



COALITION AGAINST THE MINING PANDEMIC

Africa Synthesis Report:

People in Lockdown, Extractives in Business

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Report prepared by:





Collective research and advocacy on the intersection of mining and the COVID-19 pandemic

About the coalition

The Coalition Against the Mining Pandemic works in global solidarity with communities, Indigenous Peoples, and workers to respond to mining abuses related to the COVID-19 pandemic. We work as a consensus-based coalition conducting collective research and advocacy on the intersection of mining and the COVID-19 pandemic.

About this report

WoMin and partners sought to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic through a series of dialogues and processes entitled People in Lockdown, Extractive Industries in Business. This synthesis report explores the key findings of five long case studies (Namibia, Tanzania, Uganda, Mali and Côte d'Ivoire) presented a part of the series.

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About the cover image

Women carrying out artisanal mining activities at a washing or sluicing area run by Buyegi Women in Miners Group in Nyakabale village - Geita Region, Tanzania. Photo: Evans Rubara.

BACKGROUND

Covid-19 has created deeper inequalities and increased poverty while richer households and nations have begun to recover; the world's poor and working class continue to absorb its impacts.¹ The Covid-19 pandemic highlights the relationship between the failures and contradictions of capitalism and the global destruction of nature and deepening socio-economic inequalities. The manner in which Covid-19 continues to unfold reflects the rhythm of existing patterns of exploitation, placing at the centre of its destructive path the world's already vulnerable people.²

In Africa, before the Covid-19 pandemic, governments and mining companies already possessed a reputation for colluding in favour of the operations of mining companies. Mining operations are associated with the widespread destruction of nature, increasing militarisation and violence, the dispossession of land

and relocation of communities. This threatens the lives and livelihoods of mining-affected communities and the burden to survive is shouldered by gendered labour.³

The crises faced by the African continent escalate as capitalism continues to descend into deeper crises and contradictions. The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has brought to the fore questions that have affected the majority of people on the continent since the independence period. As a result, WoMin and partners sought to understand the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic through a series of dialogues and processes entitled *People in Lockdown, Extractive Industries in Business*.⁴ This synthesis report explores the key findings of five long case studies (Namibia, Tanzania, Uganda, Mali and Côte d'Ivoire) presented as part of the series.

The research conducted formed part of the global Coalition Against the Mining Pandemic and the African synthesis of the case studies compiled by WoMin, its partners and allies, focussed on:

UGANDA

Resource Rights Africa: *Exploitation, Land grabs and Repression under Covid-19 in Uganda's Limestone Mining.*

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Gold Mining by Jeunes Volontaires pour l'Environnement (JVE): *Deepening Extractivism during the Covid-19 Pandemic: A study on Canadian ENDEAVOUR Mining in Ivory Coast.*

NAMIBIA

Oil and Gas Exploration by Frack Free Namibia: *Dispossession and violations in Recon Africa's Kavango Oil and Gas exploration.*

TANZANIA

Tanzania Mining Industry by Africa Transcribe: *Limited Covid-19 intervention, disrupted livelihoods and unhindered extractivism in Tanzania.*

MALI

Gold Mining by Committee for the Abolition of Illegitimate Debt (CADTM): *Expropriation under pandemic conditions: Gold mining in Kéniéba Cercle of Mali.*

Extractive capitalism continues to be implicated in pandemics such as the current Covid-19 pandemic and the Ebola epidemic in 2013. The rapid destruction of forests and wetlands, the spread of pollution and human migration are expected to increase the frequency of pandemics in the future. Despite this enormous environmental crisis, capitalism is using the current Covid-19 pandemic as a means of self-reorganisation through deepening extractivism. There is therefore an urgent need to understand how the actions of extractive industries and governments during Covid-19 are affecting nature and the communities that depend on it, and to monitor these emerging trends.

