

Drechsel, Franza; Engels, Bettina; Schäfer, Mirka

Research Report

"The mines make us poor": Large-scale mining in Burkina Faso

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“The mines make us poor”: Large-scale mining in Burkina Faso

Franza Drechsel, Bettina Engels & Mirka Schäfer

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“The mines make us poor”:

Large-scale mining in Burkina Faso

Franza Drechsel, Bettina Engels & Mirka Schäfer

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1 INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, Burkina Faso has seen a boom in mining activities. Since 2007, 15 industrial mines have been opened, three have already closed and one is under maintenance. Proponents of industrial resource extraction predict 'modernisation' and 'development'. Promises of formal jobs in the mines, electrification, roads and investment in health and education infrastructure are made under the assumption that the national economy will benefit from resource extraction. However, the case of Burkina Faso demonstrates that for a significant part of the population, foreign investment does not necessarily result in the improvement of living conditions. On the contrary, populations affected by large-scale mining are frequently confronted with numerous disadvantages.

Though mining activities generate state revenue to a certain degree, there is no guarantee that this money is spent to the benefit of those affected. A new mine is installed on land that was previously used for farming, cattle herding or artisanal mining. A concession also comprises land that people have been living on or where spiritual sites are located. Mining companies offer some kind of compensation, but access to fields and common land for pastoralism, as well as access to medicinal plants, firewood, and sometimes also water, is restricted. Artisanal mining is generally prohibited, which deprives local populations of an important source of income. Mining also has far-reaching impacts on the environment, such as site degradation, destruction of vegetation,



Open pit of the Bissa mine (Photo: Franza Drechsel, 2017)

the disappearance of native fauna, and the contamination of surface and groundwater. These environmental impacts have repercussions for the surrounding population and their living conditions. Thus, those affected by the opening of a mine often take a different perspective than the national government or multinational companies.

In this report, we put in the centre the views of those affected by the industrial mines in Burkina Faso. In six of the twelve active mining areas, residents of the communities next to the mines were interrogated through questionnaires, and semi-structured and narrative interviews. We asked them about the advantages and disadvantages they see regarding the installation of the mine, how they consider their relationship to the operator of the mine, and what they demand from state institutions as well as the mine management. The analysis is enriched by information obtained during fieldtrips, and from media reports, publications and other material.

Claims include jobs for local workers, compensation, non-damage of cultural sites such as mosques or graveyards, the approval of artisanal mining, as well as investment in the physical and social infrastructure, e.g. paved roads, schools, health and women's centres. Moreover, people suffer from disrespectful interactions both with the mining companies and public institutions. This stands in sharp contrast to the image put forward by proponents of industrial mining.

The report is structured as follows: After providing a general overview of the mining situation in Burkina Faso, we will take a closer look at the different contexts of the five gold mines (Bissa, Essakane, Karma, Taparko and Youga) and the one zinc mine (Perkoa) where residents were interviewed. This is followed by methodological considerations and the actual analysis.

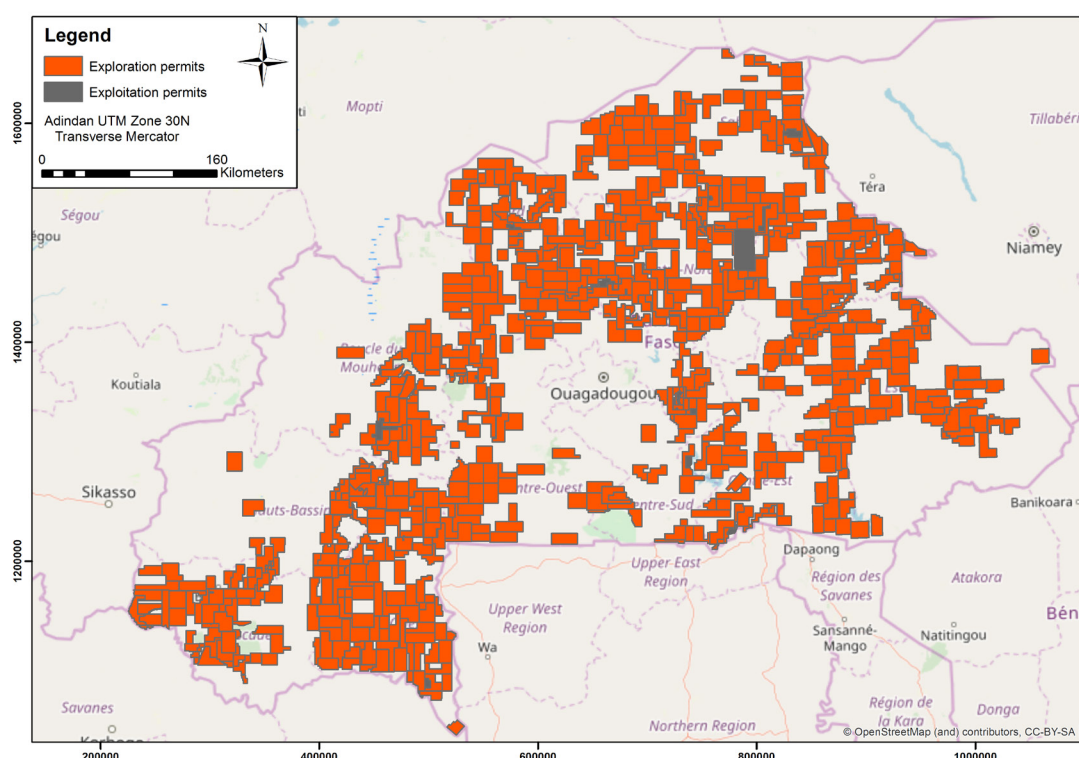
2 MINING IN BURKINA FASO

A key characteristic of gold mining in Burkina Faso is the tradition of artisanal mining, locally known as *orpaillage*, which began long before colonisation (Werthmann 2007). In contrast, the twelve currently active industrial mines—eleven gold mines and one zinc mine—all started production in the last twelve years (Web Map 2018). Industrial mining is thus a relatively new phenomenon in Burkina Faso. Today, the country is the fastest growing gold producer in Africa, and currently the fifth largest on the continent (after South Africa, Ghana, Tanzania and Mali; Metals Focus 2017).

