Global Goods and Mining Across Diverse Landscapes: Sustainable Livelihoods and Challenges

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Global efforts linking consumption to sustainable production have often used supply chain due diligence, or relied upon national responsiveness to impact variables ranging from fair trade, child/forced labor, environmental impacts, to democracy and human-rights. As a production activity for technology, mining of non-fuel resources has a global presence, and offers a cross-cutting case study of these impact variables. Similarly, consumption, down a long and tangled supply chain but sometimes channelized market, has a global presence. For both production due diligence efforts, and for consumers, tracing back to mined resource impacts is challenged by the availability of information and variable, sometimes lacking, linkage to SDGs.

This paper addresses key commodities in established and emerging technologies, including so-called “green” engineering, and highlights the most relevant impact variables for different production locations. This paper will review the internationally impactful legal norms, including those arising from the U.S. (so-called “conflict minerals” under Dodd-Frank, which include tin, tantalum, tungsten, and gold), developing OECD guidance, and other developed country laws, as well as examine targeted country domestic enforcement of labor, environmental, and other applicable legal frameworks. This paper will also revisit the application of the “natural resources curse” along the supply chain for these key commodities, for those same communities with high dependence on extraction, and specifically artisanal and small-scale mining, or ASM.

Finally, this paper will examine the meaning of several SDGs for those most vulnerable and impoverished mining-dependent communities. Mining invokes cross-cutting issues of access to clean water, decent work, including the attendant health and safety risks associated with an inherently dangerous activity, and entrenched equity concerns. SDG indicators and targets related to mining will be examined and highlighted for those areas of strength and also areas for continued improvement and refinement. Lastly, these indicators and targets will be cross-referenced to existing policy and legal frameworks.