



**MINISTERE DES FINANCES  
DIRECTION GENERALE  
DES IMPOTS**

# **Crypto-Based Money Laundering in the Artisanal Gold Sector – DRC Case Study**

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- **DIRECTION RECHERCHE ET RECOUPEMENTS**
- **Investigations in DRC**
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# Context – The Gold Trade in the DRC

- - Rich in artisanal gold production
- - Informal sector dominates
- - Weak export controls
- - Rise of digital and informal payments

# Case Trigger

- - 2023 investigation
- - Low declared revenue vs. high exports
- - Red flags in tax returns
- - Suspected under-invoicing and evasion

## How the Case Came to Light

- Routine tax audit of Kinshasa-based gold exporter
- Declared income ≈ **\$150,000 USD/year**
- Export volumes indicated income of over **\$2 million USD**
- Crypto transactions detected by a financial institution

# Investigative Findings

- - Crypto payments (BTC, USDT) from Dubai & Turkey
- - Undeclared wallets
- - Offshore crypto platforms used

Cryptocurrency	USD Value	EUR Value (approx.)
<b>Bitcoin (BTC)</b>	\$107,664 (per coin)	≈ €99,000*
<b>Tether (USDT)</b>	\$1.00	≈ €0.89–€0.92**



# Modus Operandi

- - Informal gold purchases
- - Under-invoiced exports
- - Crypto payments used to bypass banks
- - P2P conversion, real estate investment

## Crime Identified

- **Under-invoicing** of gold exports
- Use of **undeclared crypto wallets** (BTC, USDT)
- **Tax evasion** and **money laundering**
- Real estate purchases funded via P2P crypto conversions

# Challenges Faced

- - No crypto wallet declaration law
- - Limited blockchain tracing tools
- - Few trained investigators
- - Cross-border cooperation issues

## **Case Management & Strategy**

- Cross-referencing of **customs vs. tax records**
- Use of **blockchain explorers** to trace crypto funds
- Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT)**: social media, real estate listings
- Mapping **flow of illicit funds**

# Tools & Partners Involved

- - National FIU (CENAREF)
- - Financial institutions
- - Blockchain explorers
- - Regional support (e.g., South Africa)

## **Co-operation & Tools**

•**National partners:** CENAREF, Customs, Tax Audit Division

•**International:** Support from South African Financial Intelligence Unit

•Tools used:

- Blockchain.com
- P2P crypto surveillance
- Public registries for asset verification

# Case Outcome

- - Property seizures
- - Recovery of unpaid taxes
- - Regulatory review initiated
- - Exposed training gaps

## Case Outcome

### •3 properties seized:

- 2 in Lubumbashi, 1 in Johannesburg
- Total asset value recovered: approx. \$420,000 USD**
- Company sanctioned and flagged for further monitoring
- Prompted internal review of crypto oversight

# Lessons Learned

- - Crypto exploited in illicit trade
- - Collaboration is key
- - Need for digital asset expertise
- - Legal framework gaps

# Looking Forward

- - Advocate for forensic tools
- - Train peers internally
- - Share model nationally
- - Strengthen crypto compliance

## **Lessons & Recommendations**

- Crypto is now **central in laundering schemes**
- Tax agencies need **digital forensic skills**
- Strengthen **cross-border digital evidence** processes
- Advocate for **crypto asset declaration requirements**

**THANK YOU**