

UNDERSTANDING THE PERCEPTION OF LOCAL AND RURAL COMMUNITIES IN BAUXITE MINING REGIONS: A COLLECTION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS FROM GUINEA

Authors: Dr Penda Diallo, Mark Annandale, and Dr Fiona Solomon

INTRODUCTION

The Aluminium Stewardship Initiative (ASI) is a global non-profit standard-setting and certification organisation that brings together producers, users, and stakeholders in the aluminium value chain. ASI is the only comprehensive voluntary sustainability standard initiative for the aluminium value chain.

In addition to the Certification Program, ASI has a formal engagement mechanism with Indigenous peoples and local communities affected by or involved with the aluminium value chain called the Indigenous Peoples Advisory Forum (IPAF). IPAF is a platform for exchange, learning, support, and opportunities, which aims to ensure that the voices and desires of Indigenous communities in Bauxite mining regions and other parts of the aluminium value chain are effectively addressed. It has representatives from various areas worldwide who attend regular meetings to interact with, learn from each other, and work on practical actions to protect Indigenous communities' rights.

One of the key global challenges for the mining sector is ensuring effective inclusion and dialogue with communities affected by mining. There are ongoing questions about how the industry can effectively implement Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC). To maximise the contribution of bauxite to society, ASI ensures that local communities participate in their activities through IPAF, training and various other mechanisms. Guinea is a critical player in the global aluminium supply chain. ASI members operate in Guinea, including RUSAL, Hongqiao, GAC (Guinea Aluminium Company), and CBG (Compagnie des Bauxite de Guinee), in addition to several global bauxite buyers and traders, which are also ASI members. As one of the largest producers of bauxite in the world, a deeper understanding of the local context of bauxite exploration and bauxite mining in Guinea is important for ASI and its stakeholders. In addition, ASI and IPAF want to support Indigenous peoples and local communities to have an informed discussion and be able to have equal engagement with other stakeholders.

What has become apparent from IPAF participants is that globally, more efforts are needed to ensure that the implementation of FPIC supports the views, perceptions, and aspirations of Indigenous peoples and local communities. On the other hand, IPAF has also highlighted that most Indigenous communities need more technical and specialised capacity to effectively engage and participate in the discussion in an informed and meaningful way to effectively protect their rights and environment.

Therefore, this lack of knowledge and experience impedes their ability to make effective decisions or participate in negotiations effectively. Thus, an effective FPIC process can enable Indigenous peoples and local communities to participate in decision-making about mining projects on their land, the initial premise of FPIC.

It is essential to engage in a process with indigenous and local communities, to listen and gain an understanding of the local context, and to gain an insight into the communities' understanding and perceptions. This can lay the foundation for creating an environment that will facilitate the increased involvement of communities, particularly FPIC, and more broadly, engagement with ASI certification processes and working with companies in the implementation of ASI Standards.

In this context, ASI undertook exploratory and explanatory research to support a better understanding and perception of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent with local communities primarily and a few interviews with additional stakeholders, including government officials in Guinea.

ASI undertook field research activities in Conakry and the regions of Boke and Kindia from 19 April 2022 to 5 June 2022. During this period, focus groups discussion were held with selected individuals and 19 groups, including 376 participants, between April 19, 2022, to June 4, 2022, in the capital Conakry and the bauxite mining regions of Boke and Kindia. ASI plans to share research findings first with local communities starting in May 2023 and then through a series of workshops in 2023/24, supported by a newly established reference group. The objective of the reference group is to use the existing IPAF network, including a broad membership across ASI's with representatives from the impacted regions in Guinea, plus IPAF members from other jurisdictions with specific skills and experience, which will enrich the Guinea workshop activities. The research conclusions will also be shared using different platforms to reach a wider audience.

This booklet includes the research methodology and the key findings from the research, which form a collection of research findings. Overall, the learning from the research offers ASI and other stakeholders information on what they can do to support effective and sustainable engagement with local and rural communities regarding the implementation of FPIC and meaningful dialogue moving forward within the current context of bauxite mining in Guinea.