Photo: TANZANIA -- Women carrying out artisanal mining activities at a washing or sluicing area run by Buyegi Women in Miners Group in Nyakabale village - Geita Region. Photo credit: Evans Rubara



Introduction

At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, many governments in sub-Saharan Africa introduced heavy lockdowns such as international border closures, local travel restrictions, curfews and other confinement measures to curb the spread of the Covid-19 disease. Despite these strict measures on people, governments classified the mining industry and agribusiness as essential services and allowed the operations of sites of extraction as essential for economic stability. While these extractive industries operated, the livelihoods of the region's people were threatened through the criminalisation of movement and gatherings. Across the sub-Saharan African region, reports of extreme force and violence used by police and military to enforce lockdown regulations emerged from the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, with many killed and arrested by state law enforcement during the pandemic.⁵

The essential nature of mining is due to the reality that it is a dominant feature of most African economies. The dominant narrative of the absence of an alternative development model that counters neo-liberal extractivism in African economies has prioritised industrial mining which is organised around powerful mining corporations that plunder the region. The continent's earnings in the global market are derived mainly from primary commodities and extractive industries (these include mining, oil and gas production and agriculture).⁶ This large-scale extraction of natural resources causes significant deprivation for communities and women, and significant wealth loss for nations and future generations, all while contributing to the ecological and climate crisis through the exploitation of nature and human labour.

While in early 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic had pushed sub-Saharan Africa into its first recession since 1995,⁷ the region's economies had exited the recession by the end of 2021.⁸ The rebound of economies was attributed to the recovery of private investors and consumption, as well as an increase in the region's exports.⁹ Leading up to the pandemic in 2019, 60% of African countries derived a third of their export earnings from minerals and fossil fuels, with the continent producing 80% of the world's platinum and over half of its manganese and cobalt.¹⁰ This is despite the large disruptions to ecosystems emanating from deforestation, land degradation and air pollution.¹¹ Mining has been the cornerstone of African economies for decades, and the Covid-19 pandemic has further exposed the heavy reliance of African nations on mining to generate wealth at the expense of the well-being of people and nature.

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The resilience of the African mining industry was demonstrated through the priority treatment it enjoyed and mineral resources could move freely from concessions granted by African governments, while the livelihoods of many were decimated through lockdown restrictions.

The lockdowns negatively affected vulnerable women and youth the most as they account for most of the labour in Africa's urban informal economy, with informal labour accounting for 80.8% of jobs in Africa.¹² Informal work often lacks stability and does not offer social protection, as these labourers are typically low daily-wage earners.¹³ In the case study countries, 34% of informal labourers had lost their jobs in Mali early into the pandemic,¹⁴ and in Uganda women in informal work were most vulnerable as they reside in informal settlements where they face a high risk of violence

and limited access to healthcare.¹⁵ Despite the dominance of the mining sector in Africa, industrial mining itself contributes minimally to formal job creation and is intimately linked to the informal economy of traders and low-wage workers that form around mining operations, including those in artisanal mining.

The aggressive response to Covid-19 by African nations lasted months into the pandemic despite the fact that the broader sub-Saharan African region was in comparison to the rest of the world, mildly affected by the pandemic, having relatively lower mortality rates. The reasons for the comparatively low number of recorded Covid-19 related infections and deaths in the sub-Saharan African region are nuanced,

with some attributing the low figures to Africa's low capacity to test and trace Covid-19 positive people. Despite this, the region is not homogenous, and South Africa experienced the highest rates of infections and deaths across the region. The socio-economic impacts of Covid-19 lockdowns have had far-reaching consequences, taking advantage of vulnerabilities that were challenging nations before the pandemic, such as unequal and poor access to health care and education, high rates of unemployment, poverty and food insecurity, rising surveillance and militarisation, and devastating environmental degradation and climate change.

Photo: CÔTE D'IVOIRE -- Artisanal miners in Floleu.



