

Public Participation in Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (Esias) of Mining Projects: Perspectives and Highlights from the Senegal Case Study

Naby Souleymane Faye^{1,2,3,4*}, Patrice Brehmer^{3,4}, Adama Mbaye⁴, Kouakou Alphonse Yao², Bienvenu Sambou¹, Ahmed Amara Konaté⁵ & Diaka Sidibé⁶

¹Université Cheikh Anta Diop, UCAD, Institut des Sciences de l'Environnement, ISE, Dakar, Senegal

²Institut National Polytechnique Félix Houphouët-Boigny (INPHB), Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire

³IRD, Univ Brest, CNRS, Ifremer, LEMAR, CSRP, Dakar, Senegal

⁴ISRA, Institut Sénégalais de Recherches agricoles, CRODT, Centre de Recherches Océanographiques de Dakar-Thiaroye, Dakar, Senegal

⁵Laboratoire de Recherche Appliquée en Géoscience et Environnement, Institut Supérieur Mines et Géologie de Boké, Guinea

⁶Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur, de la Recherche scientifique et de l'Innovation, MESRSI, Guinea

*Corresponding Author

ABSTRACT

Major development projects, particularly mining, are regularly contested by the population because of the sometimes-harmful impacts on the biophysical and socio-economic environment of local communities. Environmental and social impact studies (ESIA), which should enable mitigation measures to be taken, are often considered to be biased and do not take into account all their impacts, for lack of real consultation with the populations. We were interested in the perceptions of ESIA by populations impacted by projects, targeting four ESIA carried out in Senegal. From the point of view of the populations, 91% of the people residing in the areas where the projects are located were not involved. The latter state that they did not participate in any phase of the ESIA. More specifically, 82% were not informed of the outfit a public restitution of ESIA validation. Public participation by the populations concerned is perceived as not considered in the ESIA. It seems appropriate to propose a formal procedure that can be understood by the populations in order to define, on the basis of logical criteria, the term "population" in ESIA, and to guarantee their participation and/or their effective representation. We also recommend simplified accessibility of the ESIA by the populations. The data collected and compiled during the ESIA should be made available to the national academic world and experts mandated by the population, when they have no strategic interest. Finally, the holding of ESIA public restitutions should be more transparent to guarantee the sustainability of the projects and their social acceptance.

Keywords: Environmental and social impact studies, Public participation, Sustainability.