In late 2018, exploration and exploitation permits for industrial mining have been issued for almost half of the surface of the country (DGCM 2018; Harris/Miller 2015: 15-17; MME 2014: 32). More than 700 exploration licences exist, including 99 that have been granted in March 2018 (OCDE 2018). Since 2009, gold has been Burkina Faso's most important export product, exceeding cotton: 59% of the total export earnings and 16% of tax revenue for the country come from gold extraction (Moore

Stephens 2018: Tables 10 and 12). In 2017, mining accounted for 8.3% of the country's GDP (Nabolé 2018).

The attractiveness of the Burkinabé mining sector for multinational corporations lies, among other reasons, in the comparably low taxation by international standards. Until an adjustment in June 2015, the corporate tax for the mining industry was set at 20%, which was less than that of other sectors and significantly less than in most other African countries (for example, 30% in Sierra Leone and Tanzania, 35% in Ghana; KPMG 2018). In 2018, it was set at 28% (for details on mining taxes in Burkina Faso, see Dorin 2017). Burkina Faso joined the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) in 2008 as an effort to increase financial transparency and accountability in the mining sector, and received full membership status as a 'compliant country' in 2013.



Exploration and exploitation permits for mining in Burkina Faso. (Source: DGCM 2018)

2.1 The legal situation of industrial mining in Burkina Faso

According to Burkinabé national law, all land, including subsoil resources, belongs to the state. Mining concessions are only given to a Burkinabé legal person, namely a company established under national law. An industrial mine is thus always operated by a Burkinabé company, of which the state holds a 10% share. Usually, the remaining 90% belong to a multinational company.

The first regulation of legal titles in mining and a law on investment were passed in 1993. In 1997, the review of this regulation fed into the first mining law, or *code minier*, a consequence of the economic measures of structural adjustment that pushed for a liberalisation of the mining business. Private economic mining activities were hence permitted and encouraged (Gueye 2001; Luning 2008: 390). The reform of the *code minier* in 2003 re-regulated the taxes and tariffs for the sector in order to make the Burkinabé mining industry more attractive to foreign investment.

On 26 June 2015, the government once again passed a reform of the mining law, against the backdrop of its experiences with active mines, and mines that had closed down. This new law is currently in the process of being implemented. Contrary to the former mining laws, the new mining code is oriented towards generating state revenues through mining, especially via a newly introduced Mining Fund for Local Development (*Fonds Minier de Développement Local*, FMDL; Décret No. 2017-0024 on 23 January 2017). In addition to the regular royalties and taxes, mining companies are supposed to pay 1% of their monthly turnover into the fund. Moreover, 20% of the state revenue from the surface tax will be added to the fund (Hubert 2018; Kaboré 2016). The FMDL is supposed to be collected at the national level and redistributed to the municipalities: 50% is to be paid to the municipalities in the immediate vicinity of mining areas, 25% will be distributed among the municipalities and the regions in the mining area,

and a further 25% will go to all municipalities in the country (Kaboré 2017). However, until today, the fund is not in operation, as not all of the required by-laws have yet been passed.

The introduction of the 2015 mining code, and particularly of the FMDL, was the result of long-lasting civil society campaigns for a more just distribution of the state revenues generated from the industrial mines (Engels 2018). In the current process of implementation, mining companies use all possible means to bypass the new code, e.g. by stating that their mining conventions or contracts stem from a period when the old mining code was in force, and thus the new code does not apply to them. Civil society organisations are therefore continuing to demand the due implementation of the 2015 mining code. Furthermore, civil society groups argue in favour of close state control of the mining companies, for fair indemnity within a national compensation scheme, and for higher state revenues that should in turn be adequately distributed.

2.2 Land acquisition

In Burkina Faso, the expropriation of people from their land for the purpose of mining is legally possible. However, mining companies usually need to produce a number of documents when they apply for a mining licence, among them an environmental and social impact assessment study. This includes an estimation of the effects of the mine on the environment, such as possible groundwater contamination, air pollution, and repercussions for the soil, animals, plants etc. Moreover, fields and communal land in the area where the mine is to be installed must be assessed for their value, in order to determine the appropriate compensation. In the process, those who stand to be affected should be informed about the plan to install a new industrial mine in the area, and the company is obliged to organise any necessary resettlements of residents on or close to the mining concession.

According to Burkinabé law, mining companies have to pay “just indemnity” to the affected population, namely to land owners and farmers (Loi No. 036-2015/CNT, Articles 123, 128; Décret No. 2017-0035, Article 9.3). However, legal documents do not specify the modalities, amounts and time periods of compensation, which thus remain open to negotiation. According to international standards (IFC 2012), a field lost to the mine should be compensated by a new field as fertile as, or even more so than, the previous one. However, residents state that land is virtually always compensated by payments instead of providing substitute cultivation areas. Farmers report having been paid between 300,000 and 500,000 CFA Francs (approximately €450 to €765) per hectare per year for a period of five years (in the case of the Karma gold mine, even for only three years) without renewal, even though the construction and production phase of a mine usually lasts 15 to 20 years. The compensation of trees and other investments normally takes the form of a onetime lump sum (e.g. of €15 to €30 per tree).

2.3 Artisanal gold mining in Burkina Faso

In 2017, more than 70 percent of Burkina Faso's population lived in rural areas (World Bank 2018) and depended mainly on subsistence agriculture and livestock farming. Another important source of income is artisanal gold mining. While some live exclusively from *orpaillage* and related activities, for many it is one of several livelihood activities. Artisanal miners, or *orpailleurs*, extract gold by digging holes into the ground. The pits are often 20 to 50 metres—sometimes even up to 100 metres—deep. The *orpailleurs* use ropes to descend into the pits and work with rudimentary tools to extract potentially gold-bearing ore.

In a multi-stage process, the ore is ground by motor-driven mills or by hand, then washed and sieved through cloth. The separation of the gold

from the ore is finally achieved using mercury and sometimes cyanide (Tschakert/Singha 2007).

The number of artisanal gold mining sites in Burkina Faso is estimated to be more than 1,000. Of these sites, only 159 have a concession permit (AN 2016: 2, 24); all other sites operate without concessions. Nevertheless, hundreds of thousands of people work in these mines. The concessions for artisanal mining—when they exist—are mainly in the hands of national ‘Big Men’, primarily influential Burkinabé businesspeople. The concessionaire and the owners of the pits make the largest profits in artisanal gold mining.

