



Conflict Factsheet

Pueblo Viejo Mining Conflict in Dominican Republic

Type of conflict Main	Intensity 3 <hr style="width: 20px; margin-left: 0;"/>
Conflict Locality Caribbean	Time 2006 –ongoing
Countries Dominican Rep.	Resources Biodiversity, Air (Pollution), Agricultural / Pastoral Land, Water

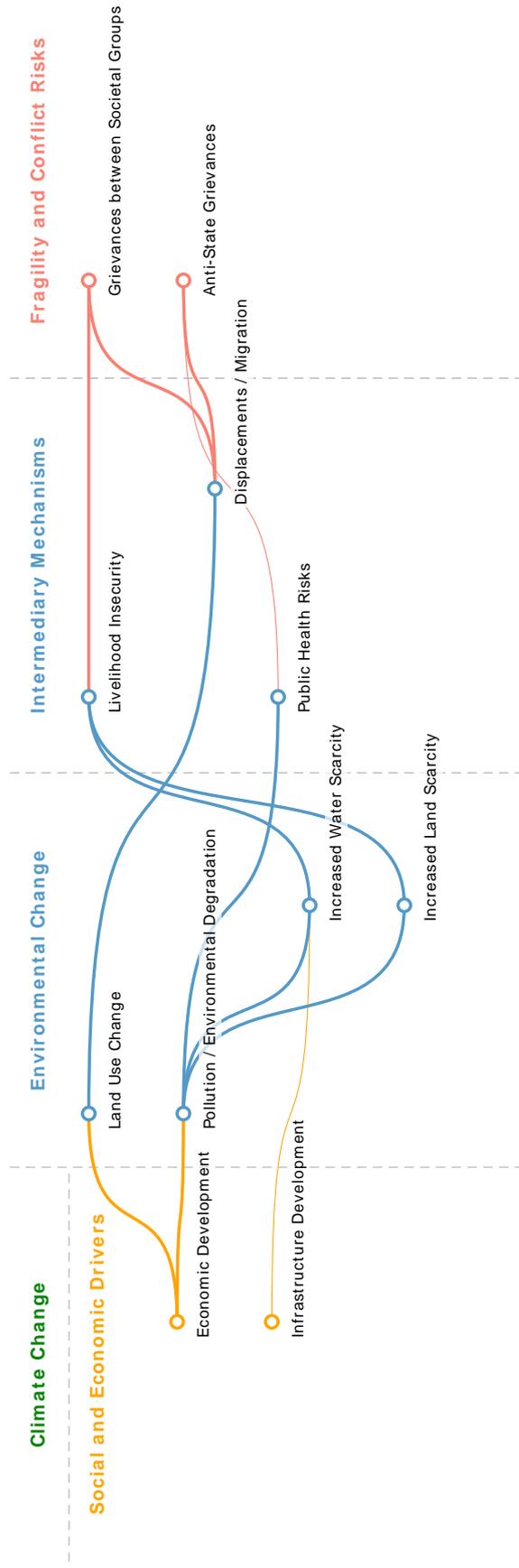


Conflict Summary

Large-scale mining activities by the Canadian Pueblo Viejo Dominicana Corporation (PVDC) have induced strong protests amongst local and national stakeholders in the Dominican Republic. Protests have been catalyzed by the large scope of the project and due to potential impacts upon health, the local environment, especially the pollution of rivers and land, as well as threats to the livelihoods of local communities. Moreover, serious labour conflicts with employees exist and a perception remains amongst local communities that economic benefits have been renegotiated at a governmental level.



Conceptual Model



Context Factors



Biodiversity, Air (Pollution), Agricultural / Pastoral
Land, Water



Unresponsive Government



Conflict History

In 2001, Placer Dome Inc. assimilated into Barrick Gold and acquired the rights to exploit the Pueblo Viejo mine following an international tender organized by the Dominican government (OCMAL, 2010). In 2006, two Canadian companies, Barrick Gold and Goldcorp Inc., created the joint venture Pueblo Viejo Dominicana Corporation (PVDC) and acquired the mine located in Cotuí in the province of Sánchez Ramírez, roughly 100 km north of Santo Domingo. It was formerly operated by the Dominican mining group Rosario Dominicana, S. A., which had exploited Pueblo Viejo from 1975 to 1999 when it went bankrupt (Mi Mundo, 2012). The region is both rich in extractives such as gold, silver, iron, bauxite, marble and nickel mines, and its rich soils enables good yields and quality of the agricultural production. Therefore, this has become a very contested area. Apart from the conflict with the affected communities, there has also been a dispute between the Dominican Government and Barrick Gold over the economic benefits derived from the mine.

