



Conflict Factsheet

Mining Conflict in Madagascar

Type of conflict
Main

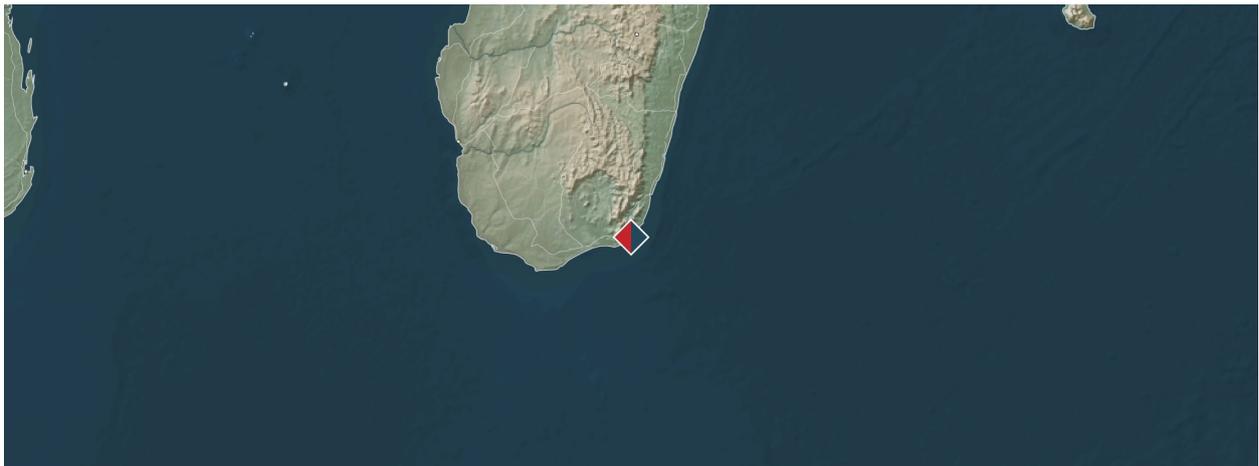
Intensity
1.5

Conflict Locality
Eastern Africa

Time
2013 –ongoing

Countries
Madagascar

Resources
Fish, Agricultural / Pastoral Land, Water, Forests, Ecosystem Stability

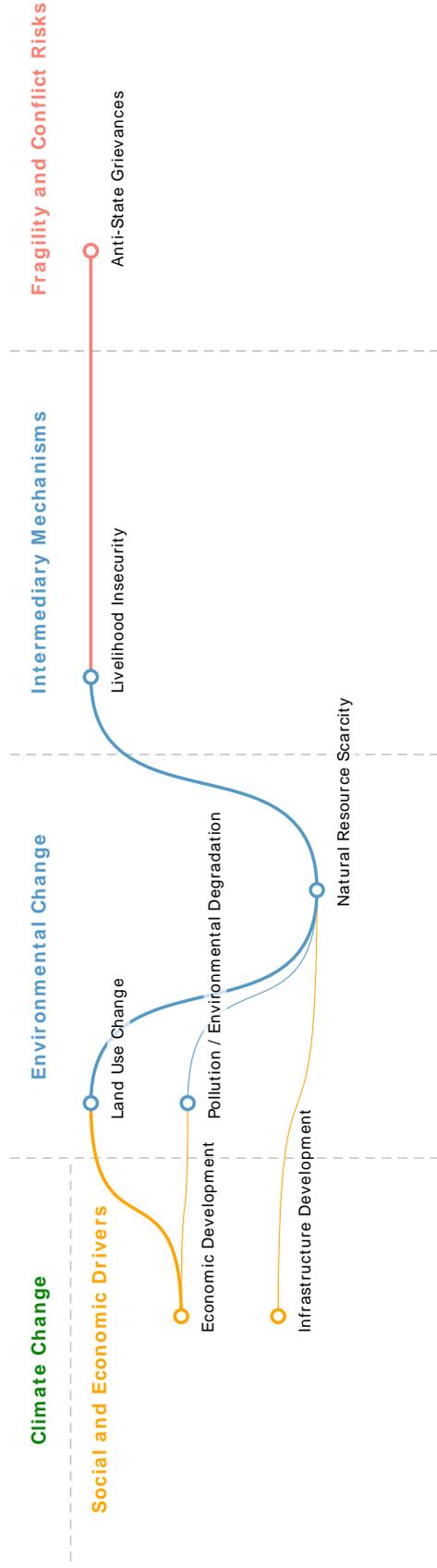


Conflict Summary

Grievances among local people over the Quebec Iron and Titanium Madagascar Minerals (QMM) company in Madagascar led to major public protests, which resulted in a military response by the government.



Conceptual Model



Fish, Agricultural / Pastoral Land, Water, Forests, Ecosystem Stability

Lack of Alternative Livelihoods
Low Level of Economic Development
Unresponsive Government

Context Factors



Conflict History

Quebec Iron and Titanium Madagascar Minerals (QMM) is a company conducting a large-scale mineral sands operation in Taolagnaro, Southeast Madagascar. With a lifespan of 50 years, it has been producing ilmenite, rutile and zircon since 2009 having started exploration in the late 1980s. The operation valued at US\$930 million is one of two major foreign capital investments in the country with 80% ownership by Anglo-Australian mining giant RioTinto and 20% by the government of Madagascar. The site comprises a mine, separation floating plant and port facilities.

