

## “Gold Fevers” in Senegal An Analysis of Migration Profiles and Dynamics in the Kédougou Region

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Children in Tinkoto gold mining village in the Kédougou Region. Photo IOM, 2019

This research is based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, through a three-stage data collection process:

- **Individual interviews** with male and female gold miners (221)
- **Focus groups** with host communities, gold miners, pit leading hands, female sex workers, unaccompanied minors, NGOs and CSOs’ representatives
- **Qualitative interviews** with key stakeholders (local authorities, site managers, pit owners, and associations’ representatives).

### INTRODUCTION

According to the latest estimates, 98 per cent of Senegal’s gold sites are in the Kédougou region. Over many centuries, gold mining was exclusively carried out based on artisanal techniques, mainly during the dry season. Today gold mining is a growing sector, whether at the artisanal, semi-mechanised or industrial levels.

Gold mining is linked to significant internal and international migration flows in the region. The population of Kédougou has grown rapidly in recent years, shifting from 71,125 to 137,485 inhabitants between 1988 and 2012.

The development of gold activities has also led to significant socio-demographic changes in the region.

This research aims to determine gold miners’ migration profile and better understand migration dynamics to and from targeted gold mining sites (incentive factors, initial movements, etc.) and the systems facilitating this mobility. It also seeks to assess challenges associated with protecting vulnerable people around gold mining sites. **Data collection was**

conducted between July and August 2019 in the Kédougou Region, in the gold mining sites of both Tinkoto and Kharakhena.

### GOLD MINERS’ MIGRATION PROFILE

Among gold miners interviewed, 36% had received an education at the Koranic school (Dara), while 29% said they had no training. The level of education of migrant gold miners in Kédougou is significantly lower than that of migrants who attempted to migrate to Europe by sea or land.

This indicates that these are two different migration profiles, with different migration intentions and projects.

**34%** OF MIGRANTS WORKING AS EMPLOYEES OR SELF-EMPLOYED PRIOR TO THEIR ARRIVAL IN THE GOLD SITES WERE IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR.

Before the gold mining activity increased in recent years, it was a secondary activity for the local communities who were mainly engaged in agricultural activities. In recent years, however, there has been a sharp decline in agricultural production, which has made gold mining a key income-generating activity for households.

*“We came to work here. As farming, our traditional activity, didn’t allow us to feed our families, so we came to Kharakhena. Gold mining brings a lot of money.”*

Focus group with gold miners without pit leading hand at the Kharakhena site.

**46%**

OF GOLD MINERS ARE BETWEEN 18 AND 26 YEARS OLD



KÉDOUGOU, A DESTINATION AREA FOR MIGRANT GOLD MINERS

The Kédougou Region hosts many migrants from neighbouring countries and other regions of southern Senegal. The migration flows to this region are a perfect illustration of **the cross-border and sub-regional mobility linked to gold mining.**

The proportion of international migrants in the two targeted gold mining sites is indeed **72%**, including 36% Guineans, 22% Malians, and 13% Burkinabes.

Internal migrants come from the southern regions of Senegal, mainly from Kédougou, but also from Kolda and Tambacounda.

MIGRATION INTENTIONS

*“Hope will help keep young people in Africa and prevent irregular migration. As an Ivorian, I wanted to go to Europe, but I am attracted by the diouras in Kédougou, so I came here to work.”*

Ivorian gold miner, member of a migrant association in Kharakhena.

The migration flows towards the gold mining sites selected for this research are **long-term internal and subregional migrations.**

**45%** OF GOLD MINERS HAVE STAYED BETWEEN ONE AND FOUR YEARS IN THE SAME GOLD MINING SITE.

The setting-up of **migrant associations in the gold mining sites** also confirms that the Kédougou Region has finally become a **settlement and reception area for migrants.** Indeed, the high rate of immigration to the gold sites has encouraged gold mining villages to organize themselves differently in order to better manage the coexistence between different groups. Migrants of same nationality have therefore created associations.

These associations make it possible to establish a link with the local communities. **They are active in addressing issues related to working conditions and are directly involved in defending migrants’ rights.**

**62%**

OF RESPONDENT MINERS INTENDED TO STAY IN THE GOLD SITES.

**30%**

WANT TO SETTLE PERMANENTLY IN THE SITES.

THE HIGH REPRESENTATION OF FEMALE GOLD MINERS

**35%**

OF RESPONDENTS ARE FEMALE

Migration to gold mining sites seems to provide women with opportunities to be more autonomous and independent. Women’s motivations for working in gold sites are similar to those of men and are mainly economic ones. **Female gold miners in Tinkoto said, “They want to support their children and families, contribute to daily expenses, and thus share the financial burden with their husbands.”**

*The Unique Female Diouratigui (Site Manager) in Kédougou*

*The Diouratigui is in charge of mystical preparations in the gold sites to prevent incidents in mining pits and ensure productivity of sites. Djabounding Diallo is the only woman in the Kédougou Region who holds this position.*

MIGRATION TO GOLD MINING SITES AS A CONFLICT DRIVER

*“We were trying to negotiate with artisanal gold miners and mining companies. For social actions and to live in peace, companies leave some areas to gold miners, but they give them non-productive sites.”*

Interview with a representative of the Ministry of Mines in Kédougou.

**The search for the precious metal also creates tensions and conflicts at different levels within the gold mining villages.** There are confrontations with local communities dependent on agriculture and opposed to the massive arrival of gold mining migrants. Quarrels between gold miners competing for the ownership of the mining pits also break out. Finally, conflicts with industrial mining companies, such as Afrigold, for example, are important and concern the ownership of gold mining field. **The diversity of gold mining stakeholders jostling for gold resources therefore requires new regulatory measures within the mining zones.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. IMPROVE LIVING AND WORKING CONDITIONS IN THE GOLD MINING SITES

- Invest in the construction of new infrastructures for gold mining communities, so that meetings can be held on a more regular basis.
- Improve access to safe drinking water at mining sites to reduce risks of transmitting diseases associated with poor water quality and pollution of well and river water contaminated with chemicals (mercury and cyanide).
- Regulate the gold mining sector as an economic activity and develop training opportunities to train miners, share skills and raise awareness of risks associated with gold mining.

2. GOVERNANCE AND PREVENTION

- Promote a regional and intersectoral approach and put in place appropriate protection mechanisms to better address the vulnerability of gold miners.
- Support civil and migrant associations in the provision of services to gold miners and promote collaboration between the various public organizations and services involved in gold miner assistance.

3. MINORS AND FEMALE SEX WORKERS IN THE GOLD MINING SITES

- Support regional and local authorities in the development of adequate, high-quality and accessible health facilities in mining areas for female sex workers, thereby reducing the risk of the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.
- Support the government in setting up awareness-raising programmes on school drop-out and dangers of artisanal gold mining among minors and their families.