

SEG 2024 Conference: Sustainable Mineral Exploration and Development

Resilience and Governance in Artisanal Gold Mining: Addressing Challenges and Opportunities in Western Kenya

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The artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) sector plays a critical role in global supply chains. Kakamega experienced growth during the 'colonial gold rush' in the 1930s but faced decline after the closure of the Rosterman mine in the 1940s. Since 2019, there has been renewed interest in the Artisanal Gold Mining Sector in Western Kenya due to significant deposit discoveries by mining companies. This surge has resulted in increased engagement in ASM activities by local communities and small-scale investors, leading to notable challenges in environmental and social governance. This study focuses on the role of the local Kakamega ASM committee's resilience team in promoting responsible mining practices and addressing the sector's opportunities and challenges. Kenya is currently in the process of formalizing the ASM sector. Key challenges include a high dependence on artisanal mining and quarrying for livelihoods, a low uptake of modern sustainable resource utilization technologies, and a general lack of awareness about natural resource technologies. Key areas of support identified include access to engineering solutions, environmental data, and geoscience information, which provide a foundation for future mining activities. Additionally, the organization of miners into cooperatives presents an opportunity for the local community to benefit from available financial resources for user-needs-based activities. Miners find these benefits appealing as they seek to mitigate physical and regulatory risks associated with their operations. Moving towards a formalized and resilient ASGM sector requires capacity building and technical assistance from both governmental and non-governmental sector players. This study highlights the pivotal role of the ASM committee's resilience team in facilitating sustainable practices and governance improvements within the ASGM sector in Western Kenya.