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Environmental Governance Programme (EGP)

Environmental Monitoring, Part II: Can participatory environmental monitoring committees empower citizens to shape decision-making?



Knowledge extracted from webinar and Goxi forum Discussions

1. Emerging Critical Issues

Community based environmental monitoring committees (PEMCs)

By providing a mechanism for citizen participation in assessing environmental information, PEMCs offer several benefits, including building citizen participation in decision-making, reinforcing environmental compliance and providing an opportunity to prevent conflict at an early stage.

This webinar complimented Environmental Monitoring Part 1: The fundamentals and access to information, and focused specifically on the work of community based environmental monitoring committees (PEMCs). The PEMCs can be a community-based initiative, or in other instances are promoted by mining companies and regional governments. They are tasked with monitoring the ongoing environmental impacts of mining activities.

The goal of the webinar was for those participating to acquire a better understanding of how these committees work, what their role is, and what some of their strengths are, as well as the challenges they face. The question of whether the committees can empower citizens to shape decision-making on mining in their areas was addressed. Cases from Peru and Mongolia formed the basis of the discussion and sharing of experiences.

UNDP Project: Participatory Environmental Governance for Sustainable Natural Resources Management in the Latin American and Caribbean Region

The aim of this project is to identify the parameters and context under which PMECs can be created and provide examples of good practices related to PMECs in 6 Latin American countries. (Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, and Peru). Participatory workshops in target countries will be conducted to share country experiences related to these committees. More info here:

<http://www.latinamerica.undp.org/content/rblac/en/home/ourwork/democratic-governance/environment-and-natural-capital.html>

Community based monitoring systems

The community must be able to act as a watchdog of the mine, in their attempt to monitor and control environmental impact. The community needs to know exactly what happens inside their territory. One of the main ways to avoid conflict. Communities can play a significant role when carrying out water, air and health monitoring. Women should be on the frontline to carry out monitoring because they have more contact with water and with children (who are the first to be affected) and they are more sensitive to social changes. In addition, social monitoring - which refers to analyzing how the mine impacts the social life and how the local community perceives this - can be an important tool to empower communities. This type of

monitoring can be done through community mapping, through interviews or through Human Rights Impact Assessment studies.

The transparency and the communication of the whole monitoring system is a key element to avoid corruption and a rise of internal and external conflicts. Every monitoring activity must be communicated to the whole community through meetings, events of media (community radios play an important role in this process). It is key that the monitoring committee involve the whole community periodically otherwise it can be seen as an entity detached from the community itself and therefore increase internal divisions.

A community-based monitoring system can prevent conflicts because it:



2. Public authorities and other actors sharing experiences

Peru Case Study:

Participatory Environmental and Social Monitoring and Surveillance Committees were created to prevent conflict in Peru over water issues between communities and mining companies. In some cases, these monitoring committees have contributed to resolving disputes among the stakeholders (community, mining company, and state). *Pronaturaleza*, a private Peruvian non-profit organization - whose experience goes back to the year 2002, when *Pronaturaleza* began collaborating with companies in the hydrocarbon sector - shared their institutional learning from the past 15 years in assisting community environmental monitoring processes, in the field of extractive industries.

What?

Participation in the **Camisea Gas Project**, one of the largest extractive investments in the country, included the design and implementation of three monitoring programs at different times and areas:

- **Community Environmental Monitoring Program of the Lower Urubamba (PMAC BU)** for Lots 88 and 56 operated by the Camisea consortium led by Pluspetrol Corporation. The PMAC in Lower Urubamba began its implementation in June 2002 and involves 22 monitors from nine native communities and two rural settlements, as well as a coordination committee made up of 6 members representing indigenous federations CECONAMA, COMARU and FECONAYY. It is the first community-monitoring program that was created in the framework of hydrocarbon activity in the country and has become a benchmark for citizen monitoring in these types of operations.
- **The High Urubamba Community Environmental Monitoring Program (PMAC AU)** for the Jungle Gas Transportation System operated by Transportadora del Gas del Perú (TGP) started in 2004 and became the first monitoring program for the operation of a pipeline in the Peruvian high forest. It is made up of 20 monitors from nine communities of the Matsigenka ethnic group and a coordinating committee represented by the COMARU federation, which monitor the Right of Way of the gas pipeline that passes through the territories of the native communities.
- **The Participatory Socio-Environmental Monitoring Program (PMSAP)** for the gas pipeline operated by Peru LNG started in July 2008 and is the first participatory monitoring experience in the construction and operation phase of a gas pipeline in the Andean and coastal areas of the country. For the construction phase, it involved 84 monitors (belonging to 35 rural communities of Ayacucho and Huancavelica, rural properties and population centers of Ica). Currently, in the operation stage, 34 local monitors participate in the program.