Background

Globally, indigenous/local and rural communities facing development projects that will impact their livelihoods (e.g., mines, road networks, railways, energy supply) are meant to be able to have a say about whether and how the project should proceed. This principle is called Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).

“The negotiations on mining plans and activities take place between higher officials in Conakry (state level) and at the regional administration level (Prefecture, Governorate, Rural Communes, Sous-Prefecture), so the communities are not associated with FPIC concerning the exploitation of our land. Here, we do not protest because we do not like conflict.”

- Focus group discussion, 28-04-2022, Missira, Kamarabounyi, Kindia



This research explored the process communities felt was culturally appropriate when seeking their engagement and involvement in consultations regarding decisions on bauxite mining projects (and their associated facilities) that will impact their livelihoods.

Seeking consent from indigenous/local and rural communities without knowledge and understanding of the local context or effective engagement processes can have unintended and ongoing consequences.

If a company has received approval to mine despite needing a proper FPIC process, there are likely to be ongoing, serious unresolved issues between the miner and the surrounding community, which are often much more complicated to rectify down the track.

Findings

1) Prior information is often missing

Overall, communities do not feel that consultations or meetings between developers and local community members are organised to provide information enabling local communities to make meaningful decisions. In general, communities feel that they need to be given information about the purpose of meetings ahead of time. As a result, they often need help to contribute effectively to discussions.

2) Respect for traditional decision-making processes is important

Traditionally, all communities and villages have a process in place to analyse situations and decision-making, including giving consent. Consent processes must be initiated through elected officials, imams/religious leaders, and other community leaders. The information then needs to be shared with the whole community in a way that they can understand, in their language, so they can have a shared understanding and consider all the issues. Whether consent is provided depends on internal discussions amongst community members and may need to be processed culturally appropriately within their time frames. Respect for the content of the commitments is a significant element in this decision process.

“We don't have a pre-designated position or person who gives consent or make a decision for the community. Before we make and share our decision on a matter, we hold an internal meeting first. During our internal discussions, we make decisions and give the honour to one person to present our decision where it needs to be presented.”

- Focus group discussion, 05-05-2022, District Sangoya, Kindia



3) Communities seek genuine FPIC processes

The overall finding from the fieldwork shows that communities want an FPIC process that:

- gives them respect from the initial introduction,
- offers them time to process information before consultation,
- includes meetings with the whole community,
- offers extra time to make an internal decision,
- allows them to share their decision once they have had time to consider and process the information shared by external stakeholders.



4) Desirable FPIC process from communities' perspective

Although communities were unfamiliar with FPIC language, based on the explanation provided during the focus groups, each community shared how they would like to be consulted about seeking their consent. The steps below offer a summary of the 19 focus groups.

1. First Phase: Introduction of project/objectives at the local sub-prefecture, sector, and village level.

2. Second Phase: Formal meeting and introduction with local elected leaders, elders, and eminent local community members Initial contact and meeting with elected official representatives, the imam/religious leaders, and the eminent local community members to introduce oneself/project. During this meeting, the purpose of the meeting is explained, the objectives sought are stated, and the expected impacts/outputs are explained.

3. Third Phase: Formal meeting and introduction with the community, including youth, women, children, leaders, notability, and elders. The leaders, elected officials, and the notability invite the entire community to an information-sharing session. So “no one will say that a decision was taken in their absence”.

4. Fourth Phase: Internal analysis and decision-making: Communities' internal meeting to analyse the information shared before deciding and pronouncing the outcome of the discussion.

5. Fifth Phase: The community meets the external stakeholders and shares their decision. The outcome of this meeting is expected to be formalised and shared with the community and external stakeholders, including the mining company and state representatives.

Where to from here?

To enable communities to make an informed decision, the FPIC process needs to be inclusive, have a structured approach that all parties agree to in advance, ensure a shared understanding, and provide communities with information on the positive and negative impacts of potential projects.

Most importantly, communities need time.