Despite the fact that artisanal mining is by and large an informal activity, and is undertaken under precarious conditions with high economic and health risks, it nevertheless offers a considerable number of people a livelihood. Besides those that work in or on the pits, numerous other people—men and women of all ages as well as children and youths—are involved in processing the artisanally mined gold, or in other work and care that is required to keep the sites running (such as the sale of water, food and products for daily needs, as well as other activities). Several thousand people live and work at some of the largest extraction sites, and some sites exist for years or even decades (Guéniat/White 2015; Mégret 2008; Werthmann 2010).

The boom of industrial mines in Burkina Faso has direct effects on *orpaillage* as a livelihood activity. The Burkinabé mining law unambiguously give precedence to industrial mining (Loi No. 036-2015/CNT, Article 73). Where an industrial mine is installed, artisanal mining is prohibited as long as the operator does not dedicate a part to the *orpailleurs*.

2.4 Industrial and artisanal mining compared

In 2017, 45.8 tons of gold were produced in Burkina Faso (Nabolé 2018)—a significant increase compared to 2016, when 38.53 tons of gold were produced, of which 38.26 tons were mined industrially and 0.204 tons artisanally (DGMGC 2017), and a continuation of the trend of increasing gold production in the country. The scale of artisanal gold production is, however, certainly significantly greater: a recent study by the national institute of statistics and demography estimates a value of 9.5 tons for 2016 (MEF 2017). A report by the Swiss non-governmental organisation *Berne Declaration* reckons that at least seven tons a year of artisanally mined gold does not appear in the statistics, because it is smuggled overland into neighbouring Togo and from there into Europe, in particular destined for Switzerland (Guéniat/White 2015: 3).

In any case, the production output of the two different forms of mining does not reflect the rate of employment: while the industrial mines in Burkina

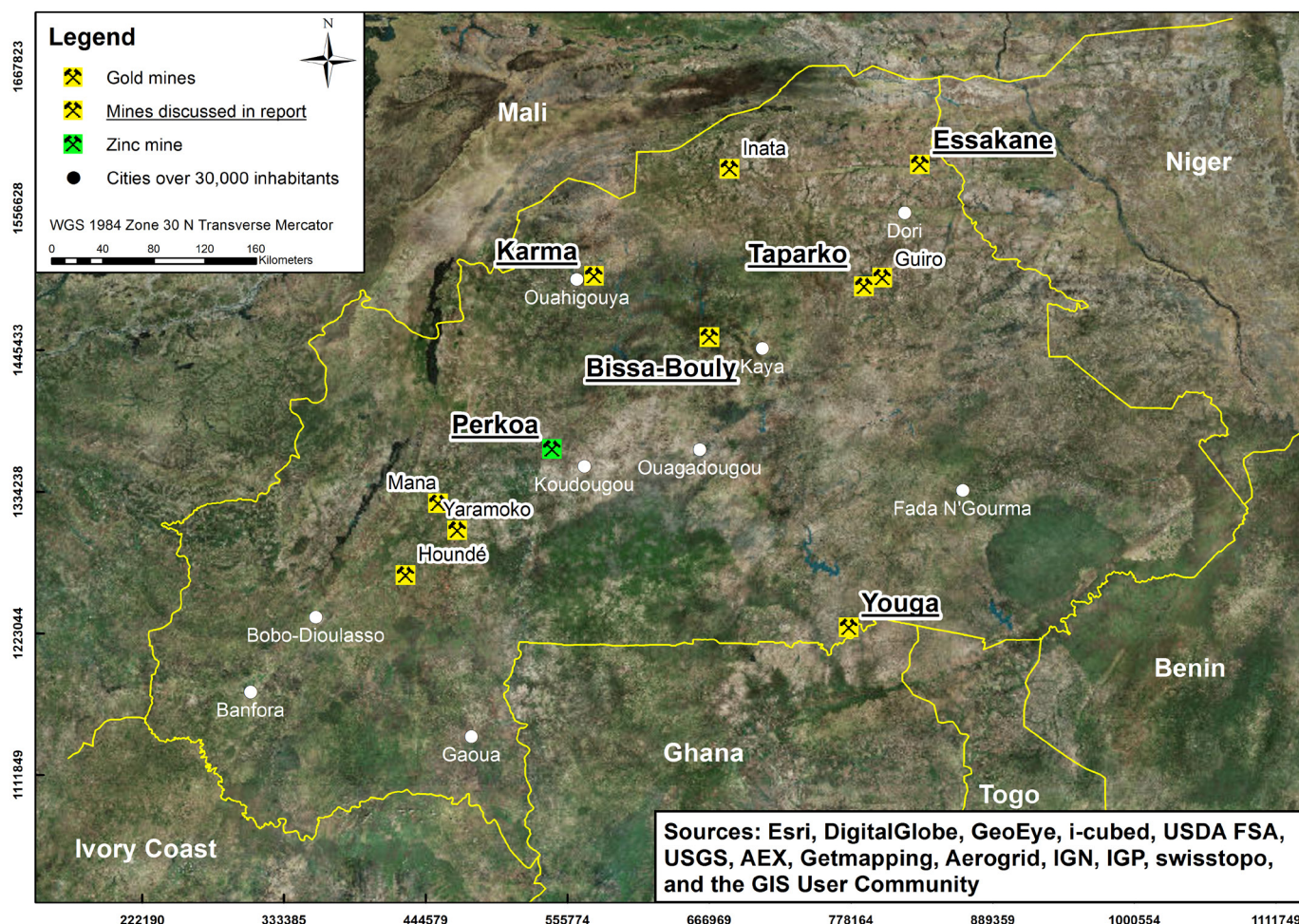
Faso directly employed 9,651 persons in 2017—including 9,017 Burkinabé, of which a large majority works in low qualified and badly paid positions (AN 2016: 47, Kaboré 2018)—at least 1.2 million people live from artisanal gold mining (Chouli 2014: 29; Guéniat/White 2015; Werthmann 2017: 418).

*Artisanal mining site near Gaoua, South Western Burkina Faso
(Photo: Bettina Engels, 2017)*



3 CONTEXT OF THE SIX INDUSTRIAL MINES UNDER SURVEY

Overview of active industrial mines in Burkina Faso ¹



This survey focuses on six of the country's twelve currently active mines, five gold mines and one zinc mine. Before analysing the preoccupations of the affected communities, the six mines under survey are presented, including the social and geographical context.

The mining sites were selected on the basis of different criteria: since most industrial mines in Burkina Faso are gold mines, we focused on these in our research, though we also included the only zinc mine, Perkoa. We have chosen the largest mines (Bissa-Bouly and Essakane), as well as the longest running mine that is still active today (Taparko).

