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PanAfGeo Project: Artisanal and Small-scale Mining in Africa

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PanAfGeo “Geological knowledge and skills in African Geological Surveys” is a Pan-African project designed by EuroGeoSurveys (EGS) and the Organisation of African Geological Surveys (OAGS) with the support of several partners i.e. European Commission, African Union Commission, UNESCO as well as Geological Society of Africa.

An artisanal miner is, in effect, a subsistence miner. These miners are not officially employed by a mining company. They rather work independently, mining their own resources or working in cooperatives. Small-scale mining includes enterprises or individuals, who employ workers for mining, but generally working with simple hand tools.

ASM contributes significantly to the economic development of the countries, where it is practiced. In some countries like Nigeria and CAR it constitutes the only mining activity and produce at most 100% of the mineral commodities. No proven statistics is available for the production of ASM operators.

One way of improving the outcome of the ASM is to get a better understanding of the geology by that mining, where it is viable; introducing simple exploration tools; and to develop low-tech exploitation technologies. Members of OAGS play an important role, naturally in cooperation with the mining authorities, the environmental authority and the health authority in African countries

One specific activity in this component of PanAfGeo is to arrange in-country training of the national geological Survey together with other national authorities to discuss ways forward to support the ASM sector and how to share the activities suggested.

The governments also recognize that the ASM activity has negative impacts on societies. It ranges from social, cultural, criminal, health, safety, illegality, to hazardous environmental impact. Due to limited financial and technical capacity some of the ASSM segments impact negatively on the environment by polluting the soil, water, and degrading the agricultural land. The Governments have taken different measures to assist the ASM sector and the results have not always been positive.

The research activities supporting the ASM sector is very limited in Africa, globally even. A few technical research projects have had a focus on developing methods to reduce the use of mercury and to some extent to improve the outcome of the ASM operations. A number of socio-economic studies have provided a better understanding of the ASM communities too.

The second specific activities in this component of PanAfGeo is to arrange regional workshops for the OAGS members to discuss “lessons learned” and “ways forward” for the national geological survey to support the ASM sector.

The activities will cover e.g.

- 1) Developing together with the African GSO's the training programmes and their implementation plan;
- 2) Identifying institutions and organisations in Africa with appropriate facilities and willingness to participate in the training programmes;
- 3) Prepare training material and technical guidelines for the applied geology for mineral resource assessment and
- 4) Implement the training sessions (on-the-job sessions and training of trainers).

