



FAIRPHONE

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Artisanal and small-scale miners in DRC cannot make ends meet with their income

How much does a miner earn in Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)? Can a miner's family cover its basic needs? In a new report, IPIS and Levin Sources compare the income of miners and their basic needs expenditures, to provide a better and nuanced understanding of why ASM communities seem to remain extremely poor and identify the factors that impact their income. This report is the first to find that in Eastern Congo, miners' families have a difficult time making ends meet, even though artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) is among the best income sources available to many. To improve miners' revenues, downstream users of minerals such as tin, which is still mostly mined artisanally, should first and foremost remain engaged in ASM supply chains and continue to purchase minerals in line with due diligence guidelines.

"In Eastern Congo, a couple, typically parents sustaining a household of six members, working full-time in artisanal mining can earn around US\$ 202 per month, but with four dependents, they would need around US\$ 243 to cover the expenditures for the basic needs of the family", says Angela Jorns, Responsible Mining and Development specialist at Levin Sources.

Still, ASM is one of the best sources of income in Eastern DRC, especially for populations with limited education or qualifications, who do not own land or other assets. Miners seem to be significantly better off than other populations in DRC, where 73% of the population live below 1.90 USD per day. In comparison, miners can make 2.7 – 3.3 USD per day.

Key factors influencing the revenue of miners seem to consist of both technical/physical and social aspects. "The technical/physical aspects include the productivity of the mine and hence opportunities to access finance and credit,

the accessibility or remoteness of the mine site, and of course changes between seasons and world market prices”, clarifies Guillaume de Brier, researcher at IPIS. “The social aspects influencing revenues include gender, the presence of cooperatives, the way revenues are distributed amongst the mine workforce, and thus the socio-economic organisation of the mining operation”.

“To improve miners’ revenues, downstream users of minerals should first and foremost remain engaged in ASM supply chains and continue to purchase minerals in line with due diligence guidelines. In addition, they may want to take action and collaborate with other supply chain stakeholders to positively influence the above-mentioned factors”, stresses de Brier. “Artisanal miners do not see the benefit of selling their mineral to the legal supply chain, therefore all stakeholders of the supply chain should look for incentives to convince miners to stay in the formalised and legal trade chain”.

“Fairphone has been active in engaging with ASM and we want to be able to work with partners to continue to improve it. One of our main objectives is to move beyond conflict-free minerals towards impact and increased local development. The first steps would be enabling mining communities to gain enough income to and help miners and mining groups to invest this income wisely in their own and their community’s development,” said Tirza Voss, Sustainable Materials & Mining Manager at Fairphone.

Voss continues, “In our continued efforts to engage ASM in our supply chain, we need to better understand what factors influence miners' revenue and what income is needed to cover basic needs. We invite other downstream actors to constructively engage ASM in their supply chains to support the mining communities in their current livelihoods and to find ways to influence incomes levels so as to drive further development.”

Note to the editor

The International Peace Information Service (IPIS) is an independent research institute providing tailored information, analysis and capacity enhancement to support those actors who want to realize a vision of durable peace, sustainable development and the fulfilment of human rights.

Levin Sources is a social venture and consultancy that builds enduring value for society and the environment by helping governments, businesses, and civil society uphold human rights, conduct business responsibly and enable good governance in accordance with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Fairphone is building a market for ethical phones and motivating the industry to act more responsibly. Fairphone designs, produces and sells smartphones to uncover the supply chain behind its products, raise awareness for the most urgent issues, and prove that it's possible to do things differently. Together with partners and collaborators, Fairphone is working to make caring for people and the planet a natural part of doing business.

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