Since the conflict around the Karma mine was very prevalent in the Burkinabé media, Karma was included in the survey, too.

¹ The Boungou gold mine, which started production in September 2018, is not included in the map.

NAME	MINERAL	OPERATOR	FORMER OWNERS	OWNER (COMPANY)	SIZE	START OF CONSTRUCTION	START OF PRODUCTION	OUTPUT IN 2017
TAPARKO	Gold	Société des Mines de Taparko SA (SOMITA)	—	Nordgold B.V. (Russia)	unknown	2005	07/2007	108.2 koz
YOUGA	Gold	Burkina Mining Company SA	2007-2010 Etruscan Resources Inc. (Canada) 2010-2016 Endeavour Mining Corporation (Canada) 2016-2017 MNG Gold A.S. (Turkey)	Avesoro Resources Inc. (Canada)	29 km ²	2005	03/2008	115.9 koz
MANA	Gold	SEMAFO Burkina SA	—	Société d'exploitation minière d'Afrique de l'Ouest Inc. (SEMAFO) (Canada)	unknown	2006	04/2008	206.4 koz
INATA	Gold	Société de Mines de Bélahouro SA	2009-2018 Avocet Mining plc (Great Britain)	Balaji Group (Ghana)	26 km ²	2007	12/2009	unknown
ESSAKANE	Gold	Iamgold Essakane SA	—	Iamgold Inc. (Canada)	100 km ²	2008	07/2010	389 koz
PERKOA	Zinc	Nantou Mining Burkina Faso SA	2005-2014 Blackthorn Resources Limited (Australia) 2010-2016 Glencore plc (Switzerland)	Trevali Mining Corporation (Canada)	unknown	2007	01/2013	179 474 t
BISSA-BOULY	Gold	Bissa Gold SA	—	Nordgold B.V. (Russia)	129 km ²	2011	01/2013 (Bissa), 09/2016 (Bouly)	319.9 koz
GUIRO	Gold	Société des Mines de Guiro SA (SMG)	—	Komet Resources Inc. (Canada)	65 km ²	2015	01/2016	65 koz
KARMA	Gold	Riverstone Karma SA	2007-2016 True Gold Mining Inc. (previously named Riverstone Resources) (Canada)	Endeavor Mining Corporation (Canada)	unknown	2014	04/2016	98 koz
YARAMOKO	Gold	Roxgold Sanu SA	—	Roxgold Inc. (Canada)	23.5 km ²	2015	10/2016	126.9 koz
HOUNDÉ	Gold	Houndé Gold Operations SA	—	Endeavour Mining Corporation (Canada)	23 km ²	2016	11/2017	69 koz (11/2017-12/2017)
BOUNGOU	Gold	SEMAFO Bounou	—	Société d'exploitation minière d'Afrique de l'Ouest (SEMAFO) (Canada)	29.6 km ²	2017	09/2018	63.6 koz (09/2018-12/2018)

Overview of active industrial mines in Burkina Faso (green: mines discussed in report)

3.1 Taparko

The Taparko gold mine is situated in the north-eastern province of Namantenga, close to the village of the same name. Construction work started in 2005 and production in July 2007. Taparko was hence the first industrial mine to begin production after Poura, a gold mine that was closed in 1999. Currently, the extension of the mine implies the resettlement of 1,100 people (Nordgold 2017).

The mine is operated by the Burkinabé company Société des Mines de Taparko SA (SOMITA), of which the Russian company Nordgold B.V. owns 90% of the shares. When the company signed the contract with the government of Burkina Faso in 1995, the country still had no mining code. Nordgold was granted a stabilisation clause guaranteeing stable royalties of 3% of the value of gold sold during the contract period of 25 years (J.B. 2018). According to estimates, and compared to other mining companies which pay 4 to 5%, SOMITA has saved 16 million US Dollars since 2011 (ibid.).

Since its installation, the mine has changed the lives of the local residents in many ways. The population of the formerly small village of Taparko has grown significantly with the opening of the mine, since people from all over Burkina Faso as well as from foreign—especially neighbouring—countries, have come to seek employment in the mine. According to EITI, SOMITA employed a total of 766 people in 2016, 727 from Burkina Faso and 39 from abroad (Moore Stephens 2018: 82). Nevertheless, the local population's hopes for recruitment have not been fulfilled, as workers were mostly recruited from outside the village. Since the land now contained within the mining concession was formerly used for farming, many residents, most of them peasants, lost their source of income. Apart from employment, conflicts between

the local population and the mine management have emerged due to danger and damage through mining activities such as dynamite blasts and the proximity of the mining site to the village. The residents have raised concerns and demands in various ways, such as through roadblocks and demonstrations, but after many years without change, the community has the feeling that the mining company does not care about them and that officials are not approachable.

3.2 Youga

The Youga gold mine is located in the province of Boulgou in the south-east of the country, close to the Ghanaian border. The mine was opened in 2008 by the Canadian company Etruscan Resources Inc., largely owned by Endeavour Mining Corp., also headquartered in Canada. The latter bought the remaining shares of Etruscan Resources Inc. in 2010, thereby becoming the owner of the Youga gold mine. The mine was then sold to the Turkish company MNG Gold A.S. in February 2016. In December 2017, the company was bought by the Canadian Avesoro Resources. In 2015, the Youga mine, operated by Burkina Mining Company SA (BMC), employed 379 people, of which 361 were Burkinabé (Moore Stephens 2017: 81).

Car watering the streets in and around the Youga mine to avoid dust production (Photo: Franza Drechsel, 2017)



The arid region does not offer many income generating possibilities. For a long time, people migrated seasonally to Ghana to work on the plantations, though they would return home to plant and harvest their own crops. When gold was discovered in the area, seasonal migration declined because people could make their living from *orpaillage*. The revenues enabled people to build brick houses and make other investments that were seen as an improvement of livelihood. But with the construction of the industrial mining site, *orpaillage* was prohibited on the mining concession. A certain area was dedicated to artisanal mining; however, according to local *orpailleurs*, no gold can be found there. This has led to conflicts between residents and the operator, as many villagers depended on artisanal mining as an additional source of income. With the missing money in circulation, trading activities (often related to *orpaillage*) diminished too. Though no residents were displaced, some lost their fields and thus the possibility of subsistence farming or cattle herding. The fact that a few people from the village found work in the mine does not compensate for their losses.

