

## Executive Summary

Artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) includes 20–30 million people worldwide, with three to five times that number indirectly supported through their activities. Yet development donors, governments, wider industry players and NGOs often neglect this sector, focusing on ASM's negative impacts rather than on addressing its structural challenges to improve the sector's opportunities for sustainable development.

ASM can be a resilient livelihood choice for people who are vulnerable or looking for economic diversity in their livelihoods. In fact, ASM generates up to five times the income of other rural poverty-driven activities in agriculture and forestry. The sector employs 10 times more people than does the large-scale mining sector, and stimulates considerable local economic development around ASM sites.

Section 1 of this document reviews what is known about the challenges in the ASM sector. The environmental and social impacts of ASM can be dire but so are the structural challenges underlying them. ASM is, for the most part, a poverty-driven livelihood chosen by people who are both vulnerable and marginalised. The diversity of sector players (including women, children, migrants and the most vulnerable) means considerable diversity in the drivers and incentives for ASM activity. The sector's structural challenges include: weak laws, policies and implementation and government marginalisation or repression; cultural marginalisation and exclusion of certain demographic groups; uncontrolled migration; low barriers to entry into informal or illegal ASM with its poor social and environmental protections; poverty driven, short-term decision making; poor access to financial services, market information, technology, and geological data; political exclusion and 'policy blindness'; and a serious lack of data on ASM individuals and communities that reveal the true scale, nature and contribution of the sector.

One of the primary obstacles to addressing these challenges is poor coordination and use of what is, and an identification of what isn't, known about the sector from researchers, practitioners and miners and communities themselves. Section 2 of this document discusses the gaps in both the stock of knowledge on ASM and the way in which existing knowledge flows to influence policy at a national and international level.

There is a large amount of practice-informed knowledge in the ASM sector, offering 'hands on' experience of what does and doesn't work. However, much of it is neither written down nor publicly shared. This is symptomatic of poor coordination and sharing between development practitioners, consultants and large-scale mining companies working with ASM communities across the world.