Poverty and inequality deepened

The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated inequalities and poverty as poor and working class people absorb its worst impacts, highlighting the failures of capitalism. Extreme poverty is on the rise on the African continent, with people living in rural areas in sub-Saharan Africa suffering the most. Covid-19 showed how existing inequalities affected people's ability to navigate health pandemics and how measures such as lockdowns exacerbate existing socio-economic inequalities.¹⁶ The disruptions to income generation caused by lockdowns have had devastating effects on communities. In the middle income, volatile and conflict-affected nations in Africa, Covid-19 is expected to intensify the long-term centralisation of poverty.¹⁷

Covid-19 showed how existing inequalities affected people's ability to navigate health pandemics and how measures such as lockdowns exacerbate existing socio-economic inequalities.

Research conducted in Côte d'Ivoire in seven villages surrounding Endeavour's subsidiary SMI (Ity Mine) showed that the mine's Covid-19 restrictions prohibited community members from accessing their farms through the mine property. This is despite the community's reliance on subsistence farming for food security. Women account for 40.4% of the

labour force in Côte d'Ivoire's agricultural sector and food crops grown in the communities surrounding Ity Mine are grown for both household consumption and for sale in urban areas. Women are dominant in the production and trading of food crops that are oriented to domestic consumption.¹⁸

Another measure SMI implemented to prevent the spread of the virus was the retrenchment of workers, many of whom are from the affected villages. Retrenchment worsened the conditions of hardship within the communities by withdrawing wages, which was even more urgently needed in a time when cash transfers were becoming globally recognised as a means of cushioning vulnerable communities from the immediate impact of the crisis. As a result of being laid off, former employed workers were now without income as a total of 377 young people were dismissed for reasons related to Covid-19, while the company continued to expand its operations. The widespread loss of income and lack of access to agricultural land, had a direct effect on the communities' food security, and set back the sub-Saharan African region which was already prone to high instances of poverty and inequality.

In an alleged attempt to avoid an increase in poverty and inequality, Tanzanian President John Magufuli's measures were considered pragmatic by some and irresponsible by others as his government was one of

few in the sub-Saharan African region to not impose a hard Covid-19 lockdown.¹⁹ With a rural population of 73%, the Tanzania government, which is most reliant on agricultural exports held the position that it could not afford disruptions to production. In the first quarter of 2021, mining accounted for 10.2% of Tanzania's GDP, and Tanzania is Africa's fourth largest gold exporter.²⁰

Despite the government's position on Covid-19, the Tanzania case study reveals that mining sites imposed restrictions as a preventative measure. This meant that access to mining sites was strictly controlled, and periodically day labourers were not allowed to access mining sites, affecting artisanal miners and casual workers negatively. In addition to this, the regional and global lockdowns had a significant impact on Tanzania's formal economy, with 140 000 jobs lost in June 2020.²¹ The impact of the lockdowns outside Tanzania also resulted in an increase in the general prices of goods, placing an additional burden on artisanal miners struggling with reduced incomes.

In Uganda, the Covid-19 pandemic started in the midst of a nationwide drought that has still not ended, with the 2020 and 2021 rain seasons yielding little rain, and affecting 20 million people in the Horn of Africa.²² Due to low rainfall, poor soil quality and cattle diseases, many men and women turned to artisanal mining to generate an income. The case study focused on Tororo Cement Limited (TCL), which relies on the labour of artisanal and small-scale miners in the Karamoja subregion.

Many who work as artisanal and small-scale miners are local people and migrant workers and face extreme exploitation of their labour as they are underpaid, while the state fails to safeguard the rights and interests of communities.



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Photo: UGANDA -- A woman clears soil out of a mining pit to expose limestone for breaking.