Other prevailing conflicts between residents and the operator are related to working conditions and the repression of unionising. According to residents and employees, the situation in and around the mine deteriorated when MNG Gold became the owner. Whether the new ownership structure since the end of 2017 will make a difference remains to be seen, however, Avesoro has very close ties to MNG Gold.

3.3 Essakane

Far up north, close to the borders to Mali and Niger in the province of Oudalan, Sahel region, the Essakane gold mine is located. It is operated by the Burkinabé company Iamgold Essakane SA and owned by the Canadian investor Iamgold Inc. (International African Mining Gold Corporation). The construction of the mine took place from 2008 until July 2010, when production started.



Aerial view of the Essakane mine

The mining site covers a surface area of 100 km², which makes Essakane the second largest gold mine in Burkina Faso after the Bissa-Bouly mine. Yet, with a production output of 389 koz of gold in 2017, Essakane is the most productive gold mine. The surrounding exploration permit covers 1,266 km² (Iamgold 2017).

The installation and expansion of the mine displaced more than 16,000 people in total (Environmental Justice Atlas 2017). The Food First Information and Action Network (FIAN) reports that most resettlements took place in 2009, when approximately 2,500 households, i.e. about 11,500 people from 13 local communities, were relocated (Sawadogo/Córdova Montes 2015: 4).

According to lamgold Essakane, the company is one of the most significant employers in Burkina Faso, with 2,288 direct employees. While 95.5% of the workforce is Burkinabé, only 37% comes from the region and only 13% from the vicinity (Isabel 2018). Since villagers lost their fields for agricultural and livestock activities, lacking employment opportunities are one of the main causes of conflict between residents and the mine management (Sawadogo/Córdova Montes 2015: 9).

Before the installation of the industrial mine, the area was famous for its big artisanal gold mining sites, where several thousand people worked and lived. Now, *orpaillage* is still possible on certain sites assigned by lamgold Essakane SA.

Living conditions in the area deteriorated due to the environmental impacts of the mining activities. In a recent study, Mahamady Porgo and Orhan Gokyay show that air, soil and water are polluted, and that the livelihoods of the local people are negatively affected due to the degradation and loss of agricultural lands (Porgo/Gokyay 2017).

3.4 Perkoa

The Perkoa zinc mine is located 120 km to the west of Ouagadougou in Sanguié Province. It is the only zinc mine in Burkina Faso and is operated by Nantou Mining SA.

The installation of the mine, owned by the Australian company Blackthorn Resources Limited (90%), began in 2007. In July 2008, its construction was suspended due to a decline in global metal prices (Barry 2010). Following the formation of the joint venture with the Swiss commodity giant Glencore plc (that held 62.7% of the shares of Nantou Mining SA), construction resumed and the first pour of zinc concentrate was announced in January 2013 (Bako 2013).

In April 2014, Glencore acquired the remaining interest in the Perkoa zinc mine from Blackthorn Resources and sold its share two years later, in

2016, to the Canadian company Trevali Mining Corporation, with which it has a longstanding relationship, with a direct holding of 25% and two seats on the company's board (Lewis/Onstad 2017).

With the beginning of the construction work, people who had fields on the mining concession were expropriated and financially compensated over a period of four years. Very few households were relocated, however, and the villagers did not get new houses until they started constructing them themselves (Zongo 2007).

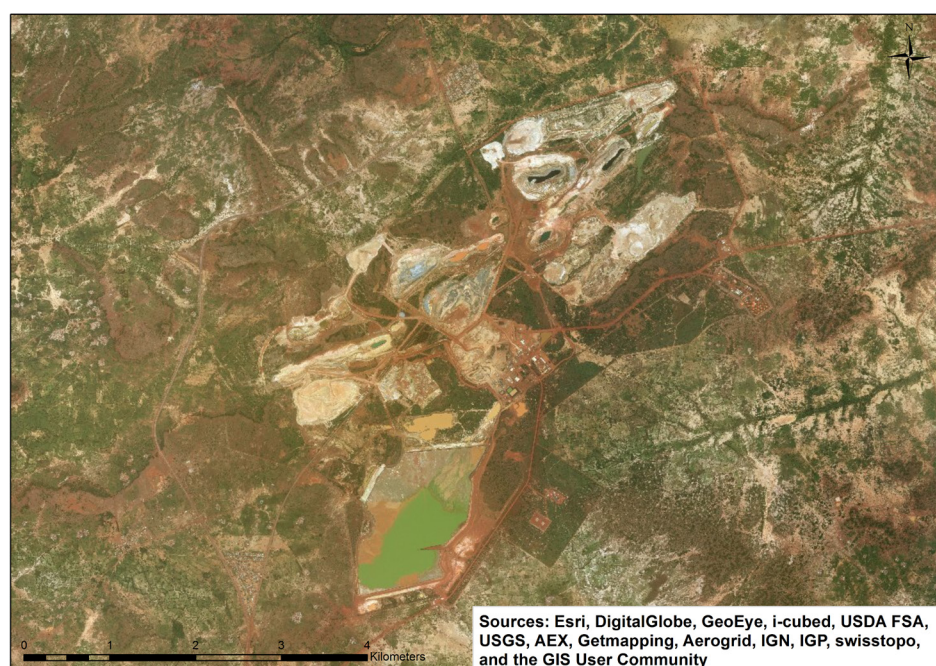
According to EITI, 325 people worked at the Perkoa zinc mine in 2016, 299 from Burkina Faso and 26 from abroad (Moore Stephens 2018: 82). The management of the mine made considerable promises regarding the employment of residents and investments in the local infrastructure through its related Nantou Foundation. The foundation, financed by a part of the operator's social and community development programme, was created to distribute social development funds (Fitzgibbon 2017). However, the foundation's support of the community fell far short of what was needed, and the villagers accused the foundation of mismanagement (ibid.). Expressing their anger, local people demonstrated and blocked a road to the mine in 2015. The protests were repressed by the police and special security forces, protestors were arrested and complained to have lost their jobs after participating in protests (ibid.; MBDHP 2015).

A subsequent investigation by the government of Burkina Faso revealed that Nantou Mining SA had deployed an accounting technique that reduced the company's taxable income (Fitzgibbon 2017). According to the government report of 2016, Nantou Mining SA paid corporate taxes neither in 2014 nor 2015 (ibid.). The even greater scale of the fiscal fraud was revealed in 2017 by the "Paradise Papers", a set of confidential documents relating to offshore investments that were leaked to *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and analysed by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) and 94 media partners. They show

how Glencore and its subsidiary Nantou Mining SA abused tax loopholes and avoided paying taxes through a chain of offshore companies (ibid.), something that Glencore denies (ICIJ 2017).

