



INFORMAL GOLD MINING IN MONGOLIA

Severe drought and heavy loss of livestock has led traditional Mongolian herders to turn to gold mining to survive. Their work is hazardous and illegal. A new law has been proposed to help improve the working conditions of 100,000 informal gold miners.

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These miners know the dangers all too well. They drill and set off explosions in abandoned mining tunnels.

E. Myagmarijav, informal miner

It is very dangerous, it's a risky job, I could die at any time. Life is not guaranteed.

With the fall of communism in 1990, state-run mining collapsed and the unemployed miners continued to do the only work they knew, on their own, at their own risk.

In recent years, harsh drought and loss of livestock have led traditional herding families to turn to mining and take advantage of the soaring price of gold.

100,000 informal miners now extract 7.5 tons of gold each year, half of Mongolia's annual production.

This rapid growth has created an urgent need to introduce new rules to informal mining.

In collaboration with the ILO, The Mongolian Employers Federation is working with the government on a newly proposed law.

Khuyagiin Ganbaatar, Executive Director of Mongolian Employers Federation (MONEF)

We are raising awareness amongst the mining companies about the difficulties and the realities of the informal miners. We are also working to support the informal miners, to improve their conditions and to improve their economic activity.

By legalising the work of informal gold miners, efforts to tackle hazardous work conditions will be more effective.

Anne Knowles, Senior Specialist on Employers' Activities, ILO

It is the groups, the family groups that work together that will be signing up arrangements with the formal mining companies so that they have some rights, some security of tenure, if you like, and then that means work on health and safety, removal of child labour, removal of mercury, those sorts of things can be better addressed.

If the new law protecting informal miners pans out, it will be as precious as any flake of gold they could possibly find.