Mining companies violate and rollback safeguards

Although rich in mineral and oil resources, the people of sub-Saharan Africa generally benefit little from them. Mineral and oil profits have long been lost or squandered abroad, leaving many people in poverty. The dubious relationships that mining companies and African states possess is fueled by Africa's neoliberal extractivist development model in which mining companies continue to be favoured above people. This has been no different during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In July 2021, at a time when Namibia had the highest Covid-19 infections, the Environmental Commissioner granted ReconAfrica (RA) environmental clearance for 2D seismic surveys. This was despite widespread public objection to the environmental and social impacts of the seismic surveys and drilling, and concerns for water safety and impacts on water wells in this arid region where the population mainly depend on groundwater. RA has shown blatant disregard for the local population directly affected by its operations, resulting in the dispossession of ancestral land, destruction of homes and the displacement of

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families. Affected communities were unaware of the EIA process that had been completed and signed off in 2019, allowing RA to start exploratory boreholes drilling on communal and conservation lands. There was little community engagement as required by the Environmental Management Act 7 of 2007. The EIA done by the company lacked the "critical Interested & Affected Parties List" in contravention of the Act.

In Côte d'Ivoire, the government granted SMI a new permit to establish the Floleu Mining Company in the village of Floleu during the pandemic and enabled the company to take 350 hectares of land from Floleu village, without

carrying out an environmental impact study and without the consent of the community. This is despite Article 127 of the Mining Code recognising the right to fair compensation to communities whose lands have been occupied by a mining company,

These trends follow the pre-existing patterns of collusion between companies and states, which often include widespread destruction and land grabbing. This was also the case in Uganda where TCL and the Moroto local government authorities used the Covid-19 pandemic to roll back regulations passed to safeguard the community against labour exploitation. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, Moroto District had finalised the process of a by-law to increase the loading and breaking fees. However, this by-law was shelved during the Covid-19 lockdown and has since not been passed, subjecting the community to continued exploitation.

Photo: UGANDA -- Young men load limestone onto a truck at Kosiroi mining site.



Human rights violations, violence, and repression

Community activists in mining areas opposing mining and oil and gas exploration typically face intimidation, harassment and violence from private mining security and from state officials, police and the military. The pandemic has accelerated gendered inequalities around resource extraction and community consent processes. This was shown in both Côte d'Ivoire and Namibia case studies, when people are consulted, companies tend to consult only with chiefs who are men, and fail to consult the larger community and women in particular. Communities, particularly women, are denied the right to freely give or withhold consent to large-scale mining projects on a prior, informed and continuous basis.²³

When TCL in Uganda started efforts to acquire 50 acres of land in Katikekile for a clinker plant, an operation in which the company plans to invest between USD 200-250 million, the Naita Tepeth Communal Land Association opposed this. TCL in collaboration with state-associated actors used Covid-19 to repress community protests against the acquisition of land for the clinker plant using the curfew imposed by the

country's president and the deployment of soldiers to arrest anyone found out of their homes after 5 p.m. In addition, TCL used armed state security personnel to threaten land and environmental defenders, and community members faced acts of intimidation from local government officials.

One human rights defender from the community was forced to leave his home and the community as he fled for his life after an agent who works for both the state and the mining company accused human rights defenders of organising an attack on him. This pattern of threatening and intimidating human rights defenders and members of the community continued, while the company successfully surveyed and prospected the land between February and April of 2021, while armed army personnel coordinated, supported and guarded the private company hired by TCL, despite the contested status of the land. Following surveying of the land, there were attempts to bribe and intimidate the Chairperson of the local community council to consent to the sale of the land to TCL. The Chairperson of the council was forced



The pandemic has accelerated gendered inequalities around resource extraction.

Photo: UGANDA -- A woman in Kosiroi Mining Site speaking about her misery of low pay for breaking and loading fees.

to go into hiding to avoid further intimidation and threats. Whenever there were any planned protests, security personnel brought soldiers to threaten the community. Private security have also been accused of forcing community members off their land for prospecting which took place in the first half of 2021.

In Namibia, no physical violence was perpetrated against anti-Kavango oil and gas exploration activists, but many activists fear for their lives and that physical violence might be committed against them to silence their voices. Activists who visited RA's drill sites felt intimidated by the company's security guards who did not want them near the drill sites and who aggressively dispersed them.

