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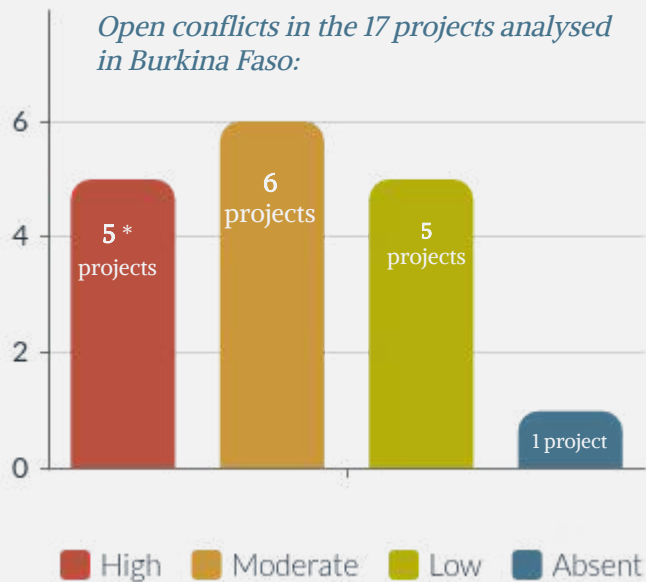
Conflict in the industrial mining sector in Burkina Faso

Role of environmental and social impact assessments



Introduction | Since the beginning of the 21st century, West Africa has experienced significant expansion in the mining sector. While this sector contributes substantially to the economies of countries like Burkina Faso, it also raises challenges. One major issue is open conflict surrounding industrial mines. Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) can help prevent and manage conflicts in the industrial mining sector. This case study shows that, for this purpose, it is recommended to involve all stakeholders and pay greater attention to social factors in ESIA. This requires an active role from all actors involved, including consulting firms, mining developers, civil society organizations, and the government.

Open conflicts in the 17 projects analysed in Burkina Faso:



** including the Houndé mining project*

Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA)

In Burkina Faso, the regulatory framework requires Environmental and Social Impact Assessments for industrial mining projects. The ESIA enables:

- the promoter to minimise negative environmental effects and maximise benefits;
- the public to better understand the project and its impacts on the environment and the population;
- the authority to make an informed decision regarding authorisation.

Environmental and Social Impact Assessments include stakeholder participation, analysis of impacts on the physical, biological and socioeconomic environment, and an environmental and social management plan (ESMP) for mitigating negative impacts and enhancing positive impacts. Key phases in ESIs are scoping, assessment, report review, and follow-up.

(Decree setting out the conditions and procedures for carrying out and validating the strategic environmental assessment, the study and the environmental and social impact statement. Official Journal No. 53 of 31 December 2015).

Conflicts in the mining sector in Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso is the fourth largest gold producer in Africa, with artisanal and industrial mining coexisting. Despite the legal and regulatory framework, the mining sector has experienced numerous conflicts. A mapping of 17 industrial mining projects shows that between 2009 and 2025, 16 projects experienced open conflicts. These conflicts fall into three levels of violence: high (mobilisations, destruction, loss of life), moderate (protests and fires, without loss of life), and low (peaceful mobilisations). It is primarily the high and moderate conflicts that have the most significant impacts. The main causes of these conflicts are related to the expropriation of sites belonging to artisanal and small-scale miners (ASM), to unemployment, and to land compensation.

Conflicts related to the Houndé industrial mining project

The Houndé mining project, owned by the Canadian company Endeavour Mining, is located in the Guiriko region of western Burkina Faso. Since 2016, the project has been experiencing several open conflicts of varying levels, both high and moderate, stemming from the three causes of conflict mentioned above. The first cause, related to the tense coexistence between industrial mining and ASM, focuses on the lack of access to gold-bearing areas, tailings piles, and ore waste, as well as the lack of compensation for investments made by ASM. Conflicts related to the second cause, unemployment, primarily concern the low employability of those affected by the project and the lack of transparency in access to local markets and services. Finally, disputes over compensation relate to the low level of compensation for agricultural and pastoral land lost to the industrial mine, the lack of formalised commitments regarding the extension of compensation over the mine's lifespan, and the disparity in compensation amounts.

