

## ITSCI resumes in Masisi territory following positive security developments

State control and oversight over certain areas in Masisi territory, North Kivu has significantly improved in recent weeks. Due to these positive developments, and following detailed on-the-ground assessments, **ITSCI has been able to take steps to resume operations in that territory.**

ITSCI had been suspended in Masisi territory for a second time from early December 2023 as a result of the deteriorating security situation created by activities of the non-state armed group M23. Since that time, ITSCI has continuously engaged with the North Kivu government and a wide range of local and provincial stakeholders from state services, security forces, civil society, and mining operators. We continued to follow developments in the local context and support stakeholders' aims for improved governance of the mineral sector.

Within the framework of this engagement, it is evident that **North Kivu authorities have shown strong commitment to address and mitigate risks by taking many positive steps.** Actions were designed to achieve the core objective of restoring state oversight and control over mining activities and, where possible, resume tagging and due diligence support.

Control and mitigation measures were agreed by stakeholders using a risk-based approach. Firstly, in recent months, mining areas in Masisi territory have generally remained unimpacted by direct armed conflict between the Congolese army and their allies on the one hand, and non-state armed group M23 on the other. Several field missions carried out since the end of January 2024 by ITSCI teams, state services and state security forces, have found that the security situation was positive at ITSCI sites visited, with no direct involvement of any non-state armed groups at those sites. These missions also enabled us to monitor complex dynamics of local population movements and activities and resulted in ITSCI opening incidents related to several risks, including mineral fraud.

Challenges and risks of illegal taxation from security barriers controlled by state forces and/or their associated local non-state armed groups known as 'Wazalendo' have been reported. While the DRC government has recognised 'Wazalendo' as potential military reserve force, risks involving those 'Wazalendo' remain high, prompting recent interventions by military authorities to control them. Risks posed by barriers also continue to be addressed by authorities and **significant control and mitigation measures have been agreed by all local stakeholders.** As a result of actions taken, including intervention from high-ranked FARDC officials, **several barriers in Masisi territory were removed in recent weeks.** An alternative mineral transport route bypassing M23 controlled areas was also agreed incorporating control mechanisms to avoid risks of illegal taxations along that route. Ongoing multi-stakeholder engagement is currently taking place to continue follow-up recorded incidents and address other ongoing risks.

In light of these positive developments, ITSCI Field Officers and state services have returned to Masisi territory from the end of March 2024. They are monitoring and evaluating general mining activities and risks in this improved context to evaluate the feasibility of managing responsible mineral supply chains. First joint missions at ITSCI sub-sectors have taken place, confirming previous reports that the security situation is calm.

As a result of the commitment and efforts of all stakeholders, and subject to any necessary final confirmation of the local situation at any mine area, we expect that **ITSCI will progressively resume operations** in coming weeks. To date, government services have resumed tagging at two ITSCI sub-sectors with full monitoring and support of ITSCI.

We continue to provide regular contextual and risk information to ITSCI member companies on this fragile – albeit improved – situation to facilitate their own due diligence.



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