



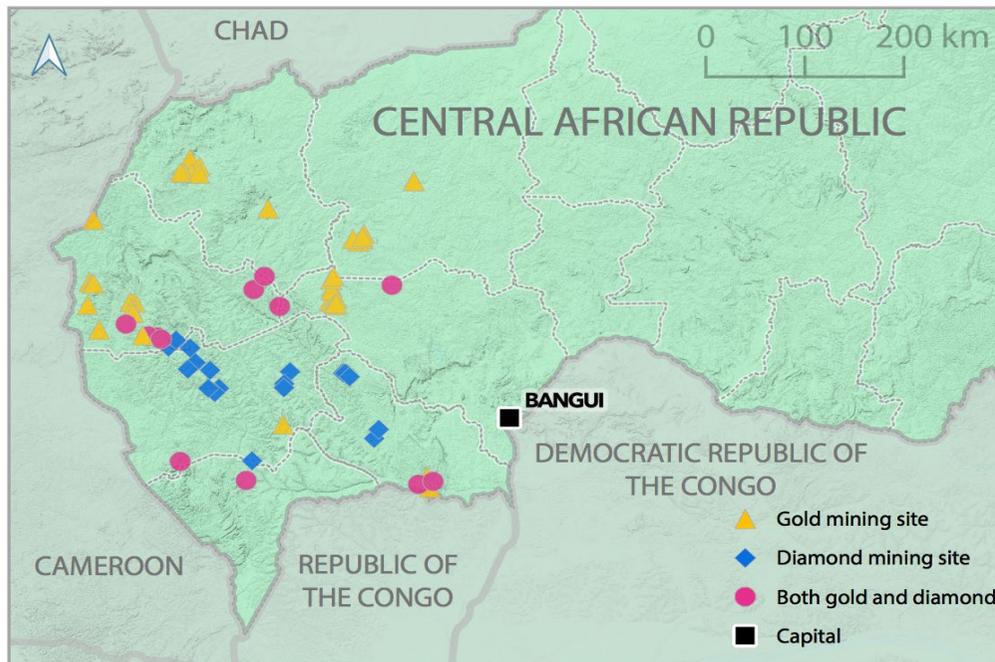
# THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON ARTISANAL MINES IN WESTERN CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

IPIS FACTSHEET  
SEPTEMBER 2020 UPDATE

To assess the socio-economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the artisanal and small-scale sector in the Central African Republic (CAR), IPIS conducted a series of phone interviews targeting key informants<sup>1</sup> to collect information on minerals production, prices and illegal taxation on gold and diamond artisanal mining sites in Western CAR.

In May 2020, IPIS teams in Bangui collected data over the phone on 105 mining sites with an estimate of about 26,350 workers. In July 2020, IPIS teams reached out to key informants on 175 mining sites (about 23,200 workers).<sup>2</sup> To assess the impact of the pandemic, this data is compared to our baseline data on the same mining sites that IPIS visited in 2019.<sup>3</sup>

This factsheet provides information on 75 mining sites only that were both surveyed in May and July 2020 and compares this data with the baseline from 2019 on the same 75 mines.



**Table: Median average of the data collected from the 75 mining sites that have been surveyed at each data collection cycle<sup>4</sup>**

	Spring 2019 Baseline	Spring 2020 (May) Phone survey 1	Summer 2020 (July) Phone survey 2
Number of workers, including women and children	70	80	70
Number of women	20	20	17
Number of children*	10	13	10
Number of buyers	3	2	1.5
Price of one gram of gold at the mining site (XAF)**	16,000	18,000	20,000
Price of gold expressed as a percentage of the world market price <sup>5</sup>	64%	53%	56%
Weekly production of gold (in gram) per site	27.5	72.5	60
Price of one carat of diamond at the mining site (XAF)	200,000	85,000	80,000
Weekly production of diamond (in carat) per site	0.35	3	1
Armed group presence	13 AntiBalaka 12 3R	8 Antibalaka 13 3R	11 Antibalaka 9 3R

\* Children are more present on gold mining sites than on diamond mines.

\*\* Interviews with key informants suggest that the price of gold at the mining sites might have increased (up to 20,000 - 22,000 XAF) between IPIS 2019 field surveys and the end of 2019, before it dropped to 18,000 XAF when our study began. These variations would result from market distortion related to Covid-19.