How?

- In order to carry out the monitoring programs, Pronaturaleza developed different methodological and operational tools to strengthen the technical capacities of the men and women who represent their communities as monitors. The aim is to ensure that monitoring actions are based on technical arguments and objectives.
- Through this, the monitors develop the skills to verify whether the environmental and social commitments made by the companies have been fulfilled.
- And, in this way, conservation and the management of the natural and cultural heritage is sought through the reconciliation of corporate interests with those of local populations, ensuring that the highest environmental and social quality standards are met.

What were the results?

- Through this work, indigenous peoples, peasant and rural settlement communities are better informed about the work carried out by the companies in their territories and have established a relationship of trust between the company and the local inhabitants based on efficient communication mechanisms, thus avoiding possible social conflicts.
- It has been possible for communities and towns to increase their environmental awareness and to establish favorable conditions to implement environmental education programs, solid waste management and even in some cases, programs for the recovery of endangered species with the involvement of the local population, thus enhancing a greater exercise of environmental citizenship.
- During the past 15 years, Pronatura has seen that the monitoring has benefited the communities in many ways. One of the most important is the reduction of the real risk to their lives and property due to the early warning mechanism that can prevent accidents.
- Because the community monitors collect the information, community members have greater confidence that the risks to them or their assets are being objectively communicated to the communities, the state and the company, so that these risks are taken care of and controlled.
- Benefits extend beyond those to the communities to all other actors, including companies, government and society in general. Recognizing this, sectors such as Energy and Mines and Environment have given norms incorporating the experiences of monitoring programs into public policies. In recent years, parliamentary groups and civil society actors have proposed bills to strengthen these processes.

Mongolia Case Study:

Mongolia is a mineral rich country where mining is very important to the economy. Mining accounts for over 80 percent of total exports. However, the increase in mining

comes at a significant cost to the country's fragile natural environment. Mining exploitation has led to rapid soil erosion and degradation of both pastureland and waterways. In particular, the Gobi Desert has a very unique ecology, which is home to many endangered plants and animals. The real challenge in coming years is how mining will develop in the Gobi Desert with limited water resources.

What is SESD?

The Stakeholders' Engagement for Sustainable Development (SESD) is a national, not for profit, non-governmental organization. The SESD was established in September 2016 to continue good community environmental practices that came out as a result of a six year "Engaging Stakeholders for Environmental Conservation (ESEC)" project implemented by The Asia Foundation Mongolia in partnership with Mongolian Government agencies and institutions. The SESD's main mission is to promote collaboration between different stakeholders in responsible resource use and to contribute to local sustainable development.

What are Local Multi-stakeholders' Committee (LMC)?

The establishment of the LMCs created a forum for local participation in monitoring mines. LMCs are comprised of mining companies, local government and communities. The main objective of the LMC is to ensure that mining companies, local community and the government come together, have meetings, discuss local environmental issues and find local solutions. In this context, LMCs ensure that stakeholders address local environmental issues (e.g. rehabilitation of land, water management, etc.) and ensure funds provided by mining companies contribute to sub-province development. In many cases, a first joint activity of the LMC is to organize a mining visit by members of the LMC. These visits are instrumental to building trust between the local community and the mining company.

What are Annual Action Plans?

LMCs develop a yearly action plan, with clear responsibilities about who is doing what and how funds are allocated. However, yearly action plans were too short-term and addressed mostly immediate social needs (e.g. companies providing funds for awards for the local festivals, or paying tuition or health fees to local vulnerable families) but they could not really contribute to the sub-province's long-term prosperity and sustainability. Moreover, yearly plans of action did not capture the cultural and historical values of the local community.

What are Environmental Management Plans (EMP)?