3.5 Bissa-Bouly

The Bissa gold mine, operated by Bissa Gold SA, is located approximately 100 km north of Ouagadougou, in the community of Sabcé in Bam Province.



Aerial view of the Bissa-Bouly mine

It is 90% owned by the Russian company Nordgold B.V. Construction work began in late 2011 and production started in January 2013. With the launch of the nearby Bouly deposit in September 2016, Nordgold expanded the Bissa mine. In 2017, 1,233 people were directly employed at the combined Bissa-Bouly mine (Kaboré 2018).

The acquisition of land in both the case of the Bissa mine as well as the Bouly extension resulted in the involuntary resettlement of residents and the loss of agricultural land. For the establishment of the Bissa gold mine, about 3,000 people were relocated, losing their farmland (Fastenopfer/Brot für alle

2016: 17). According to plans, 552 households were displaced and 547 agricultural plots totalling 758 ha were lost for the construction of the Bouly gold mine (Nordgold 2015: 184). On each occasion, villagers protested against the conditions under which the resettlement was undertaken. The affected villagers were compensated in cash, with the intention that this would be invested into new income generating options. Due to the limited job opportunities in the region and without much education and training, however, it was difficult for most of the local people to build up income generating opportunities at

the time that the compensation payments were made. With the expiration of the five year compensation payment in 2016, protests by residents increased (Engels 2018: 6f.).

Together, Bissa-Bouly has a size of 129 km² and is thus the largest gold mine in Burkina Faso, covering a surface as large as its second greatest city, Bobo-Dioulasso (133 km²). The area of all exploration and exploitation permits together accounts for more than 1,000 km² and more extensions are already planned (Nordgold 2016).

3.6 Karma

Close to the city of Ouahigouya in the north-western province of Yatenga, the Karma gold mine is located. It was first run by the Canadian company True Gold Mining Inc. (previously Riverstone Resources LLC) until another Canadian company, Endeavour Mining Corp., acquired it in 2016, before it started production. In 2017, the operating company, Riverstone Karma SA, employed 1,684 people (Kaboré 2018).

Prior to the construction of the mine, 35 residents were resettled and villagers lost a total of 520 ha of farmland (True Gold 2013). Already during the

procedure to grant the concession, residents of the affected villages expressed their concerns about the possible negative impacts of the planned mining site regarding artisanal mining, health and the environment, and the loss of farmland as well as cultural and spiritual sites (Engels 2018: 5). Nevertheless, the concession of an 85 km² area was granted to True Gold Mining Inc., without considering the villagers' concerns. As a consequence, some residents protested in January 2015, setting part of the construction equipment on fire, which led to a temporary suspension of the construction work (Engels 2018: 6; Nikiema 2015).

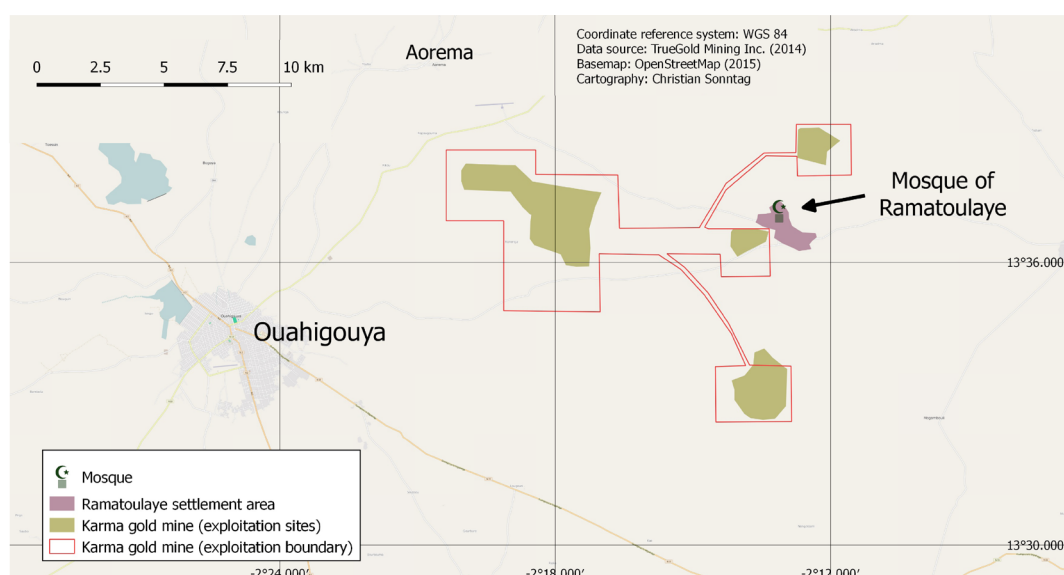
The Ramatoulaye Mosque, an important pilgrimage site located close to the mining concession, plays a particular role in the conflict. Since the beginning, the population of Ramatoulaye feared that the religious site could be affected by the mine. Due to the strong pressure of the government of Burkina Faso, the sheikh of the Ramatoulaye Mosque, a personality with spiritual as well as social and political influence, signed an agreement with the authorities in June 2015 giving his permission for the mine installation to go ahead. The construction continued and eventually production began in April 2016 (Engels 2018: 6).

Contrary to the media portrayal, the conflict between the villagers and Riverstone Karma SA is not only related to the potential threat to the

mosque, but also to the lack of income generating opportunities in the area following the loss of fields and the prohibition of artisanal mining. More recently, the resettlement of the residents of Boulouga, to the benefit of the extension of the mine, was also crucial. In contrast to the announcement by the former owner True Gold that 400 people were going to be relocated during the second resettlement two years after the commencement of production (True Gold 2013), recent numbers indicate that 1,200 residents had to resettle due to the extension of the Karma mine (Nikiema 2018).

Recently, conflict emerged concerning the resettlement plans in general and the planned location in particular. The new location proposed by the mine management is considerably less attractive than the residents' current location in terms of the economic, social and cultural conditions there. The resettlement also includes the relocation of a cemetery, which many residents oppose. Local residents have found various ways to express their disapproval, such as village assemblies, letters to the local and provincial authorities, and allies in the capital Ouagadougou who present their demands to the national authorities.

