

Artisanal and small-scale gold mining, agriculture, public policies and territorial dynamics in West Africa

The research project seeks to better understand the impacts of the artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) development in West Africa. Specifically, it looks for analysing and illustrating the interactions between ASGM activities in Upper Guinea and agriculture in Forest Guinea. This research aims to enrich the debates on public development policies.

EXPANSION AND TRANSFORMATION OF ARTISANAL GOLD MINING

Artisanal and small-scale gold mining is an old activity in West Africa. Since the 1980s, gold mining is experiencing a strong development mobilizing hundreds of thousands of miners with important national and subregional mobility practices [1]. Since the 2000s, ASGM activities have evolved, marked by the proliferation of industrial mines and the rise of mechanization of artisanal activities.

This latest gold boom generates a set of transformations in rural areas (wealth creation, revitalization of the economy, mobility of people in search of gold) but also negative impacts (pollution, degradation of the health situation, social tensions, violence, transformation of the access and control of resources...). ASGM activities interact with agricultural activities. They are in direct competition for land and workforce access but they are also complementary. Gold boom generates an increase of agricultural products demand in mining areas. Some household combine agriculture and ASGM, allowing them to diversify their sources of income, mitigate risk and reinvest the gains from one activity in another [2].



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Gold mining in the north of Forest Guinea.

GUINEA AS A CASE STUDY

Guinea illustrates these dynamics related to the development of ASGM in West Africa. The rise in the price of gold in the 2000s amplified the gold mining old practices and led to large population movements towards Upper Guinea, the main mining area [3]. Some of the artisanal miners are from Forest Guinea. The number of artisanal gold diggers is estimated at more than 200.000 in Guinea for an artisanal production of nearly 20 tons of gold per year [4].

STUDYING THE RECENT GOLD BOOM IMPACTS ON TERRITORIES AND HOUSEHOLDS

This project aims to strengthen the understanding of the recent gold boom impacts, by focusing on the analysis of ASGM dynamics in Upper Guinea and their effects on agriculture in Forest Guinea. The Guinean case could be compared to another AGSM situation in another African context.

This work is based on geography and comparative agriculture (study of agrarian systems) with an approach at different levels.

- At territories scale (mining area and the territories of gold miners origin), this research studies the ASGM impacts on the environment, the local economy, the governance of resources, the employment of young people and the evolution of inequalities.
- At household scale, this research focuses on people who work on ASGM, their activities and the incomes they earn from this work.

Lastly, this study focuses on the likely evolution of agricultural and extractive activities and their social, economic and environmental impacts. What responses do ASGM and agriculture interactions bring to current and future development challenges?

Research results would be usable by various Guinean and international players: public institutions, funding agencies and development actors, in order to adapt their activities to these new dynamics and promote the sustainable development of territories.

RESEARCH PROJECT PARTNERS

This research project is part of a partnership involving Iram and the research unit PRODIG (University Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne and AgroParisTech). It is carried out within Iram as part of a thesis work led by **Robin Petit-Roulet**, supervised by **Géraud Magrin** (University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne - UFR 08 Geography), **Nadège Garambois** (AgroParisTech) and **François Doligez** (Iram). This project received a CIFRE grant from the Association nationale de la Recherche et de la Technologie (ANRT) and a contribution from the Comité technique 'Foncier et développement' and the Agence française de développement (AFD).

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