Due to the shortcomings of the annual action plans, a very recent development is the creation of Environmental Management Plans (EMPs). These are mid-term 3 to 5 year plans, that capture the different relationships and roles of all stakeholders and take into account all natural resources of the entire sub-province area. In contrast to the LMC's, and where annual action plans focus on implementing agreed activities and

lack long-term perspectives, the EMP actively promotes community participation in the development of the plan.

LMCs have facilitated the development and implementation of Environmental Management Plans. EMPS map out environmental stakeholders, identify the environmental impacts and potential conflicts thereby increasing the understanding of local stakeholders on environmental, and socio-cultural issues. With EMP's implementation, stakeholders' cooperation increases, and this eventually leads to more transparency and conflict prevention.

Best practice - Case of Ulziit Sub-province, Dundgobi Province

- Ulziit soum is a Mongolian sub province, where a lot of gold and fluorspar is being mined. According to the Mineral Resources and Petroleum Authority of Mongolia, 228 mining licenses (91 exploitations, 137 exploration) were issued. But only 34 mining companies registered with the local authority in the area, and only one mining company has an agreement with local Government.
- The soum level environmental management plan (EMP) is being developed for that area. The main goal of the EMP is to manage natural resources in a sustainable manner. EMP serves as a mid-term planning tool. The EMP identifies the main economic activities and the environmental impacts associated to those activities. Furthermore, it outlines the inter-relationships between relevant environmental stakeholders who use common resources and identify the responsibilities of different types of stakeholders, thus preventing potential conflicts. All stakeholders, in particular local citizens, define the vision and mission through a number of consultative meetings.

What were the results?

- LMC helped to solve the environmental degradation that was caused by mining when land was abandoned from mining in the early 1990s. The degradation of the land caused a lot of health and safety issues. Through the LMC the government allocated funds for an environmental rehabilitation of degraded land and Local Artisanal and Small-scale Mining (ASM) communities successfully carried out the rehabilitation.
- LMC helped to address issues related with ASMs. ASMs got organized, registered, and paid social and health insurances and income taxes.
- ASM got permission to mine fluorspar. LMC facilitated a process so that mining companies agreed to buy the fluorspar for a better price from local communities including ASMs.

Recent Results

The multi-stakeholder process in Mongolia led to the following concrete results:

- Information on local natural resources and its use is available to local stakeholders: mapping mining land areas, water resources, underground water wheels, herder's winter and spring shelters, historical heritages.
- EMP is reflected in a newly elected Governor's action plan.
- To establish a practice of responsible resources' use: a "hunting zone" was determined and local community partnership was established to use income from hunting to increase local conservation.
- An agreement was made with a mining company "Magic Bridge" on implementing environmental and social responsibilities.

Lessons Learned

- Changes in the Government after the election require more capacity building for newly elected officials, especially when they are part of the LMC.
- Continuous advocacy of the Environmental Management Plan (EMP) among the general public is needed to implement the EMP activities.
- The support of different levels of government is essential on several levels: The Provincial Government's support level; the environmental departments' acceptance, and the support and encouragement across government are essential elements for a successful implementation of the EMP.
- Funds to implement must be secured.

3. Questions from Webinars and GOXI Audience

- What is community based, participatory environmental monitoring? How does it contribute to addressing environmental issues for communities affected by mining?
- What are the roles, achievements, strengths, and weaknesses of Participatory Environmental Monitoring Committees?
- What are the key challenges and opportunities to strengthen these committees?
- How do we define or understand "success" for these committees?
- Are you aware of any experiences where the work of committees, including their training for monitoring and the interpretation of results obtained, is financed by an investment fund?
- In black water, particularly in the Amazon rainforest, the composition of the water is modified and shallow bodies of water no longer have a current, leaving these waters vulnerable to insects such as anopheles and malaria vectors. These insects promote epidemics of disease. How can that be stopped or prevented with specific laws?

- Do you think the scope of the committees should consider the environmental conditions (for instance the Amazon near a natural reserve is different from semi-arid areas), when evaluating how the committee would work, including the committee's internal composition, budget and local strategies and plans?
- Is there a constructive role for the press in helping to prevent environmental conflicts from escalating, while helping to ensure transparency and fairness for communities?
- What is fluorspar, what is it used for and what is its stock market value?
- How important is it to consider a gender approach to promote the equal participation of women in these committees? And in what specific way can the gender approach be implemented in the work of the committees?