If there are proposed re-settlements, loss of farmlands and other livelihoods, there need to be assurances that the compensation they receive is agreed upon in advance and sustainably offsets the impacts into the future. Therefore, to communities, any compensation should not just be a one-off payment but one that both they and their families can benefit from for current and future generations.

It is also important for companies to understand that FPIC is not a one-off process and that consultation with local communities should be an ongoing process. This way, information about new evolving issues can be exchanged, and hopefully, any issues can be resolved regularly.

Critically, to ensure the effective implementation of FPIC processes, there is a need to build the capacity of all stakeholders to engage with communities in a culturally appropriate way. Knowledge and skills to manage these processes are essential for all parties. On the community side, more is needed to understand the mining cycle, the impacts of bauxite mining, and associated facilities such as rail lines, roads, and ports at every stage of the cycle. On the mining and government side, staff need to build their capacity for effective community engagement and assessment and monitoring of social and environmental projects.

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Background

Bauxite mining activities in Guinea have been ongoing for over 50 years. The mining and associated infrastructure, including roads, rail, ports, enclaves, and processing facilities, has led to urbanization and growth in regions such as Boke and Kindia.



Mining's growth has, directly and indirectly, impacted rural, remote, and isolated communities whose environment and livelihoods were historically agriculture and pastoral activities. The absence of other economic and community development in these areas has created frustration and mistrust toward local authorities and mining companies, whom they feel have neglected their development and needs.

“We are here, but we have not benefited from anything! We are tired of talking; too many people have come to record questions and answers, but we have not seen anything. We no longer trust anyone; we have no water or electricity, yet the company is extracting our bauxite...In addition, several organisations came and wrote about our problems but did not provide any solutions. They take pictures of us and make money; we still have nothing. We want our messages and voices to be considered and to reach the right places where it will result in positive action for the benefit of our people.”

- Focus group discussions, 28-04-2022, Kamaraboundji District, sector Missira, Kindia.



Consultation fatigue

Communities feel that they see no results from consultations and engagement with external stakeholders. Whilst communities engage with external stakeholders, the methodologies and approaches used by the stakeholders are often not in line with best practice research approaches (See Poster 1 on research methods).

The combination of poverty, frequent information sessions, frequent meeting requests from external stakeholders, unfulfilled promises, and lack of development across bauxite mining regions have led to consultation fatigue across rural communities.

Findings

1) Fatigue from lack of practical outcomes

Communities are tired of being consulted, seeing external stakeholders, and yet not having any visible improvement in their lives.

“We are here to receive people since the time of Sekou Touré we have seen nothing—we will listen to you too. You are the first to give us documents to tell us where you are coming from and to proceed to several steps to ensure that we are available to talk to you - this is the first time.”

- Focus group discussion, 26-04-2022, Kakita, Kindia.



2) Need for additional and effective state support

Communities' perception is that the state is responsible for the fact that mining companies do not meet all their promises and continue to hurt communities' land and livelihood. To help mitigate the negative social, environmental, and economic impacts of mining in their regions, all communities want more support from state authorities

3) Loss of trust in external stakeholders

Communities have lost trust in national and foreign external stakeholders, including local authorities, mining companies, researchers, and donors, and therefore, they do not see any point in attending meetings. Some claim that sometimes they have hoped that the presence of foreigners, including consultants, researchers, donors, and staff from mining companies, will improve their situation. However, they feel that they have not seen much improvement. Therefore, they are tired, hopeless, and do not trust anyone anymore; too many unfulfilled promises and unproductive meetings.

“Since people started coming, we haven't seen anything, and it's just good words. That's why we don't come to the meetings anymore. On the other hand, you told us the truth and informed us why you are here—we all understood why you are here—it's the first time we had such an openness and understanding of the presence of external actors. We know you are not promising to resolve our issues. This is the first time someone has left us a document - no one has left us a document before; they leave without leaving anything.”

- Focus group discussion, 16-05-2022, Horelafou, Sangaredi.