The legacy of the mine

The PVDC gold production began in 2012. This 3.8 billion USD open pit mine is anticipated to have a life of more than 25 years, becoming Barrick's largest operation in the world (Kosich, 2013). It was ratified by the Dominican Congress, becoming the largest amount of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the country (EJOLT, 2014). Both the government and the company vowed to include a clean-up of Rosario's toxic mess and implement systems to ensure clean local watercourses before granting mining concessions. Another contract establishes that the Dominican government accounts for the environmental remediation of the preceding mining activity (OCMAL, 2010). However, without carrying out the clean-up procedures to the promised extent, a new exploitation license was issued in 2003 for Pueblo Viejo (Mi Mundo, 2012). According to the company, waters that have a direct connection to the Barrick site have since been cleaned up. However, to date, evidence has not been provided (EJOLT, 2014).

A wide array of grievances

There has been strong opposition to the new project since its conception, which eventually turned into major violent protests of inhabitants and local stakeholders. Major concerns comprise, primarily, a lack of prior consultation of local stakeholders, feared and implemented land dispossession, detrimental effects on health and agricultural production, water contamination, working conditions and preservation of local environmental heritage. Previous mining activities had already inflicted severe environmental, social and financial damage upon the region. At least four rivers of the area were polluted with acid mine drainage and discharges from the tailings of the dams, which constitute an imminent danger for the entire surrounding region as the rivers are prone to inundations (OCMAL, 2010).

Current environmental ramifications and jeopardies

The Pueblo Viejo mine generates approximately 6,736 million cubic meters of waste water annually containing highly acidic elements and significant traces of heavy metals. Furthermore, studies have identified that contamination from this runoff presents a significant risk to the local water supply (MICLA, 2014). PVDC's mining activities considerably increase the contamination of the 210 km-long river Yuna



which provides the fertile eastern Cibao Valley with freshwater. The high precipitation pattern during rainy season in the region worsens the situation by dispersing contaminated water and wastes, and putting stress on local dams. In May 2011, thousands of people were relocated out of fear of inundation (OCMAL, 2014). Reportedly, other previously clean local rivers have become polluted or dried up since the company built a dam especially designed to collect water for their extracting purposes (The Economist, 2012). Moreover, the Pueblo Viejo project is situated in the immediate proximity of the Hatillo Dam – which is equally one of the country’s most important freshwater sources and provides irrigation to the Cibao’s agricultural products for national consumption and export. A collapse of its toxic storage tailings pond would contaminate the island’s largest freshwater reservoirs. Upon a freedom of information request posed by the civil society, the Ministry for the Environment publicly released tests that confirmed that the water in the Margajita River, downstream from the mine, contains toxic traces above the legal limits (Mi Mundo, 2012).

Health issues and other grievances

There have been numerous reports on intoxications and health problems of farmers and locals, and significant damage to agricultural products including cattle death caused by particulate material in the air emanating from the mining activities (OCMAL, 2010). This pollution has affected community members as well as mine workers. In 2012, over 100 employees were poisoned from exposure to toxic chemicals (MICLA, 2014). Another serious threat for local residents of Pueblo Viejo’s adjacent communities - particularly La Cerca – is the imminent risk of losing their territories and being forced out by the encroaching mining project. In 2008, families were evicted from their original lands or communities (Mi Mundo, 2012).

Furthermore, serious interfamily, as well as intra-communal, conflicts emerged between those employed by PVDC or affiliated businesses and those opposing the project at a communal level (Mi Mundo, 2012). Moreover, one of the affected municipalities, Bayaguana, issued a request against the free use of municipal property for the installation of electric towers. The companies, however, responded by recusing to an administrative court procedure to avoid paying taxes (Chavez, 2014).

Lack of government protection

According to reports, locals have bemoaned that they have been forced, or in some cases lured, to sell their land at low prices to the government, while the latter then resold the same land to Barrick at a much higher price. New jobs were not created, and productive land was not provided in exchange as promised. Instead, local community members felt coerced into approving the project and many hold the belief that local officials were bribed.