Public Protest: 2013 and 2009

In January 9-12, 2013, Taolagnaro witnessed a major public protest involving road blockage and trapping of about 200 QMM workers including QMM's chief executive ([Douguet, 2013](#)). As the company threatened to close the mine and even exit Madagascar, a military response accompanied by firing of tear gas dispensed protesters and rescued the trapped miners on January 12, 2013 ([The Telegraph, 2013](#)). This followed previous protests such as in 2009 when protesters used road-blocks to prevent QMM vehicles from entering the Mandena processing plant ([Seagle, 2013](#)). The main causes of the protests were issues related to fishing ground and land acquisition and employment at the mine. Although the climax of the conflict was reached during those three days, historical grievances since the acquisition of the concession underpin that culmination.

Ecological impacts

The QMM project involves dredge mining covering an area of 6,000ha, of which 2000ha (the Mandena site) is currently mined with 498 persons already displaced to allow for construction of a new port, roads, quarrying, and housing for mine workers ([Rio Tinto/QMM, 2011](#)). Affected people are mostly subsistence farmers with coastal communities relying on fishing. Grievances in relation to QMM's impact on ecosystem emanate from land acquisition and clearing of forests. The project coincides with ecosystems as diverse as coastal forest, freshwater, swamps, estuarine and marine environments.

QMM's planned clearance amounts to 80% of the Southeastern littoral forest ([Watson et al, 2010](#)). The unique habitat and biodiversity has been significantly degraded with the decline in forest cover becoming one of the most acute threats to the ecosystem ([Harper et al, 2008](#); [Myers et al, 2000](#)). This has been the subject of public discontent although the company claims that forest degradation has already been inflicted by local people. There is a direct livelihood dependency and significant benefits from ecological tourism; and so any change to the ecosystem is considered a change to living conditions.

Affected people were not only disgruntled by the loss of their prized asset (the ecosystem), but also felt either under-compensated or overlooked in the process of beneficiation. Displaced people have been discontent as compensation did not match the value of the loss in cultivable and sacred land. Compensation amount ranged from 100 to 400 MGA (Malagasy Ariary - the local currency)/square metre while World Bank guidelines are close to 2,000 MGA/square metre of land ([Andrew Lees Trust, 2009](#)). Grievances related to undervaluation of mining land and the subsequent receipt of inadequate compensation were taken to court by locals, a case that was dismissed by the court six months prior to the protest ([The Telegraph, 2013](#)). This ruling has only escalated the dispute as people felt hard done by the lack of support from public authorities who have interest in the mine through the 20% share.



Impacts upon fishing industries

Those who rely on fishing have either seen their fishing stock reduced or denied access to fishing sites due to dam construction by the company (Seagle, 2013). The dam was constructed at the mouth of a River leading from Lake Ambavarano to the coast to supply fresh water for dredge mining and is considered by local fishermen as the main cause of reduced catch (Seagle, 2012). Fishing is one of the main activities in the area providing food security, job opportunity and income; and people fear of continued impact given the enormous amount of water ilmenite mining requires and the polluting effect on water sources. An assessment made by Friends of the Earth (2011) also emphasized impacts of the dam on reduction of tourism and transport obstruction.

The loss in cultivable land and fishing resources has been compounded by the lack of employment opportunities for locals. Many locals and in particular the youth have shown their disappointments at the limited employment opportunities and the hiring of many workers from other regions or even other countries (Harbinson, 2007). Local communities had high expectations in terms of employment and other benefits; however, a lack of transparency has left them with a sense of broken promises relative to their high expectations. Affected people lack advance knowledge and communication about the project depriving them from important information regarding the benefits and negative impacts of QMM operations. The resulting changes have created mistrust and social conflict.

Resolution Efforts

Given the strong connection between local livelihood and the environment especially cultivable land, forests and water resources and the water-intensive nature of the mine which requires massive land, conflict becomes a serious phenomenon that requires proactive mitigation planning. Most of the mitigation measures have been reactionary such as the use of military and police forces to respond to protests and threatening to suspend mining or altogether leave. Mitigation measures by QMM went further to address impact on livelihoods through provision of various forms of compensation such as technical and financial assistance for social and community development and an improved HR policy such as strengthening local capacities to prioritise local labour (Rio Tinto/QMM, 2009). Another measure to mitigate conflict involved a communication campaign funded by QMM and conducted by an NGO called Search for Common Ground to improve the relationship between negotiating parties and develop negotiation, conflict resolution and constructive communication capacity of stakeholders.