4) Importance of culturally appropriate approaches

Whilst they have lost hope, they are still open to people who use culturally appropriate approaches in engaging with them. They also seek honesty and trust from external stakeholders who hold interviews, meetings, and consultations with them.

5) Role of Faith

Communities are tired of being consulted, seeing external stakeholders, and yet not having any visible improvement in their lives.



Where to from here?

Communities now want action and practical support beyond data collection, information sessions, and false promises. Communities do not see the positive benefit of mining on their land and in their communities. Many are frustrated that bauxite mining companies have ongoing activities whilst most of the communities live in poverty. Therefore, there is a feeling of fatigue, anger, and frustration across all communities. In most places, people have lost so much faith in all stakeholders that their only consolation is their faith in God. Instead of external stakeholders coming to rural and local communities to collect data, communities want to have practical support.

Communities want consultations that can lead to practical support to improve their lives. Therefore, external stakeholders need to ask themselves what they can offer communities and how to support them in positively enhancing their lives and livelihoods.



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Background

Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) establishes the collective right of Indigenous Peoples to self-determination regarding developments (including mining activities) affecting them and their environment. This right is recognised in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, but there are few examples around the world where it is implemented well.

“We want our young people to be trained and informed about what they need to know to undertake negotiations with the company better.”

– Focus group discussions, 12-05-2022, District Kagneka, Kindia



For indigenous/local and rural communities impacted by mining projects, FPIC can be the most important first step for engagement. Ideally, this process should set the foundation for the effective and ongoing inclusion of local communities in mining projects, with an informed engagement throughout the mining cycle.

In theory, FPIC can address the issues concerning the indigenous/local and rural communities in projects related to mining activities. Community interviews in 2022 highlighted the realities of the application of FPIC in the context of bauxite mining in Guinea.

In Guinea, mining activities are perceived as public interest because they are expected to benefit the country. There is an understanding that the wealth of the subsoil belongs to the state. It is the land above the soil that belongs to communities. Following these principles, the state grants mining exploration licenses without prior consultation with local communities.

In Guinea, FPIC is not required before granting exploration mining licenses. However, national and international regulations expect companies to consider communities' needs and mitigate the potential impact of mining on the community's environment and livelihoods. The application of FPIC remains the responsibility of all parties, with the mining companies to provide information on the proposed development and resources for communities to participate on an informed basis that may include communities sharing their own information and world view, and the state with the responsibility to monitor and facilitate the application of FPIC.

“FPIC as an approach is not implemented – but elements are considered by the state and its partners in their relations with communities.”

– Personal interview 2, 01.06.2022, Conakry

Findings

1) The concept of FPIC is not known by communities

The participants in the focus group discussions had no knowledge of FPIC. Once the concept of FPIC was explained, their understanding and perceptions were that the national legislation does not make it possible to oppose mining projects. They all confirmed that FPIC is not applied before mining projects start.

2) The state's mining legislation, and policies expect mining companies to engage with local communities

Overall, communities feel that mining companies tend to inform them of their planned actions and areas of interest instead of seeking their consent. Whilst FPIC is not a requirement, there is an expectation from the state's legislation and policies that there will be an engagement between mining companies and local communities.



3) Community members recognised that they have limited knowledge about the impact of mining activities

During the introduction of mining projects and plans to communities, mining companies and state representatives mainly focus on the potential jobs and economic developments that will result from mining projects. Not much is said about the long-term environmental and social impacts. It is only once the project starts that communities realise the extent of the negative impacts associated with mining activities on both communities, their environment, and their livelihood.

“Whilst communities' approval is not sought in advance, all properties on the land that will be affected by mining must be compensated.”

– Personal interview 3, 01.05.2022, Conakry



“We are not involved at the beginning/phase of project development. We are often called when projects start and when there are problems. We want to be involved as soon as the mining project department is contacted to apply for an exploration permit so that from the beginning, we analyse the companies' proposals and what is included concerning local communities.”

– Personal interview 1, 31.05.2022, Conakry

Where to from here?

