

ARTISANAL MINING

Sector formalisation and integration into the formal economy dominate multistakeholder dialogue in Niassa

- Artisanal mining provides a livelihood for communities in Niassa, but miners report barriers to obtaining licences, accessing mining areas, securing finance and technology, and entering formal markets. Delays in regularising their operations were central to discussions between artisanal miners and representatives of public mining institutions in Lichinga.



These issues were addressed at the Multistakeholder Dialogue on Artisanal Mining, organised by the Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (CDD) on 24 September 2026 under the theme “Formalisation, Human Rights

and Local Development”. The meeting provided a forum for provincial and district authorities, artisanal miners, and representatives of communities, the private sector, civil society and academia to exchange views.

Miners challenge delays in formalisation

The first panel, “Artisanal Mining in Niassa: Between Community Survival and the Presence of the State”, examined working conditions, barriers to licensing, and the presence of public institutions at mining sites.

Rajabo Cimalawonga, a representative of artisanal miners in Niassa, criticised delays in recognising and regularising miners who, he said, have been operating for decades.

He cited Lupilichi, in Lago District, where, according to his account, some Mozambicans have been engaged in artisanal mining since 1993

and are still awaiting formalisation.

Cimalawonga also questioned the handling of licence applications. He stated that local miners wait for years, while other operators, including foreign nationals, are able to formalise their activities within shorter periods.

Miners’ representatives argued that procedural delays and the lack of accessible formalisation mechanisms prevent them from moving out of informality and restrict their access to finance, technology and formal markets.



Mining institutions raise concerns about legal compliance

Mordqueu Gonçalves Omar, Head of the Mining Inspection and Oversight Department at the Geological and Mining Institute (IGREME), and Felismino Chirimbo, a Mineral Resources Officer at the National Institute of Mines (INAMI), both based in Niassa, challenged the view that responsibility for the sector’s difficulties rests solely with the State.

According to the two officials, some miners operate seasonally, fail to meet applicable legal requirements and, in some cases, work in areas already allocated under mining concessions.

Miners’ representatives disputed these arguments, reiterating the barriers to formalisation and delays in processing licence applications.

Despite these differences, participants ac-

knowledgeled the need to formalise artisanal mining. The discussion highlighted the importance of public institutions working directly with

miners, making procedures more accessible and providing support to help them meet legal requirements.

Environmental impacts and worker safety

The second panel, “Artisanal Mining, Environmental Management and Community Development in Niassa”, examined the effects of mining on water, agricultural land, forests and community livelihoods.

The panel brought together Virgílio Benesses, a civil society representative; Salvador Ângelo, an academic at Rovuma University’s Lichinga campus; and Elves Novela, from the District Services for Planning and Infrastructure (SDPI) in Lago.

Discussions covered abandoned mining pits,

the rehabilitation of degraded land, worker safety and the responsibilities of those involved in mining activities.

Participants called for mineral extraction to be accompanied by environmental protection and safety measures, alongside efforts to ensure that mining generates economic and social benefits for local communities. They also stressed the need to protect farming and the natural resources on which communities depend.

Formalisation must go beyond issuing licences

The 2021 Artisanal Miners Census identified 229,680 operators nationwide and estimated that 806,957 people were involved in the sector’s value chain. For approximately three-quarters of operators, mining was their main source of income.

Participants in the Lichinga dialogue emphasised that formalisation must extend beyond issuing licences. It must also enable access to mining areas, finance, technology and markets, allowing miners to operate legally, safely and sustainably.

They also called for a stronger institutional presence and greater public-sector capacity at mining sites to improve monitoring, regulatory oversight and the protection of community rights.

The dialogue forms part of a CDD pilot initiative supported by the Open Society Foundations, aimed at strengthening the participation of artisanal miners and affected communities in discussions on natural resource governance, human rights and local development.

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Inspirar e impulsionar acções para proteger os direitos humanos, fortalecer a democracia e promover a justiça.

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