Lockdown regulations across the case studies included criminalising the meetings of community councils, and removing mechanisms that communities would typically use to raise complaints about the misconduct of mining companies. In Namibia, the remote nature of the communities made it difficult for activists to organise and mobilise for campaigns. In-person awareness raising and objection to RA's operations by community members and interested parties were also made difficult by lockdown restrictions. In Côte d'Ivoire communities have not been able to take up their problems as civic spaces were closed with various prohibitions still in force today. The curfew and the banning of gatherings provided an excuse to stop the meetings of the Local Mining Development Committee. In Tanzania, by the end of April 2020, the government's position to deny the severity of the pandemic had resulted in the government halting reporting on Covid-19 infections and mortality rates. The government used laws passed before the pandemic to intimidate, arrest and detain people reporting on Covid-19. All media were restricted from reporting on Covid-19 and foreign media and all local media were prevented from broadcasting content from foreign media without official permission. Demonstrations and gatherings were also made illegal.



Photo: NAMIBIA -- Andreas Hawano in front of his sorghum fields, one part of which was occupied by Recon Africa without prior warning or notification. Photo credit: John Grobler, Oxpeckers

In their third bulletin on Covid-19, AFREWATCH revealed how mining companies abused workers by placing them in unacceptable living conditions in order for mining operations to continue.²⁴

In the sites studied by AFREWATCH, there were strikes and uprisings in several mining sites in the DRC, resulting from dismissals and abuses of the human dignity of workers. As workers were confined to the mining sites, there were variations in how companies treated their workers, but throughout the sites, there were complaints regarding the quality of food and accommodation, including feeding workers two loaves of dry bread in the morning and workers sleeping on pallets covered with a sheet, or workers sleeping in containers. Many workers experienced cuts in their wages, and large numbers of workers were dismissed.

Environmental degradation

The current unprecedented environmental crises threatening human existence and all forms of life are most starkly experienced in climate change, which continues to wreak havoc across the world, disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable and poorest people.²⁵ In Africa, the average rate of temperature increases across the continent is higher than the global average with 2020 ranked between the 3rd and 8th hottest year recorded and the continent facing higher rates of deglaciation than other parts of the world. Africa is expected to have total deglaciation by the 2040s.²⁶ The extreme impacts of climate change in the region have been experienced through flooding, prolonged droughts and cyclones. All while deforestation and extractivism have continued despite its large contribution to environmental degradation and depletion of natural resources. The location of mines in primarily rural areas also poses direct risks to agrarian based livelihoods. This is exacerbated by unregulated mining processes and lack of enforcement of mining regulations.²⁷

In Côte d'Ivoire, the chief of Ity noted that dust from mining vehicles pollute the farms which do not produce as they used to. In the village of Dapleu,

villagers complained about the noise pollution caused by the use of explosives. The grabbing of almost all of the communities' arable land, estimated at several dozen hectares, is now leading to food insecurity and the destruction of the forest and biodiversity. The scarcity of fish in the Cavally River has further contributed to higher levels of food insecurity

The study from Uganda revealed that after the surveying of contested community land, TCL left grease and drilling mud on the land which some community members claimed killed goats and cows. Furthermore, they left drilling holes uncovered, which pose a threat to members of the community, especially children.

In Mali, during the lockdown declared by the government between March and August 2020, members of the community monitoring committees were not able to play their monitoring role, and mining companies took the opportunity to violate environmental protection rules. This increased the incidents of environmental pollution and thus the number of people suffering waterborne diseases and other diseases, many of whom do not have the financial means to seek treatment.



Community alternatives

At the heart of extractivism and the current neoliberal extractivist development model is the predatory exploitation of the world's vulnerable people and nature. It is now more than ever urgent that alternatives to this destructive model of resource extraction, and capitalist accumulation, are championed,²⁸ and greater emphasis placed on the social reproduction of life instead of commodities for profit. In the midst of the socio-economic crisis of Covid-19,



communities have navigated survival through alternatives led by women in the respective communities.