The findings highlight two key needs:

First, there is a need to widen the understanding of FPIC amongst all stakeholders. Communities need to know what to expect and how to engage in an FPIC process. Mining companies and the state must also ensure that their staff understand the FPIC process and its advantages for all stakeholders and that they are well-equipped to manage FPIC consultations.

Second, more efforts need to be taken by both internal and external stakeholders to implement FPIC in relation to both mining and non-mining activities, including community consultations and interviews. This can include creating joint efforts and collaborations to address existing issues with local communities and mining companies. Another aspect can include resolving outstanding and historical issues with communities before they escalate.

“The company consulted us to ask our permission. By the way, they already had permission from the state, so even if we said no, they were going to work. We can't defy the permission of the state. So, they came to inform us that they were going to work, and we discussed the conditions of their installation. The working conditions were based on promises from the company to improve the living conditions of the communities, guarantee local jobs, train young people, and provide social security (health care). The promise of employment has not been honored after the construction phase. In addition, the promises made to women have not been kept. There have been several promises without follow-up.”

– Focus group discussion, 24.05.2022, Dapress, Kamsar

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Background

For local communities in Guinea, the impacts of bauxite mining in their region directly impact their life, environment, cultural heritage, and livelihoods, particularly agriculture and pastoral activities. These impacts can be social, environmental, economic, cultural, and political.

Mining activities directly impact communities' water sources and their health and safety through water pollution, noise, dust, and both rail and roads dissecting communities.



Mining activities often increase in-migration and the cost of living for local communities. The loss of historical livelihoods may compound this. Furthermore, the growing economic activities associated with mining often create unrealistic expectations for youth employment and community development.

Therefore, communities feel that effective representation and engagement with local communities in all discussions related to mining development and implementation are critical to maximising benefits and mitigating the negative impacts of mining on local communities.

Representation – who legitimately speaks on their behalf and how they take forward diverse community interests – is central to this.

Findings

1) Communities feel excluded from and distrustful of decisions related to mining

Where and when decisions related to mining are concluded, communities sometimes feel that even where they are presented, they are not represented by their legitimate nominated representatives. This is why communities believe their issues need to be effectively addressed by mining companies and the state.

“To represent a community well and find appropriate solutions to community issues, one has to know the problems of the community”

– Focus group discussion, 26-04-2022, Kakita, Kindia.

“From the start, rights are flouted, and the representatives are often not legitimate representatives, they are people who think they are representatives and often they are corrupt...”

– Personal interview, 31-05-2022, Conakry.

2) Local selection processes

In all communities, it was confirmed that legitimate representation must be provided by people nominated by the community through their own selection process. The community will consider ethnic diversity, gender, social, and cultural considerations regarding representation.

“There is not Fulani, Malinke, Sussu, Guerze, they are all the same, they can all represent the community once the key members have been informed of a meeting.”

– Focus group discussions, 28-04-2022, Kamaraboundji District, sector Missira, Kindia.



3) Legitimate representatives

Communities noted that the people who should participate in key decision-making processes as the legitimate representatives of their communities include:

- Official and elected representatives (Chief sector, district president, area head).
- Imams.
- Elders (representatives).
- Local eminent people and advisors associated with positions in the village, district, or community, e.g., Adviser to the chief, advisor to the chief district.
- Women's President.
- Youth Presidents.
- Vice presidents.
- Secretaries.

“For resettlement negotiations, communities would like the owner of the land to be accompanied and supported by their legitimate representatives. This would include the following:

- Landowner/family who owns the land.
- The Deputy warden.
- Notables/elders/chiefs (up to 5).
- Community relays.
- Youth (two representatives).
- Women (two representatives).

Communities feel that their compensation now is not advantageous in the long term. With more representatives, they think that landowners will have more support during negotiations and negotiate.”

– Focus group discussion, 16-05-2022, Hamdalaye2, Sangaredi

Where to from here?

For all discussions related to bauxite mining which will directly impact local communities and their environment, it is essential to include legitimate representatives selected by the communities that reflect the community's diversity, i.e., age, gender, expertise, and communication skills.