Resolution Efforts

Present conflict status



Currently, about 70 dispossessed families' have demanded compensation from Barrick Gold and the Dominican government and there have been frequent protests staged (Tejeda, 2014). In 2014, residents of six communities located in the immediate proximity of the mine demonstrated against the uncertain health impacts of both soil and air pollution (MICLA, 2014). Residents of the affected area are suing PVDC for poisoning rivers, causing illnesses and the death of farm animals. There is no sign of a decline in the conflict scale and intensity as the detrimental impacts on the region persist (OCMAL, 2014). Between the Dominican Government and Barrick Gold, on the other hand, a dispute over economic benefits was solved.

Insufficient response to alleviate grievances

Despite tests conducted downstream of the mine by the Dominican Ministry of Environment showing that the water in the Margajita River was heavily polluted, the government has made little effort to act on these results. PVDC claims that it has signed the international code of practice for the handling of cyanide and that it treats all sewage output, as well as conducting regular public tests on water/air with local people (MICLA, 2014). However, local communities claim to have no knowledge of such tests and no data has so far been publicly provided (Mi Mundo, 2012). Several local farmers and community leaders have requested the government to be relocated to safe regions which are agriculturally productive. However, these requests have not been met so far (OCMAL, 2014).

The deputy Carlos Gabriel García initiated a conflict resolution project that seeks to revise the agreement with the government and the state, including the consideration of its unjust impact on the national interest (Chavez, 2014).

There is no significant alleviation, neither to the conflicts surrounding land dispossessions, nor concerning the environmental degradation that affects livelihoods and poses other serious threats to health and communal peace (Tejeda, 2014).



Intensities & Influences



INTENSITIES

International / Geopolitical Intensity



Human Suffering



INFLUENCES

Environmental Influences



Societal Influences



Diplomatic Crisis

No diplomatic crisis



Violent Conflict

Yes



Salience with nation

National



Mass displacement

Less than 100.000 and less than 10% of the country's population are displaced within the country.



Cross Border Mass Displacement

No



Resolution Success

Resolve of displacement problems

Displacement continues to cause discontent and/or other problems.



Reduction in geographical scope

There has been no reduction in geographical scope.



Increased capacity to address grievance in the future

There is no increased capacity to address grievances in the future.



Grievance Resolution

Grievances have been completely ignored.



Causal Attribution of Decrease in Conflict Intensity

There has been no reduction in intensity





Entry Points for Resilience and Peace Building

Compensation 0

Dispossessed and affected communities have staged frequent protests demanding compensation from Barrick Gold and the government, and are suing PVDC for the mines' role in water and air pollution, as well as the resulting health ramifications. Local farmers and community leaders have also requested to be relocated to safe and agriculturally productive regions. However, the government has not yet complied.

Environmental restoration & protection 1

The Dominican Ministry of Environment conducted tests that indicated heavy pollution of the Margajita River located downstream of the mine. However, little effort has been made by the government to act on these results. On the other hand, the Pueblo Viejo Dominicana Corporation (PVDC) has claimed to treat all sewage output from the mine, but no evidence has been publicly provided to date.

Resources and Materials

Conflict References

[Barrick Gold vs. Dominican Government over Pueblo Viejo Mine](#)

References with URL

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[Chavez, P. \(2014\). Cotuí contra Pueblo Viejo/Barrick Gold, Dominican Republic](#)

[MICLA \(2014\). Pueblo Viejo, Dominican Republic](#)

[Jorge, M. \(2010\). Asegura funcionarios recibieron 20 millones de dólares de la Barrick Gold](#)

[The Economist \(2013\). Mining in the Dominican Republic - Sickness and Wealth](#)

[Mi Mundo \(2012\). Acumulación por Desposesión: La Mina de Oro Pueblo Viejo de Barrick y Goldcorp en la República Dominicana](#)

[Tejeda, L. \(2014\). Continuarán protestas en contra de la Barrick Gold](#)

[Kosich, D. \(2013\). Dominican Republic govt. mines more pesos from Pueblo Viejo JV](#)

Further information

<https://factbook.ecc-platform.org/conflicts/pueblo-viejo-mine-dominican-republic>