

IM4DC

Action Research Report

SUMMARY

Researcher:
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School/Centre:
Minerals Industry Safety and Health Centre

University/Institutions:
Sustainable Minerals Institute,
University of Queensland

Key themes:
Governance and regulation
Community and environmental sustainability

Key countries:
Ghana

Completion:
February 2014

Research aims:
This research sought to address the following:

- Understand the dynamics of small scale and artisanal mining
- Identify the safety challenges
- Gain knowledge to assist better management of associated "flow on" effects related to environmental and social issues

For further information on this action research:

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Investigating the Occupational Health and Safety Issues Associated with Small-scale and Artisanal Mining in Ghana

From a development perspective, artisanal and small-scale mining is one of the most complex economic sectors of Ghana, but the extent of this type of mining is very difficult to quantify and a clear understanding of the country's Occupational Health and Safety management in the sector is missing. The population engaged in particular in artisanal mining is largely nomadic and illiterate, and no reliable statistics exist for either small-scale or artisanal mining. There are no meaningful systems, processes or models in place from which to develop Occupational Health and Safety programs or deliver them once health and safety challenges have been identified. Additionally, the lack of formality in this sector significantly affects worker safety and the ability of the inspectorate to provide assistance to those engaged in activity.

Artisanal and small-scale mining is frequently labour intensive, and usually employs a semi-skilled or unskilled workforce, often with low levels of mechanisation, production, productivity, recovery and efficiency. Most recently, artisanal miners have been categorised as a vulnerable group in a document released by the United Nations Development Program.

This project involved visits to two artisanal mines, displaced communities and one large-scale mine in Ghana, where interviews were held with key personnel. Discussions were held with the Chief Mining Inspector and Senior Mining Inspectors regarding collaboration, and linkages were established with academics at the University of Mining and Technology in Tarkwa. The report details the findings from these visits and provides guidance on where to target interventions that will have the most impact on improving health and safety within the sector in Ghana. Technical assistance programs that may be developed aimed at improving practices in Ghana could be introduced and customised to the artisanal and small-scale mining sectors in other countries. Programs developed from this project may provide an opportunity to also minimise risk for large-scale mining companies, such as where artisanal and small-scale miners use the same underground workings as large scale mining operations, and may be used to direct further research interventions.