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Background

Traditionally across local communities, women are responsible for undertaking their daily agricultural, market trades or other activities, looking after children, and cooking the daily family meals. And yet, most women feel excluded during consultations with external stakeholders on decisions related to the impact of mining projects.

For instance, where communities have been resettled, women have a double burden of being too far from local markets and sometimes without productive land and other livelihood activities nearby. Additionally, where land is selected for mining, small activities such as wood collection in the plantations, used to facilitate meal cooking, become less accessible.

Most of the population in bauxite mining regions is young and unemployed. These young people also feel excluded from decisions related to mining and the opportunities associated with mining, including jobs, business opportunities, economic growth, and other positive contributions to their well-being.

“Today, 12 trains from different mining companies come and go daily, and we have no jobs. We only have negative impacts.”

- Focus group discussion, 18-05-2022, Ramblai District, Kolaboui.

As a result, there is an ongoing frustration among youth and women toward their inability to benefit from bauxite mining activities effectively. Years of frustration linked to the social and environmental impacts of mining, including air, water and noise pollution, reduced access to food resources, high rates of unemployment, and lack of effective engagement with young people, have led to anger, hopelessness, and regular youth-led protests.

Findings

1) Current engagement processes are not effective

Where and when decisions related to mining are concluded, communities sometimes feel that even where they are presented, they are not represented by their legitimate nominated representatives. This is why communities believe their issues need to be effectively addressed by mining companies and the state.

2) Four reasons why women do not effectively engage in meetings despite being present

First, cultural context. Second language barrier. Third, women feel that they are not offered time to prepare in advance of the meetings, including getting preliminary information. Fourth, they feel that even when they speak, external stakeholders do not consider their needs.

“We women have never been consulted. We are just informed that they are coming and gathering us. We are not given a voice, and we are not asked our opinion! We have never been called and consulted for a meeting, usually it is just the men. Today is the first time this has happened. Usually, the women come and sit down and don't have the floor, so we stay without speaking, and the few times we do speak, it is not considered.”

- Focus group discussions, 19-05-2022, Wossou Centre, Sangaredi



3) Youth feel hopeless and do not feel properly engaged

Young people feel that they are only consulted by the mining companies and local authorities when external stakeholders visit, during protests, and when there are accidents.

Youth feel hopeless because they have become silent observers of the bauxite wealth moving out of the country, whilst most of the local youth are unemployed and remain impacted by the noise, dust, train traffic, and the high cost of living resulting from bauxite mining in their region.

4) Employment is a critical issue for youth

Across all rural communities, youth are frustrated and feel neglected by the state and mining companies. They feel recruitment processes are biased and do not offer skilled opportunities to local youth. Some of the young people interviewed claim that there are graduates amongst them who have unsuccessfully applied for jobs in mining companies.

The few young people employed during the construction phase of mining infrastructures as manual laborers are laid off as soon as mining activities start, thus creating further frustration across communities.

Youth strikes and uprisings regarding employment often lead to violent reprisals and imprisonment.

“In addition to my university degree, I have just completed 37 training courses, but I can't get access to opportunities in mining companies.”

- Focus group discussion Participant, 17-05-2022, Kamsar

“Companies organize flashy consultations to make their superiors - external foreign stakeholders - believe that the communities are listened to, which is not the case.”

- Focus group discussion, Youth Group, 04-05-2022, Kamsar



5) Supporting women and youth participation in a culturally appropriate way

There are culturally appropriate ways to ensure that the elders allow women and youth to speak. However, most external stakeholders are not aware of these approaches.

Both women and youth want action and activities to enable them to live decent and fulfilling lives. They live in extreme poverty and need external assistance to mitigate the impact of bauxite mining on their ability to sustain productive livelihood activities and lead a decent life.

Existing women and youth structures are in place. External stakeholders often do not engage with these, and the structures also lack funding to develop and implement their programs.

“We had set up the coordination to be listened to and better organized. If young people are called to be represented, young people will choose their representative in the coordination.”