QMM environmental measures

As part of its environmental plan which responds to the Environmental Charter of 2004, QMM has set up environmental measures with the creation of conservation zone a priority. One major activity to rectify the environmental damage was a QMM program of planting fast-growing species in the areas where minerals have been exploited (Temple et al, 2012). While this program started two years prior to the major protest mentioned above and has been widespread, people in the area are far more concerned about the loss of their livelihood sources which affected agriculture and fishery. In particular, the impact on water supply which the mining operation requires throughout the mining cycle causing changes in flow and drainage patterns, siltation from increased sediment load of discharged process water, water table drawdown,

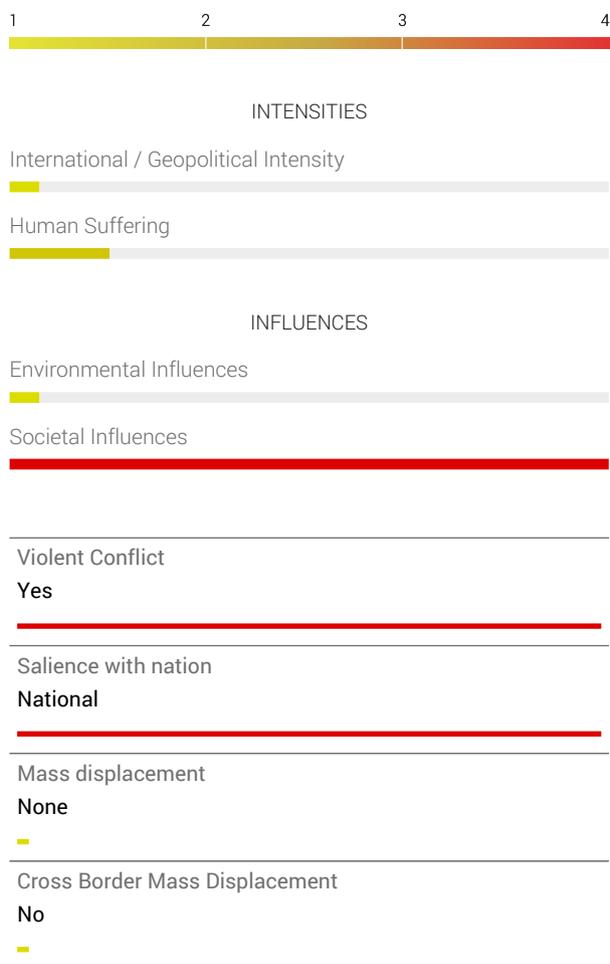


erosion and impacts on aquatic life (Hoagland, 2013). As such, general discontent about QMM project is likely to continue until a durable solution is implemented addressing these major livelihood impacts.

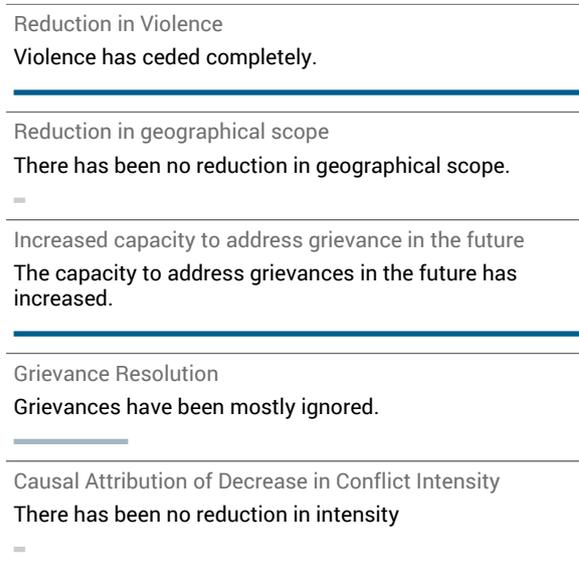
Minimization of future conflict

Future conflict might be at least minimized when a mechanism is put in place to ensure appropriate water management practice, compensation is carried out to not only cover temporary loss but also as an implementation tool for a long-term plan to provide sustainable livelihood. But all these can only be done through proactive and ongoing dialogue with the affected people, which is a realistic approach to avoid conflict. Due to insufficient open and balanced dialogue between QMM and local stakeholders, there is a lack of awareness of the social and environmental risks and balanced view of benefits (Harbinson, 2007). Therefore, affected communities need to be partners in decisions that affect them and consulted on a regular basis to raise their awareness about the actual risks and benefits and identify best mechanisms for conflict resolution, compromise, or mitigating negative impacts.

Intensities & Influences



Resolution Success





Entry Points for Resilience and Peace Building

Dialogue

1

A communication campaign funded by QMM and conducted by an NGO called Search for Common Ground aims to improve the relationship between conflict parties and develop negotiation, conflict resolution and constructive communication capacities of stakeholders.

Compensation

2

The Quebec Iron and Titanium Madagascar Minerals (QMM) Company has provided various forms of compensation such as technical and financial assistance for social and community development, and an improved human resources policy that strengthens local capacities to prioritise local labour. This has gone further to address the impact on livelihoods given that most of the mitigation measures so far have been reactionary, such as the use of military and police forces to respond to protests, and threats of suspend mining.

Environmental restoration & protection

2

QMM has created a conservation zone as part of its environmental plan.

Resources and Materials

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Further information

<https://factbook.ecc-platform.org/conflicts/socio-ecological-impacts-and-conflict-rio-tinto-s-qit-madagascar-minerals-qmm>