

Keywords:

Mining, extractive industries, corporate social responsibility, Zambia, transparency



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OVERVIEW

IIED Sustainable Markets Group

Project name:

Assessing Citizens' Attitudes Towards Mining: Zambia Pilot

Project leader:

Sarah Best

Time frame:

November 2013–March 2014

Budget:

£20,000, plus in-kind contribution from CSIRO in staff time (to value of £20,000)

Objective:

Scope the possibility of a full-scale national survey in Zambia to understand citizens' attitudes toward mining, and contribute to national and global conversations about the role and future of mining.

PROJECT SUMMARY

Mining companies are increasingly concerned about local public approval, which determines their 'social licence to operate'. In Zambia, where minerals are fuelling rapid growth, IIED and partners surveyed 300 people in three different local contexts about their attitudes towards mining. This pilot project allowed us to engage stakeholders for a future nationwide citizen survey, and prove its value. The survey instrument, designed by Australia's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), revealed intriguing differences between locations, as well as subtle community priorities we did not foresee.

CHANGE IN ACTION

How to leverage countries' mineral wealth for sustainable development is a major challenge. Mining impacts on people in complex and varied ways. Yet national discourses around mining are often dominated by large and influential voices – government, industry and NGOs – that do not always represent broader perspectives. To bring attention to the broad array of citizens' perspectives and needs, Australia's national science agency, CSIRO, is conducting applied research to understand what shapes societal

Drilling deeper into public opinion

A pilot survey on mining in Zambia hints at the unwritten rules behind the social licence to operate

Zambia's Copperbelt Province is as mineral-rich as the name implies, and its deposits have fuelled the national economy since the colonial era. But much has changed in the last 20 years.

State-owned mines, which once directly funded local schools, healthcare and housing, have been privatised and 'corporate social responsibility' initiatives stripped back – with government-run services often failing to fill the breach. Meanwhile, surging global commodity prices have drawn the mining industry to new areas. GDP is rising fast as billions of dollars pour into Zambian mines, yet the poor still make up over 60 per cent of the population. The country's great challenge is to ensure that mining growth benefits everyone.

Government, industry, trade unions and NGOs all have strong opinions about sustainable development in the mining sector, but national debates and policymaking often sideline the voices of affected people. In the past two years, Australia's national science agency, CSIRO, has started collecting and comparing citizen surveys on mining around the world. An IIED project took CSIRO's survey to Zambia in late 2013. The preliminary data shed light on public acceptance of the industry – its 'social licence to operate'. And some of the findings surprised us.

Preparing the ground

The survey was funded by the UK Department for International

Development (DFID), carried out by a local consultancy, RuralNet Associates, and designed in partnership with CSIRO. CSIRO had already gathered surveys from Australia, Chile and China. IIED's budget for the project was limited, so we ran a small pilot study to prove the concept, gauge interest and prepare for a nationwide survey.

The study was carefully randomised to report the views of average citizens. It not only asked about environmental and economic concerns, but also explored other attitudes: did people trust industry actors, for example, or think that impacts and benefits were distributed fairly? CSIRO then analysed which factors contributed most to acceptance of mining. Our discussions with sector insiders in Zambia also helped tailor survey questions to local concerns such as taxation of mines.

Unexpected attitudes

Researchers interviewed about 300 people in three districts: Lusaka, the capital; Solwezi, a small city in a new mining region; and Lufwanyama, an underdeveloped rural region of the Copperbelt with high poverty, weak infrastructure and a mix of large-scale, small-scale and informal mines. Focus group discussions in each area helped contextualise the survey data. Overall, people viewed mining as central for Zambia. Interestingly, responses differed by region in ways that seem to reflect stages of development. Solwezi residents were more confident that

acceptance of mining and is compiling a global database of citizens' attitudes to the industry. IIED was keen to bring CSIRO's survey to Africa, where mineral wealth is increasingly important to development.

By running a small pilot survey in Zambia, we leveraged a limited budget and time frame to engage stakeholders, test and adapt the survey tool, and prepare for a full national survey – while providing robust data to inform CSIRO's global project.

KEY LESSONS LEARNT & INNOVATIONS

- The mining industry and other stakeholders are interested in citizen surveys that can help build consensus in polarised debates and clarify what it takes to secure a social licence to operate. These stakeholders provide vital local knowledge and buy-in.
- Well-designed, representative surveys reveal unexpected patterns. In Zambia, pilot results suggest that acceptance of mining depends on local benefits, trust in industry and trust in governance arrangements, but not on companies' environmental performance.
- A full-scale national survey is needed to test these findings. The credibility and impact of such a study depends on the three Ds: data, dissemination and dialogue.

PARTNERS' VIEW

As RuralNet, we believe high-quality, representative data on the perceptions of Zambian citizens will not only inform policy dialogues but also bring new knowledge to policy debates that can be compared and contrasted with expert opinions to which we have become accustomed.



This research was funded by UK aid from the UK Government, however the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of the UK Government.



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Kansanshi mine is close to Solwezi, one of the surveyed areas, where a mining boom is taking place. There are challenges to ensure mining growth benefits everyone.

mining brought money into their communities and created business opportunities, but they also felt the new boom's negative impacts, such as higher cost of living and environmental damage.

People in Lufwanyama, by contrast, struggled to see benefits. Here the lack of decent job opportunities came out as a major issue in focus groups. Residents in Lufwanyama also saw more acute tensions between artisanal and small-scale mining and other land users.

The most unexpected finding was that, although Zambians reported that mining had significant negative impact on the environment, health and agriculture, these concerns did not appear to influence their levels of acceptance of the industry. Instead, the factors that strongly predicted acceptance were economic and employment benefits from mining, trust in the industry, and faith in the ability of Zambian institutions and communities to hold industry to account. In other words, local benefits, trust and accountability are key requirements for the social licence to operate in Zambia. Stakeholders we talked to suggested people's interest in economic benefits could reflect poverty rates in Zambia – and they wondered how the results might shift if long-established mining areas in the Copperbelt were included. A well-designed survey can reveal these kinds of subtle priorities.

Engaging stakeholders

IIED and Ruralnet then worked on assessing buy-in for a nationwide study by sharing the pilot results with key stakeholders. Companies feel that negative perceptions of their industry are a problem and that this type of attitudinal research could help bridge

entrenched positions and build shared understanding of citizens' real values. Government-industry negotiations over issues like tax rates have become 'a dialogue of the deaf', as one person said, but all sides want to hear how ordinary Zambians see the pluses and minuses. For civil society organisations, a key priority is ensuring that surveys support better dialogue and information-sharing with local people, rather than just feeding national and global discussions.

After finalising the pilot results and adding them to the CSIRO database, the next step is to facilitate the full-scale survey. This will need expert and multi-stakeholder input to help decide which questions to prioritise and how to select study areas. We also need to partner with additional local institutions to ground the work in Zambia, disseminate results to local communities and officials, and facilitate multi-stakeholder discussions of the findings. Focusing on these three D's – good data, dissemination and dialogue – will give the results more weight and strengthen the project's impact on policy and practice. And that will help Zambia contribute a crucial piece to understanding the effects of mining development worldwide.



Knowledge Products

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