- Focus group discussion, Youth Group, 15-05-2022, Kolaboui

Where to from here?

The findings highlight four important considerations for women and youth engagement. These are relevant for mining companies and the state, international donors, foundations, and companies in the aluminium value chain.

First, external stakeholders need to make extra efforts to include and engage with women and youth in an effective and culturally appropriate way. Recognize the importance of youth and women agencies, engage with, and listen to them, and support them in local development initiatives.

Second, the crucial need for youth and women is action-oriented support, which will mitigate the negative impacts of mining activities and have a tangible impact on their lives and livelihoods.

Third, there is a need for more efforts to support effective local development of decent life and livelihood for local communities in bauxite regions, particularly programs targeted at women and youth representing the most vulnerable communities. To do this, stakeholders can consider several actions, including the strategic provision of funds, resources, and support, which can help them build tangible and sustainable livelihood activities.

Lastly, stakeholders must explore opportunities to engage with and support local youth-led and women-led initiatives directly. These efforts need to be embedded in the strategy of the state, mining companies, and donors.

“It is not the training or the structures that the community lacks. We have associations and NGOs, but we don't have funds.”

- Focus group discussion, Local Youth Council, 17-05-2022, Kamsar

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Introduction

Methods (what we did)

This case study explores the perception of FPIC in the context of bauxite mining. Focus groups discussion were held with 19 groups, including 376 participants, between April 19, 2022, to June 4, 2022, in Conakry, and in the bauxite mining regions of Boke and Kindia. These regions host Guinea's largest and longest history of bauxite mining activities.



Focus group discussions were conducted in Fulani, Sussu, and French. The semi-structured interviews were held in French. The purpose of the interviews and focus groups was shared in the local language. Before starting discussions, an ethical consent form was explained in detail to each participant within their local language. Efforts were taken to ensure that the research was undertaken with respect to traditional cultures and customs.

The focus group discussions varied from 90 minutes to 3h. The one-to-one interviews varied between 30 minutes and 90 minutes. Both were transcribed in detail. An analysis of secondary literature on FPIC was also completed before the field research activities.

Context

Fieldwork logistics and preparation needed much time and planning, including back-and-forth trips to set up appointments with the community and their representatives. Often, the first visit was to meet the local authorities, the second was to go to communities to explain the research and seek participation at a convenient time, and the third visit could be the interview or focus group.

A key objective of the research was to listen. There were many frustrations held by community members, which sometimes made following structured questions difficult. After the first question, the community members often shared their frustrations, concerns, and anger. Once this was acknowledged and there was clarification on the research objective, the discussions could go back to the research questions.

Findings and recommendations

1) Culturally appropriate engagement and consultation

Support from national and/or local authorities and collaboration with interpreters, guides, and translators is essential for community engagement or consultation.

2) Meeting information and informed consent

Communities are usually called to attend meetings with no prior planning, sharing of information, no clarity on meeting contents, the origin of stakeholders, the meeting objectives and what potential output from consultations will be used for. External stakeholders must apply informed consent principles to support informed participation.

3) Understand community priorities

There is a lot of anger and frustration across communities which can make it challenging to engage with and consult with the communities, particularly if it does not address unemployment, poverty, and lack of development infrastructures.

4) Be flexible

It is essential to be flexible and allocate sufficient time and resources to prepare meetings with communities. On some occasions, times will change on the day of a meeting or arrival or extend longer; the participating group may be larger or smaller than planned, or it may be necessary to wait because of a local priority that has come up and which was not predictable.

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Formulaire de demande de consentement
Étude de recherche pour comprendre le contexte local de l'exploitation de la bauxite en Guinée

1. Je confirme avoir lu et compris la fiche d'information sur la recherche pour l'étude ci-dessus et avoir eu l'occasion de poser des questions. Veuillez cocher

2. Je comprends que ma participation est volontaire et que je suis libre de me retirer à tout moment sans donner de raison.

3. Je comprends que mon nom n'apparaîtra dans aucun rapport, article ou présentation, sauf si j'ai accepté que mon nom apparaisse.

