ASM-LSM contexts and mediating conflicts.

Support ASM formalization efforts that establish and monitor extraction standards and promote peaceful coexistence of industrial and artisanal mining and economic and social development for communities.

Engage with and implement initiatives that seek certification of minerals or with other standards/benchmarking measures.

Examples of Good Practices

To limit risks to the security and human rights of ASM actors and surrounding communities, companies that take constructive steps as early as the exploration phase of project development are more likely to build and maintain a trusting relationship with the ASM community.

In Ghana, ASM activity takes place in close proximity to the Tarkwa Gold Fields mine. When the mine transitioned from underground to open pit format in the mid-1990s, reports indicated tensions between ASM actors and the company, including:

- Security providers reportedly permitted the trespassing of ASM workers into mines leading to thefts of product and equipment.

- Hundreds of illegal miners occupied a portion of the concession.

- There were disagreements between the company and ASM on village relocations.

The company worked to resolve these tensions and implemented open dialogue and clear and predictable arrangements by signing an MoU in 2012 with ASM actors, village chiefs, and district assemblymen regarding the land concessions. That same year, the Gold Fields Sustainable Development team also commissioned a baseline social study of ASM activities near the mine. This included further direct engagement with local communities and small-scale miners.

The study informed the development of an ASM strategy for Gold Fields Ghanaian operations. The strategy included a focus on security and stakeholders and aimed at ensuring the company and its employees engage with ASM communities with respect and transparency. As a result of these strategies, the company's Community Relations and Sustainable Development team has described the relationship between ASM actors and the Tarkwa Mine as characterized by greater trust and non-violent interactions.

Sources:

- Gold Fields' Group-wide approach to artisanal and small-scale mining
- Artisanal and Small Scale Gold Mining in Ghana: Evidence to Inform an 'Action Dialogue,' International Institute for Environment and Development 2016.
- How You Start Matters: A Comparison of Gold Fields Tarkwa and Damang Mines and their Divergent Relationships with Local Small-scale Miners in Ghana 2013

Key Resources:

- [Practical Guidance on Human Rights and Security in the Colombian ASM Industry, DCAF, ARM 2021](#)
- [GCBHR Cobalt Knowledge Hub](#)
- For reflection on the application of VPs on ASM see: [Promoting Coherence in OECD and VPs, DCAF, ICRC, OECD 2020](#)
- [Making Mining Safe and Fair WEF 2020](#)
- [Global Trends in ASM IGF 2018](#)
- [Code of Risk-mitigation for artisanal and small-scale mining engaging in Formal Trade (CRAFT) version 2.0](#)
- [Women and Artisanal and Small Scale Mining, World Bank Group and Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, 2014](#)
- Example of a Formalization standard: [The Enterprise Générale du Cobalt](#)

The Toolkit on Addressing Security and Human Rights Challenges in Complex Environments offers guidance to develop responsible security practices on the ground, in line with international standards. It was developed to support companies facing security and human rights challenges in complex environments.

The Toolkit, first developed in 2013, is structured as a practical handbook for companies. It pools a large set of resources and good practices related to human rights-compliant security management. It also proposes tools that help translate the good practices to a particular operational context. It furthermore assists companies in ensuring that human rights due diligence policies and processes are informing security arrangements. The Toolkit supports companies to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals and to implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, especially those companies operating in conflict-affected areas and otherwise complex environments.

In 2021, the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF), the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Geneva Center for Business and Human Rights partnered together to revamp the Toolkit with new case studies, cutting-edge good practices, practical tools and more.

The new edition of the Toolkit will be released in June 2022. This fact sheet provides a preview of how the Toolkit will support companies in managing security and human rights challenges related to artisanal and small-scale mining.