

Artisanal Small Scale Mining, Just Energy Transition and the Feminist Future

8 February 2024

The 15th edition of the Alternative Mining Indaba (AMI) has witnessed enlightening discussions which situated artisanal small scale mining (ASM) in the bigger spectrum of just energy transition, climate change and the inclusion of socially marginalized groups such as women and youths.



During the idea generation sessions on day 3 of the AMI, participants discussed that the current over drive towards the adoption of clean energy by countries in the Global North has witnessed an increase in ASM activities with severe environmental, severe health outcomes as a result of the contamination of water bodies sexual exploitation of women and child labor. These negative effects of ASM activities in the extraction of critical minerals casts serious doubts on the whole narrative of 'just energy transition' as on one hand resources are being unsustainably and irresponsibly extracted without due regard to the needs of mining communities. While on the other, the same resources are being deemed the answer to address climate change through engineering a change from fossil fuels to clean energies.

The participants further deliberated on the 'new' form of artisanal small-scale mining, which is permeating borders and continents thus require a well-coordinated approach to respond to it. A case in point discussed was how Chinese 'investors' have flooded Zimbabwe's small scale mining sector contributing to massive resource extraction. The ZAMA ZAMA artisanal small-scale miners in South Africa have also affected local people's sources of livelihood and are indiscriminately extracting gold, which has resulted in the occurrence of earth tremors in the areas they are operating in. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) needs to dialogue on the best practices to streamline ZAMA ZAMA operations as it involves nationalities from countries such as Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Malawi.

The Discussions further revealed that due to chaotic scenes, illegalities and limited to no regulation in the ASM sector in African countries such as Ghana, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Kenya, Angola and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), breeding spaces are created for female exclusion, sexual exploitation and sextortion.

In some African countries such as Kenya, women are trusted that they do not steal processed gold and given the responsibility to process it making them to be directly involved in the use of substances such as mercury and cyanide which have severe health outcomes.

In light of these discussions, the following recommendations were made at AMI 2024:

Every country should define the idea of what is critical to it and what is just energy transition instead of being fascinated by propositions from the Global North whose social and economic revolution is way ahead that of the Global South and has been largely responsible for indiscriminate critical resources extraction by ASM.

Regional blocs should dialogue on the best practices to streamline artisanal small-scale mining operations as it involves nationalities from countries and to have uniformity and a similar voice in natural resource governance.

Africa needs to revitalize other sectors of its economy instead of solely depending on mineral proceeds for economic sustenance so as to relief pressure on the extractive industry.

Pictures of Participants at the 2024 AMI



Energy Transitioning Minerals: Putting Communities First For An Exclusive Feminist Future.
#AMI2024