Overview of the Karma gold mine (Christian Sonntag, 2016)



4 METHODOLOGY

The qualitative analysis of the perspectives of six communities affected by mining in Burkina Faso is primarily based on partly standardised questionnaires, and is enriched with information from publications and fieldtrips, including focus group discussions and narrative interviews with residents and employees. Interviews with representatives of civil society organisations engaged in the sector and of the mine management were also undertaken. The questionnaire survey was conducted in villages close to the six active industrial mines between October 2015 and June 2017. During the research in the field, all mines except for Karma were in production. The Karma gold mine started production six months after the interviews were conducted; however, the repercussions of an industrial mine already begin to emerge with the exploration work or with the installation of the mine, that is, long before it starts production.

MINE	TIME OF SURVEY
KARMA	October 2015
ESSAKANE	November 2015
BISSA	June / July 2016
PERKOA	June / July 2016
YOUGA	February / March 2017
TAPARKO	June 2017

Time of survey per mine

In the questionnaires, the main questions concerned (a) the extent to which the residents close to the mine have been personally affected by the mine, (b) what positive and negative impacts the installation of the mine has had on their village and what general problems they see, (c) the extent

to which social and physical infrastructure projects have been realised by the operator, and if so, whether they have been useful, (d) whether there has been conflict between the affected population and the mine management, and if so, why, and finally (e) what demands the local population have toward the mine operator and the government.

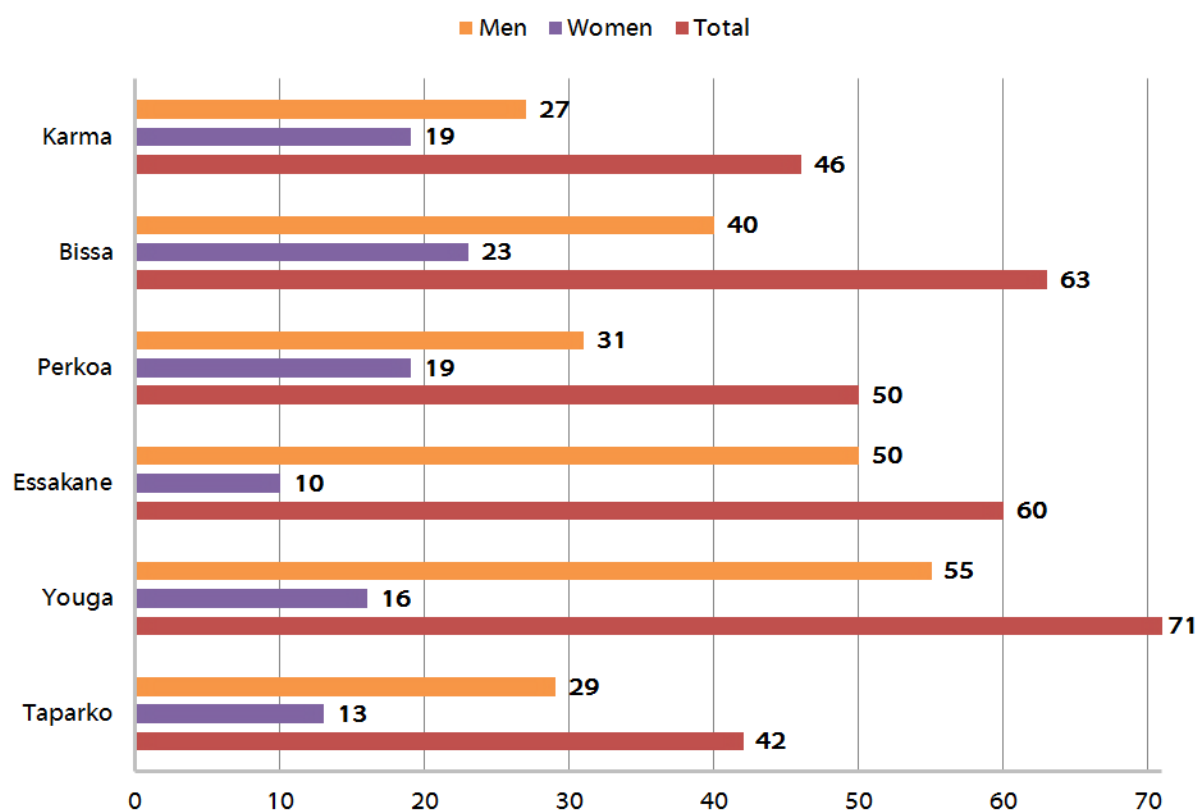
The interviews were conducted by various interviewers who asked the questions in local languages and filled in the questionnaires in French. The questionnaire was adapted after the first two mining areas (Karma and Essakane) were surveyed, though all in all the form did not change and comparability of the data was assured.

Between 42 and 71 people per location participated in the survey, totalling 332. With the first part of the questionnaire, we collected basic data of the interview partners regarding their gender, age, profession, place of residence and how long they have been living there. Most of the respondents were living in the same village in the vicinity of the mine in question, many of them had also been born there.

Regarding gender of the interviewees, we admit to an imbalance in all areas of the survey. This is related to the fact that women in Burkina Faso are socialised in a way that prevents them from giving public statements. In Essakane, of 60 interviewees, only 10 were women. The largest share of women was interviewed in proximity to the Karma (41.3%), Perkoa (38%) and Bissa gold mines (36.5%).

The respondents also indicated a profession. Men mainly stated that they were peasants, especially around Bissa and Perkoa, as well as in Taparko and Youga. In contrast, the majority of women identified as homemakers rather than farmers, although they also work in the fields. Generally, the majority of people in rural areas pursue several activities

Overview of total number and gender of interviewees per mine



depending on the season, *orpaillage* being an important one. Others mentioned a profession such as merchant (36 in total) or student (30 in total). Around Essakane and Perkoa, as well as in Youga, a total of 11 survey participants were employed in the respective mines.

For the following analysis, the answers were digitised, and at this point we already began the process of condensing the qualitative answers. On this basis, inductive categories were created, the main ones being: livelihood, social infrastructure, interconnection and other infrastructure, living conditions, nature, women-related issues, cultural sites, situation in the village, benefit, experienced attitude of government toward population, experienced attitude of operator toward population, demanded attitude of government toward operator, and demanded attitude of population toward operator.

5 IMPACTS OF THE MINES AND THE CLAIMS OF RESIDENTS

In this section, we analyse how affected populations experience the impact of industrial mines. In so doing, we present a perspective that is often neglected. The answers given in the survey at the six mining sites are set into context with other research undertaken. We divide the analysis into three parts. First, we analyse the negative impacts as perceived by the interviewed residents, including how they are personally affected and what they identify as the causes of conflict (5.1). The positive impacts at each of the mines follow (5.2). Both sub-sections then form the basis for the demands made towards the mine management as well as the government (5.3), as formulated by the residents who responded to the questionnaires.

