

At least 14 gold miners who were missing since and feared dead on Saturday in Burundi after flash floods swept into a pit where they were searching for gold, a local government administrator said.

Nicodème Ndahabonyimana, a district administrator in the northwestern province of Cibitoke, said that the miners could not be saved after the pits collapsed Friday night amid torrential rainfall.

“Efforts were underway to pump water from mine shafts to recover bodies of the trapped miners” he said, but “there is no longer any chance of finding them alive”

The bodies of two other miners who were missing and presumed dead have not been recovered, he said, urging artisanal miners to avoid pits during the rainy season.

Police and other authorities on Saturday unsuccessfully tried to extract the miners from the pits, flooded with water from the overflowing Rugogo river.

Such mining disasters are frequently reported in Burundi’s northwest and northeast, where people mining illegally prefer nighttime work to escape the oversight of authorities.

Burundi is rich in gold, precious minerals and rare earths but many mines are unregulated.

In May 2019, nine miners were killed and another 20 injured when an unregulated coltan mine collapsed following torrential rains in northern Burundi.

In 2021, Burundi’s government announced it was suspending the operations of several international mining companies, saying that that it was not getting its fair share of income from the country’s mineral wealth.