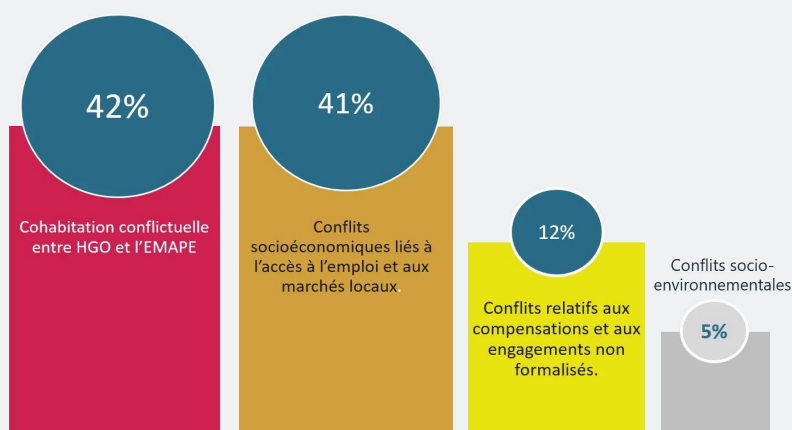
Key elements of the ESIA for Houndé as a tool for managing and preventing conflict

The Houndé mining project is accompanied by several Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIAs). These function as an important framework for preventing and managing conflicts, but have significant shortcomings.

In terms of participation, stakeholder engagement plans include a diverse range of stakeholders, and the complaints management mechanism is functional. However, key actors are lacking, and the participation of artisanal miners' organisations and NGOs such as those focused on human rights and women in the mining sector remains marginal. Furthermore, the capacity of project-affected persons to participate meaningfully in the ESIA process remains limited.

In terms of impact analysis – measures to address negative impacts and enhance positive impacts – key elements related to the three main causes of high and moderate level conflicts are as follows:

- regarding artisanal and small-scale mining, compensation for improvised work shelters is well-addressed in the project. The main challenges are the lack of compensation for investment losses suffered by artisanal miners and the limited access to resources during company exploration and exploitation.



Responses to a survey on the main causes of open conflicts in the Houndé mining project

- regarding unemployment, encouraging purchases on the local market, the introduction of employment quotas and institutional consultation structures are positive aspects of the project. However, the setting and transparent application of indicative quotas in local job vacancies, market offers and contracts, as well as the handling of complaints regarding specific commitments, remain challenges.
- regarding compensation, cash payments are being made and livelihood restoration plans are in place. These are good measures to mitigate negative impacts of the project. However, land-for-land compensation and the formalisation of commitments regarding the duration of land compensation are still lacking. Ensuring the inclusion of female farmers and miners remains a major challenge in the compensation negotiation process.

The environmental impacts on the communities living near the mining project are relatively well addressed through water well drilling projects, road irrigation, and initial physicochemical analyses for environmental quality monitoring. However, the closure of some wells, the limited technical capacity of the monitoring teams, and complaints related to tailings spills and flooding of adjacent fields are cause for concern.



Recommendations

For mining developers:

- involve artisanal and small-scale miners and women as stakeholders from the project design stage;
- translate the promises made during public consultations into concrete actions during the implementation of the project;
- implement in a transparent manner the mitigation and enhancement measures, including those relating to quotas and compensation;
- strengthen monitoring and management mechanisms and the handling of complaints throughout the mining project cycle.

For consultancy firms:

- ensure the engagement of all stakeholders in all stages of an ESIA;
- improve the traceability, completeness and integration of concerns arising from public consultations into ESIA reports and resettlement action plans;
- better integrate socio-economic issues into ESIA processes.

For the environmental assessment agency:

- verify the commitment of all stakeholders in all stages of the ESIA;
- work with women's organisations to support the integration of gender considerations;
- ensure that the social environment is taken into account in all stages of ESIA, including framing, review, and follow-up;
- strengthen monitoring mechanisms.

For civil society organisations:

- strengthen the capacities of people affected by the project in order to better contribute to the ESIA process and associated negotiations;
- consolidate the effective participation of people affected by the project throughout the mining project cycle;
- ensure the proper implementation of measures to mitigate and improve the human environment.

Government and politics can complement the role of other stakeholders by:

- consolidating consultation, land negotiation, and communication mechanisms to ensure clear information and inclusive participation;
- accompanying the employment, compensation, and livelihood restoration measures provided for in the documents;
- improving the handling of complaints around specific commitments such as compliance with quotas for jobs and local procurement.

This is a summary of a diagnostic study on the potential role of Environmental and Social Impact Assessment in managing conflicts in the industrial mining sector in Burkina Faso. The study was carried out at the request of the Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment (NCEA) in collaboration with the National Agency for Environmental Assessments (ANEVE) in Burkina Faso. The report (in French) is available on [this web page](#).

Research : M. Hermann Konkobo

Cover illustration : Aleid Landeweerd, 2026

Contact

Joyce Kortlandt

Senior Advisor Environmental and Social Assessment

jkortlandt@eia.nl | www.eia.nl



Netherlands Commission for
Environmental Assessment