REPORT FOR THE RESEARCH FINDINGS DISSEMINATION
COMMUNITY MEETING IN MUBENDE DISTRICT

Henry Bazira executive director WGI presents to participants at Sygon Gardens, Sygon mining village –Mubende District.
3rd August 2017.
Introduction

WGI has been implementing a 2-year (2015 – 2017) project on “Promoting Mining Industry Compliance to Social and Environmental Safeguards in Uganda”, a project funded by Foundation Open Society Institute (FOSI) and Open Society Institute for East Africa (OSIEA). The main objective of the project is to promote social and environmental safeguards amidst mineral development.

The project was implemented in the districts of Hoima, Mubende and Moroto. The project comprised of two broad components i.e. one to evaluate existing policy, legal and institutional frameworks’ ability to deliver safeguards and benefits to society, the economy, the environment\(^1\) and politics of local communities and the country as a whole. The second component involved testing the levels of Mercury, Cyanide, Arsenic, Aluminium and Lead pollution in soils and water in proximity to mining operations to determine the potential risks this could have on the people directly and indirectly involved in mining operations and those living in proximity to mining areas, including the surrounding biodiversity.

It is against this background that WGI conducted a research dissemination community meeting on the 3\(^{rd}\) of August at Sygon Gardens, Sygon mining village – Kitumbi subcounty-Mubende district.

The main objectives of this meeting were:

- To disseminate results to the relevant authorities at local and central government levels derived from the soil and water samples collected from gold mining and processing points on the 1\(^{st}\) and 2\(^{nd}\) of April that were tested for presence of Mercury, Cyanide, Arsenic, Lead and Aluminium as indicators of pollution.
- To disseminate research information to community members to trigger appropriate responses/ remedial actions.
- To sensitize relevant stakeholders on the negative social and environmental impacts of mining on communities and ways in which such impacts can be mitigated.

Expected outcome

\(^{1}\) Biodiversity and ecosystem services
• Participants aware of the levels of mining industry compliance to social and environmental safeguards;
• Participants aware of the pollution risks associated with the mining activities and drawing strategies to avoid and/or mitigate the risks.

Only 39 community members participated in the meeting and most of these were the artisanal miners from the area.

**Presentation about the project by Diana Taremwa-Project officer**

She made a presentation about the project. She informed participants that;

• This was a two year project that began at the end of 2015-2017. It will be ending in September 2017. It is being funded by Foundation Open Society Institute (FOSI) and Open Society Institute for East Africa (OSIEA).

• The main objective of the project is to promote social and environmental safeguards amidst mineral development.

• The project was implemented in the districts of Hoima, Mubende, Moroto and Nakapiripit districts.

• The project was premised on a number of aspirations including Article 39, of the Uganda constitution, 1995 which provides for the right of every Ugandan to a clean and healthy environment, expected best practices in the mining sector and the need to promote sustainable development under the AMV and vision 2040.

• The project comprised of two broad components i.e. one to evaluate existing policy, legal and institutional frameworks’ ability to deliver safeguards and benefits to society, the environment and politics of local communities and the country as a whole, Biodiversity and ecosystem services.

• On the 2st and 2nd of April 2017, WGI team had collected soil and water samples collected from gold mining and processing points in Mubende district that were tested for presence of Mercury, Cyanide, Arsenic, Lead and Aluminium as indicators of pollution.

• The meeting was mainly to disseminate research results to the community members, relevant authorities at local and central government to trigger appropriate responses/ remedial actions.
Presentation on the pollution levels in soil and water in gold mining areas of Mubende districts-by Mr Paul Kiggala- Consultant

He informed participants that;

- WGI had requested the Minerals and Materials Division under the Product Development Department at Uganda Industrial Research Institute (UIRI) to undertake laboratory tests on soils and water samples within and in proximity to Artisan and Small-scale Gold Mining areas in Moroto, Nakapiripit, and Mubende.
- The research involved an assessment of the chemicals used or found in mining operations’ effects/impacts on people/society and the environment. Particular focus was on Mercury Oxide and Cyanide used in Gold mining operations and Aluminum, Lead and Arsenic that may be associated or found in mining operations. This particular assessment analyzed pollution levels of these chemicals in soils and water within and in proximity to Gold mining operations.
- The research in Mubende district focused on gold mining. Field surveys were conducted that included taking soil and water samples from mining sites for analysis in the laboratory. Uganda Industries’ Research Institute (UIRI) laboratories conducted the soil and water analysis.
Soil samples were taken horizontally and along the slope to measure flow effects/impacts.

Water samples were taken at the stream edges and centers to obtain an aggregated sample Water test.

There were Mercury Oxide and Cyanide risks in soils in Mubende.

Chemical pollution at various levels is occurring at different ASMs sites in Mubende.

Mercury and Cyanide present a significant social and environmental risk among artisan and small-scale miners in Mubende.

Lead was slightly below the NEMA and WHO permissible levels at some locations, suggesting that it could become a risk.

The high Aluminum registered was as result of wear and tear of equipment during the crushing and panning of tailing to prepare them for Gold extraction.

