

Impediments of Covid-19 on Transparency and Accountability in the Mining Sector

Concept Note

Zoom Meeting

DATE- 11 December 2021 TIME-11:00-13:00

Introduction

Several mineral resource-rich African Countries are looking to the mining sector for their economic recovery post-COVID. However, it is imperative that those who are impacted the most by mining – women and men in local communities – have a say in mining-related decisions and this is only possible when extractives data is available. To advance transparency and accountability in the sector, further work is needed to make extractives data widely available and usable especially during the pandemic era which has become more digital than physical.

Pre-pandemic era, African countries had begun to see the importance of transparency and accountability in the extractives era as critical and had begun reforms to make sure that they can benefit from the industry, this was seen through countries like Zambia joining the extractives industry transparency initiative. However other countries such as Zimbabwe are yet to join though showing some interests and efforts to improve transparency and accountability in the extractives sector. However, the momentum has been stalled by the Covid-19 pandemic which requires the use of technological initiatives to continue providing data and making sure that no one is left behind in accessing it. For extractives data to have an impact, it should exist in an easily accessible and usable open data format that can be understood by everyone especially mining affected communities.

Amidst this pandemic, African countries have made legal and policy changes designed to increase investment in mining which is their hope for economic stability. But without transparent management of minerals, realising significant economic benefit from the extractives will remain as only just a dream.

Objectives

1. To discuss the impacts of covid-19 pandemic on transparency and accountability in the mining sector.
2. To discuss the challenges that communities and extractives actors face in disseminating and accessing extractives data in the covid-19 era.
3. To understand the challenges being faced by ASM in their operations which hinder transparency.

Discussion Topic 1 Summary - Effects of Covid-19 on Transparency and Accountability in the mining sector- Experience sharing.

Time - 11:00-12:00

The discussion topic seeks to discuss the technical, economic, social challenges that transparency, accountability, and natural resource governance sector actors face in their efforts to advance access to and use of extractives data in the covid-19 context. There is difficulty in maintaining a focus on transparency as a policy priority and the transition to virtual working has made it worse for such reforms to be implemented effectively.

However, despite the challenges it is important to understand that progress toward transparency and accountability is possible across the natural resource value chain—this includes consultation, licensing, contract transparency, revenue collection and taxation, and expenditure—when civil society and government champions alike work to improve quality, accessibility, and use of extractives data to benefit communities which will be the basis of the discussion- What has gone seriously wrong? And What can we do better together?

Amidst the pandemic, Communities around extractives operations will be among the hardest hit. As well as the loss of jobs, they face a reduction in the allocation of their share of resource revenues from central governments. If transparency and accountability dose is not increased, the voices of these communities will go unheard. The challenge of Low levels of internet penetration constrain their access to information and their ability to voice concerns which further pushes them into marginalisation.

Discussion Topic 2 Summary-"Including the excluded: threats posed by the Covid-19 pandemic to artisanal and small-scale miners.

Time-12:00-13:00

Artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) is largely an informal sector with limited available information on production, revenues, operations and even location of activities. Regulation of the sector is often inadequate and its real contribution to national economy is difficult to estimate. Estimates of employment numbers and production levels in the ASM sector vary but show that it plays a significant role, particularly in the development mineral sector.

It is important to explore options to address issues in ASM to (i) improve access to reliable data on artisanal mining; (ii) understand the contribution of ASM to the national economy; (iii) raise awareness on ASM related issues such as mineral smuggling which drain the national fiscus. The challenges in the ASM sector have been increased by the covid-19 pandemic that has restricted ASM operations despite being exempted to operate during the lock down. The increase in commodities prices such as gold has led to some large miners making good production and profits results in 2020 but for the ASM sector it is not known or documented. The discussion is intended for learning and sharing lived experiences of small miners. The session will furthermore explore opportunities or ways in which regulators, and different actors can systematically assist small scale miners to practice responsible sourcing during the pandemic.

MEET OUR PANEL OF SPEAKERS

Discussion Topic 1

Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association

Billian Matambo

PWYP Malawi

PWYP Uganda

PWYP Zimbabwe

Discussion Topic 2

Shamiso Mtisi

Methembeni Moyo

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