

Stakeholder views on Policy Options for Managing Public Health Impacts in Mining Areas

preliminary findings from a Q-methodology study in Burkina Faso

Background information

In summer 2021, the governance work stream of HIA4SD project carried out a [Q-methodology study \(Q-study\)](#) to identify and analyse how different stakeholders from government, civil society, and the private sector think about various policy options to improve public health in the context of large-scale mining projects. A first analysis of the collected data revealed areas where these different stakeholders tend to agree and disagree with regard to various policy options. The preliminary findings were discussed at the [multi-stakeholder workshop](#) that took place in Ouagadougou on 30 July 2021.

General observations

A cursory analysis of the Q-study data revealed unanimous support for strengthening public health considerations in large-scale mining among all participants from the different stakeholder groups included, i.e. the Ministry of Mines and Quarries (MMCE), Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of the Environment, Green Economy and Climate Change (MEEVCC), the private sector, and civil society organizations. Participants from these stakeholder groups share a general consensus that public health is not sufficiently considered in industrial mining today.

There is a broad agreement that the protection and promotion of public health should see the public sector in the lead whereby the Burkinabè government is to provide guidance. Managing public health impacts in mining areas should not be left to the discretion of companies. Voluntary corporate social responsibility (CSR) measures can be supplementary but must not be the bedrock of public health protection.

Preliminary findings on policy options

Monitoring and sanctions

- ⇒ Across stakeholder groups, study participants gather behind the idea that **monitoring of public health** in mining areas needs to be strengthened. Monitoring is seen as a public task that is not to be left to companies – a view that is also supported by private sector representatives.
- ⇒ The **collection of baseline data** and regular monitoring of public health impacts by government institutions emerged as one of the most supported measures. Several participants from different stakeholder groups have also called for the creation of a monitoring unit within the MoH.
- ⇒ Preliminary findings indicate a robust consensus for the establishment of a **clear sanctions framework** as an important policy tool to ensure compliance. Individual voices from civil society point to challenges of dependency and political willingness and call for the support of NGOs as watchdogs.

Regulatory requirements

- ▷ Preliminary findings suggest that there is broad albeit not unanimous support among participants from all stakeholder groups to **include public health issues in the management plan**. This policy proposal is also supported by private sector representatives.
- ▷ Stakeholders do not reveal a clear preference whether a separate Health Impact Assessment (HIA) should be required or whether the existing Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) requirements should be amended to include public health issues. Both policy options can be considered during a policy dialogue on strengthening public health in large-scale mining projects.

Capacity-building

- ▷ Building up government capacity to address public health impacts in large-scale mining areas is regarded as important by most study participants. There is broad agreement that **capacity-building is required to improve monitoring** of public health impacts. Yet, there is no clear agreement in which institutions capacity-building should take place.
- ▷ Individual voices point out that, in some areas, **existing capacity is not fully used** today. Including different stakeholders into training efforts could improve the quality of cooperation between institutions.

Strengthening coordination

- ▷ All stakeholder groups view improving coordination as relevant but in different areas. Most support gathers the proposal that **mining companies coordinate and consult with local health sector representatives and affected communities** on an ongoing basis.
- ▷ Some stakeholders see it as crucial to **establish a formal coordination mechanism** to align priorities between companies and the public sector as well as among different government institutions and administrative levels. Others, especially civil society organizations, view it as an important channel to access information.

Increasing transparency

- ▷ The majority of stakeholders calls for **more transparency of public health data** in the licensing process and during mining operations.
- ▷ The preliminary findings indicate that there unanimous support among participants from all stakeholder groups for public **dissemination of the results of impact assessments** as well as broad support for the publication of health impact monitoring findings.