4. Je comprends que toutes les données ou informations utilisées dans les publications découlant de cette étude seront anonymes, sauf si j'accepte que mon nom apparaisse.

5. Je comprends que toutes les données seront stockées de manière sécurisée.

6. J'accepte que des photos et des vidéos soient enregistrées pendant mon entretien, stockées, traitées et diffusées. Oui Non

7. J'accepte que ma voix soit enregistrée à l'aide d'un enregistreur vocal. Oui Non

8. J'accepte que mon nom apparaisse sur les documents résultant de cette recherche. Oui Non

9. J'accepte de participer à l'étude ci-dessus. Oui Non

Nom du participant/e	Bibi Soudra Bayla
Date	16/05/2022
Lieu	Kamabounyi

Nom de la chercheuse	Penda Diallo
Date	16/05/2022
Lieu	Kamabounyi

Une fois terminé, veuillez le retourner à la chercheuse, Dr Penda Diallo. Une copie sera remise au participant et l'original sera conservé dans le dossier de la chercheuse. Merci!

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5) Avoid a 'white savour' approach

Communities often do not have sufficient knowledge of the identity and role of non-local stakeholders who visit them. Therefore, many feel that sometimes western organisations that come, write "a lot", and take their photos make money at their expense while pretending to help them. Communities confessed that, in many instances, they don't understand the purpose of visits; they feel they must sit with the person or attend the meetings.

6) Put extra emphasis on meeting women and youth

Extra emphasis needs to be put on meeting women and youth groups. The ability to organise youth-only meetings and female-only meetings offered the possibility of hearing their voices openly.

"How can you help us to be heard, we beg you, you who came here and are telling us of a best practice, better way. You know what is here and what is out there."

- Focus group discussion, 28-04-2022, Kamabounyi district/sector Missira, Kindia.

"We had had several meetings here. The meeting we just had with you is the most modern and participatory one."

- Focus group discussion, 16-05-2022, Wossou Centre, Sangaredi.

7) Building trust meaningfully facilitates effective participation

Whilst the very fact of communities' lack of engagement is because they feel that their voices are not heard or being considered, once they establish a relationship and some trust, people feel more positive about attending meetings, hoping that their concerns will be shared and hopefully considered. They seek honesty and trust from external stakeholders who hold interviews, meetings, and consultations with them. In this case, there is an expectation that the findings from this research will be shared with a broader network that will consider the voice of local communities.

"We have been here to receive people since the time of Sekou Touré. We have seen nothing-we will listen to you too-we listen to you. You are the first to give us documents to tell us where you are coming from and to proceed to several steps to ensure that we are available to talk to you - this is the first time."

- Focus group discussion, 26-04-2022, Kakita, Kindia.

Where to from here?

Community participants interviewed do not recall having previously signed consent forms or having sufficient information on who is coming in and going out of their communities. This shows that neither mining companies, NGOs, donors, nor consultants apply adequate research or information collection methodologies when engaging with local communities. External stakeholders must implement culturally appropriate methods and ensure that a Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) approach is applied during interviews, consultation, and community engagement.

Acknowledgement

This *Beyond Certification* research project was funded by the Aluminium Stewardship Initiative (ASI) to listen to and share feedback from the local communities in Guinea. The field research took place from the 19th of April 2022 to the 4th of June 2022 in the bauxite mining regions of Boke, and Kindia, which host the largest and the longest history of bauxite mining activities in Guinea. ASI would like to thank all those who participated in the local community consultation research. Many people have contributed, and we want to thank all participants for spending their time and sharing their experiences and views. The project's success is because of the support provided by the Ministry of Mines and Geology, the local Prefects of Boke and Kindia, Sous-prefects, and Mayors of the regions of Sangaredi and Kindia, the chiefs of the sectors, village chiefs, interview participants, and local communities across the regions visited have been key for this research. Additionally, the fieldwork would not have been possible without the valuable support from the IPAF members in Boke, local guides, field assistants, and drivers.