1 The key informants were selected from a list of informants gathered during the 2019 mapping project.  
 2 For more information about the previous data collection cycle, please refer to: A. Jaillon, *The impact of Covid-19 on Gold and Diamond Artisanal Mines in Western Central African Republic*, IPIS insight, July 2020. Available at: <https://ipisresearch.be/publication/impact-covid-19-gold-diamond-artisanal-mines-western-central-african-republic/>  
 3 A. Jaillon, G. de Brier, *Cartographie des sites miniers artisanaux dans l'ouest de la Centrafrique*, IPIS, November 2019. Available at: <https://ipisresearch.be/publication/%20mapping-artisanal-mining-sites-western-central-african-republic/>

4 Cells in green show a strong evidence toward significant changes (Wilcoxon signed-rank test, paired samples and significance level at  $p < 0.01$ ). Cells in orange show little evidence towards significant change when compared to the baseline ( $p > 0.1$ ).  
 5 For more information on calculation of the price of gold as a percentage of the world market price, please refer to A. Jaillon, *The impact of Covid-19 on Gold and Diamond Artisanal Mines in Western Central African Republic*, IPIS insight, July 2020, p11-12.



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## NUMBER OF CHILDREN

Compared to the field data collected in 2019 (i.e. baseline data), the results of the call-based survey conducted in May 2020 show a small increase in the number of children working in the mining sites. This observation is reported to be linked to the closure of schools during Covid19 pandemic.

« Avec la fermeture des écoles à cause du Coronavirus, le nombre d'enfants a augmenté sur les sites. »

Artisan minier sur le site de Tédoua <sup>5</sup>.

However, in July 2020, the number of children in mining seems to have declined and approximates the estimates of 2019. Although not statistically significant, this decrease is also visible in the overall number of workers (from a median average of 80 to 70 people) and in the number of women (from 20 to 17). This trend may be explained by the rainy season happening usually from June to October. During the rainy season, there is a peak in agricultural workforce demand and most of the mining sites along the riverbeds have to stop their activities when the water flow is too strong.

« Sur ce site, on a observé une augmentation du nombre d'enfants à cause de la fermeture des écoles depuis le début de la pandémie. Plus récemment, on assiste à une baisse du nombre de travailleurs au profit des travaux champêtres depuis le début de la saison des pluies. Le nombre de femmes est resté stable car ces dernières s'organisent de sorte que dans la semaine elles font un tour sur les chantiers en plus de leurs activités agricoles afin d'obtenir un petit financement. »

Chef de village près du site Lyn où le nombre total de travailleurs serait passé de 250 à 50 personnes.

## INSECURITY

Insecurity remains an issue in some of the mining sites surveyed in the area where the 3R<sup>6</sup> armed group is present. More information about the type of interference by armed actors in the mineral sector in CAR is available in IPIS 2019 report.

<sup>6</sup> 3R stands for "Retour, Réclamantion, Réhabilitation».

« Le nombre de travailleurs n'a pas évolué parce qu'il pleut abondamment et que les 3R sillonnent les environs du site. »

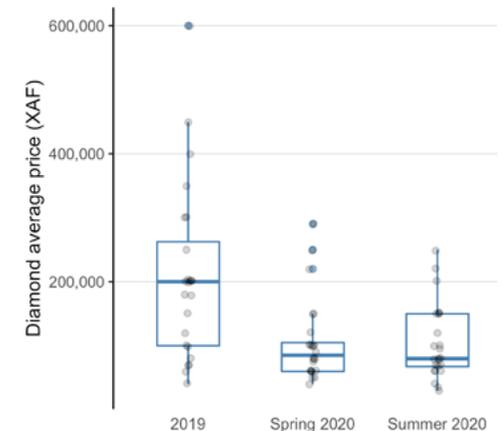
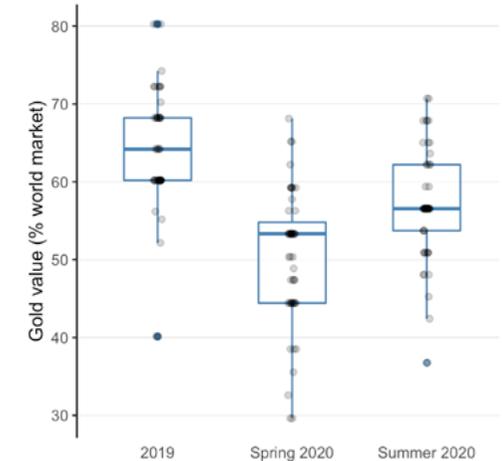
Chef de chantier sur le site de Gbaro.

## MINERAL PRICES

Compared to our baseline data and relative to the international market price, prices of gold and diamonds decreased significantly since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. Since international border have reopened, the export of gold seemed to have restarted as gold prices have slightly recovered. The diamond price has not recovered since May 2020.

## CONCLUSION

The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the ASM sector in the CAR, by disrupting the gold and diamond trade. Since May 2020, the sector seems to slightly recover. To assess the medium-term impacts of the pandemic on the sector, IPIS will continue to monitor the selected mining sites in the coming months.



To quote this factsheet please use the following: A. Jaillon & L. Hoex, The Impact of Covid-19 on Artisanal Mines in Western Central Africa Republic, IPIS Factsheet, September 2020

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