In Mali, communities have stood against the reckless destruction of the environment by loggers and miners. The Wassa Ton Association, which brings together the inhabitants of twelve communes of the Cercle de Kéniéba, filed a complaint against a mining company on 24 November 2020 before the Court of First Instance of Kéniéba.

In Côte d'Ivoire, communities are organising outside of the structures which existed prior to the pandemic as the women of Ouyatouo formed a cooperative to produce Attiéké (a staple meal made from cassava) as a measure of responding to food insecurity. The youth set up a group from the eight impacted villages to start income-generating activities. They denounced the lack of transparency in the management of funds for communities and the poor functioning of the local mining development committee. The people of Floleu sent a letter of protest to SMI to demand a stop to the demarcating of their land without prior agreement.

In Namibia, communities have suggested investment in an indigenous knowledge economy to provide alternative models for sustainable development as an alternative to oil and gas exploration. There are

ongoing consultations by civil society organisations to assist communities in accessing training, expertise and funding to realise their aspirations, ranging from providing small-scale farmers access to facilities such as cold storage, and broader infrastructure and markets to process wildlife products.

In Tanzania, women in the Artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) sector who had previously been engaged in crushing stones to extract minerals started charcoal-burning activities and collection of firewood for sale. Some women's groups, who previously bought stones believed to contain gold, found that pit owners were no longer selling these stones due to decreased quarrying activities. In response, the women's groups initiated their own pits despite a shortage of operational capital. Some community members started small-scale soap-making activities since there was an increased community need for soap and sanitation detergents.

Photo page 12: CÔTE D'IVOIRE -- Women of Ouyatouo who decided to organize themselves into a cooperative to produce Attiéké in Côte d'Ivoire.

Photo above: TANZANIA -- A Focused Group Discussion with Women Small-scale Miners in Mgusu ASM area in Geits District, Geita region. Photo credit: Evans Rubara.

Conclusion

The responses from communities to the Covid-19 crisis offer an organic critique to the dominant, neoliberal extractivist development model that has been beneficial to corporate mining giants. In the midst of the climate, food, energy and economic crisis, governments in Africa have colluded with extractivist industries in violating regulations and shielding them from public health interventions, with the promise that this will ensure economic recovery. This was done in the midst of a pandemic that was exposing cracks in public health infrastructure and social protection systems and deepening inequalities. The burden of the social reproduction crisis remained solidly on the backs of working women and peasants who have had to fill the gap left by the state. Responses by women in communities facing the impacts of the crises illustrate the dynamism and possibilities that exist for an alternative to the dominant development model that builds autonomy and self-reliance from below.

The Namibian case study highlighted the extent to which governments and state institutions remain wedded to the dominant neoliberal extractivist development model, which offers access to resource rents and lends itself to corruption. The capacity of the state to regulate environmental impacts resulting from industrial mining, let alone rapidly growing artisanal mining, remains largely weak and ineffectual. As the cases in Mali, Uganda and Côte d'Ivoire illustrate, it was left to communities to form their own

structures to regulate the environmental impacts of mining operations. On one hand, the absence of the state with regards to this crucial role, and its hyper visibility in the form of militarisation and securitisation, alongside the free hand that private security also exert, exposes how deeply compromised the state has become, and the abandonment of communities facing the destructive impacts of extractivism.

While there were trends towards resource nationalism during the commodity boom phase in the early 2000s, the economic crisis that deepened during the Covid-19 pandemic has placed corporations in a position of dominance as governments in Africa desperately seek investments. The expansion of the neoliberal extractivist model is at the root of destroying ecosystems, agrarian livelihoods and precarious working conditions, exacerbating existing inequalities and poverty. Women as workers and smallholder producers in the informal economy continue to absorb the shocks, through unpaid care work. Through their livelihood strategies they offer glimpses of what alternatives can centre on to ensure a balance between the social reproduction of life and nature.

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