**Recommendations**

- Miners need to stop use of Cyanide and Mercury Oxide in gold mining, Borax could be an option. Studies have been made in other countries e.g. Philippines to support this.

- Use closed-loop water recycling systems to avoid chemical spillage into the environment.

- Use a wet-gold extraction all through to control dust pollution.

- Local government needs to enforce the safeguards.

- Need to use safety gear while handling mercury and Cyanide.

**Presentation on Mining Industry Compliance to Social and Environmental Safeguards in Uganda** by Henry Bazira – Executive Director

The presentation covered the Introduction, research Methodology and approach, Social Safeguard Policies and Laws, Environmental Safeguard Policies and Laws, Compliance to Social Safeguards, Compliance to Environmental Safeguards. He informed members that;

- The research involved an assessment of the chemicals used or found in mining operations’ effects/impacts on people/society and the environment. Particular focus was on Mercury Oxide and Cyanide used in Gold mining operations and Aluminum, Lead and Arsenic that may be associated or found in mining.
operations. This particular assessment analyzed pollution levels of these chemicals in soils and water within and in proximity to Gold mining operations.

- The research focused on Gold mining in Mubende.
- The research involved a review of Uganda’s policies, laws and institutional mechanisms to identify the social and environmental safeguards enshrined there in that need to be complied with by oil and mining companies, including international frameworks.
- The research involved a desk (literature) review of Uganda’s policies and legislation that provide social and environmental safeguards. This was also analyzed alongside international industry best practice, conventions, protocols and treaties/agreements.
- Field surveys were conducted that included taking soil and water samples from mining sites for analysis in the laboratory. Uganda Industrial Research Institute (UIRI) laboratories conducted the soil and water analysis

**Social Safeguard Policies & Laws**

National and international social safeguards cover but not limited to Security of person and property (Social Protection), Right to hold property, Employment Opportunities, health, education, respect of human rights, Compensation and Resettlement of PAPs, Rehabilitation of PAPs; Economic development and Benefit sharing, Physical Planning

**Environmental Safeguard Policies & Laws**

National and International Safeguards ensure: A clean and healthy environment; Sets standards for compliance, Polluter Pays Principle and is responsible for the clean-up, Integrity and Sanctity of Biodiversity especially the threatened and endangered species, Sustainability of ecosystem services, Sustainable utilization of natural resources, Decommissioning of projects/interventions and restoration of the environment to as close to original as possible.

**Social and Environmental Safeguards Not Complied with or Violated by Mining Companies**

Safeguard Not Complied With

- Respect of human rights:

- A clean and healthy environment, Set standards for compliance, Polluter Pays Principle and is responsible for the clean-up, Integrity and Sanctity of Biodiversity especially the threatened and endangered species, Sustainability of ecosystem services, Sustainable utilization of natural resources, Decommissioning of projects/interventions and restoration of the environment to as close to original as possible.

- Employment:
- Economic Development and Benefit Sharing

**Research Findings**

- The research findings showed that Miners work without safety gear especially among ASMs thus compounding the likelihood of poisoning of Miners by chemicals used or associated with the mining operations.
- Mining companies and individuals, especially ASMs do not meet any of these safeguards/ set standards
- Some youth exhibiting symptoms that could be associated with Cyanide and/or Mercury Poisoning

**Conclusions**

- ASM’s and mining companies are not complying to social and environmental safeguards to some extent
- Many mining companies and individuals either are not aware of the safeguards or they have deliberately chosen to ignore them;
- There is great likelihood of human poisoning arising from the chemicals used or associated to mining operations
- Government needs to enforce the safeguards
- Need to sensitize miners and local government officials on the risks of chemicals used in Mining Operations
Mr Emmanuel Mpoza, a miner in sygon advises participants to stop handling mercury and cyanide without protective gear.

Key issues raised by participants

- Community members engage in gold mining activities using hazardous chemicals
- Government should register and license artisanal miners in the district so as to bring order to the district.
- Community members need safety gear to protect themselves for these chemicals
- Foreigners such as Chinese are also engaging in mining in the district and in most cases come with the chemicals
- Artisanal miners are destroying the environment without complying to environmental safeguards.
- Miners often face dangerous working conditions and exploitation by companies.
- Government should increase monitoring compliance to social and environmental safeguards
Way forward

- Participants agreed that there is need for WGI to conduct more sensitization meetings in the district so that artisanal miners stop using chemicals mercury and Cyanide in the mining process.
- WGI should start a project where it provides miners with safety gear to use during the mining process.
- WGI should also sensitize community members on alternative livelihood activities so that they stop engaging in mining that puts their lives at risk.
- WGI should continue its campaign to promote mining industry compliance to social and environmental safeguards in the district.

Conclusion

The community meeting was successfully carried out and the predominant request was on the need for WGI to start a project where it provides safety gear to miners while further sensitizing communities on dangers of using hazardous chemicals in the mining processes. Participants called upon WGI and partners to intensify promotion of mining industry compliance to social and environmental safeguards in the districts. WGI enlightened participants on governments plan to put in place a new mining law and how this law is meant to regulate activities of artisanal miners in the country.