5.1 Perceived negative impacts of the mines

A mine in the neighbourhood has a direct impact on the income generating possibilities of residents, on their housing situation and their health, as well as on access to cultural sites and natural resources, including water. The most relevant effect is that many of the interviewees are impeded from pursuing a livelihood as they have lost their fields and/or are denied the possibility to engage in artisanal mining. The lack of necessary resources often leads to poverty, perpetuated by a lack of formal jobs in the mine for the local population. In addition, sometimes access to areas for collecting firewood or water is restricted. In many cases, villagers are—mostly involuntarily—displaced due to the installation or expansion of a mine.

Further problems are the outbreak of diseases

and pollution, as well as repression by public and private security forces when people protest against a mining project.

"They have taken everything from us: our land, our jobs, our health, our peace and our hope."

Peasant from Taparko

Lack of prior information

The majority of the interviewed residents in the neighbourhood of the mines claim not to have been informed about the plans to construct a mine in their vicinity and the potential repercussions on their lives. According to Burkinabé law, obtaining the consent of the local population is part of the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA), one of several documents necessary to apply for a mining licence. However, in Perkoa, more than 80% of the interviewed residents felt uninformed beforehand, while around Karma 57% and in Youga 55% of the interviewees indicated that they did not know that a mine would be installed. Around Essakane 40%, around Bissa 25% and in Taparko 29% of the interviewed population outlined that they had not received any information in advance. The high number of people who were unaware of the installation of the mine and its implications beforehand leads to the assumption that the ESIAs were not carefully undertaken.

Livelihoods at risk

As the majority of Burkinabé depend on farming, access to land is essential for survival. Artisanal mining is often used as an additional way to generate income. Already before the mining infrastructure is constructed, residents are dispossessed of their land and artisanal mining is usually prohibited.

Around the Bissa mine, 67% of the interviewed residents say they are directly affected by the loss of land; in Youga 48%, in Perkoa 40% and in Taparko

38% of the interview partners state the same. Specifically in Youga and around Bissa, this has led to conflicts between the mine management and the villagers. Furthermore, 37% of the interviewed residents around Bissa and 10% in Youga speak of problems with compensation. In both locations, this issue has been a recurrent one during fieldtrips. The financial compensation offered has usually been low. Around Bissa, the local population is demanding that a second compensation be paid following expiration of the first, which had been paid for a period of five years. Bissa Gold SA's management has never replied to this demand. Both the lack of a reaction from the management as well as the perception that the initial compensation was unjust has provoked protests.

Around Karma 59%, around Essakane 57%, in Youga 25%, and around Bissa 19% of the interviewed residents mention that *orpaillage* is no longer possible. Around Karma, 70% claim this to be the main reason for conflict. In Youga, this perception is also widely shared.

The mining concessions are generally not accessible to the local population. Thus, they can no longer collect firewood essential for cooking or mushrooms to eat, as well as medicinal herbs and plants on land belonging to the operator. Hence they must undertake longer journeys to find firewood or water for their daily needs, which makes daily routines and farming activities more difficult. Long-term effects include the loss of local knowledge about natural medical treatments.

Some residents even claim to have lost access to water sources. Generally, industrial mining requires a lot of water. However, especially in times of drought and in the north of the country, water is a scarce resource. Lack of water led to protests around the Essakane mine in the far north in 2011, when the operator, Iamgold Essakane SA,

planned to use water that was originally allocated to the village for mining processes. Even though the regional government prohibited the operator from using the village's water, the national government disregarded the protests and overturned the decision (Chouli 2012: 43f; Baro 2011).

Lack of formal employment leads to poverty

Before or during the installation of a mine, the management as well as government officials make promises regarding employment opportunities. However, these are realised only to a small extent. The mines are highly technical, thus jobs are mainly given to people with formal education; only few people from the surrounding villages have the required level of education. Some of the operators (e.g. Bissa Gold SA and others) provide training, but do not offer a position afterwards. Neither do residents benefit much from supplying the mines with goods and services, since they face problems meeting the regulations of the

operators, e.g. for food delivery or construction materials. Hence more people from cities are employed and service delivery is rather provided regionally and nationally, if not internationally

(Drechsel/Groneweg 2017: 2). Around all of the mines under survey, people are therefore generally dissatisfied with the fact that non-locals are advantaged in finding a job in the mine.

Other income generating opportunities are difficult to find in these areas. Consequently, when the main source of income—farming, cattle herding, *orpaillage*—is lost and no formal employment in the mines is offered, unemployment and poverty, sometimes even hunger, prevail. Around Bissa, where 67% of the respondents have lost their land, both unemployment and poverty are mentioned by 70%, the same amount claiming hunger to be very present. Furthermore, 70% of the interviewees

“This mine has made us very poor in this village. The area of the mine was the granary of the village and above all the basket of the housekeeper. We no longer have access to all that nature had given us.”

Housemaker from Perkoa



Newly constructed Bouly village (Photo: Merle Groneweg, 2017)

see the lack of local employment as the trigger for conflicts between the mine management and the villagers.

Around Essakane, 42% of those interviewed claim that unemployment is a problem since the mine has been installed, while 25% say the same regarding poverty. Some of the residents also speak of hunger. The lack of local employment in the mine, general joblessness as well as dismissals are thus the main reasons for conflict between lamgold Essakane SA and the surrounding population. Of the interviewees, 27% specifically refer to the subcontracting of a new security company not from the area as a cause of conflict. Since the previous one had been local, the change means that people from the area will lose their positions.

Also in Perkoa, a great share of the interviewees sees the lack of employment as a negative effect of the mine, while nearly as many report hunger and poverty. In Taparko 45% and in Youga 48% criticise joblessness as a problem since the installation of the mine. In Youga, 48% think that the lack of employment has provoked conflict between the operator, Burkina Mining Company (BMC), and the villagers. In 2013, there were also protests when employees were unlawfully dismissed after a demonstration for better working conditions (Le Reporteur 2013). Problems of

working conditions and the prohibition of trade union organisation has sparked repeated discontent amongst the employees in the Youga mine.

Around Karma, more people speak of impoverishment (37%) than of joblessness (17%), which might also be due to the fact that the mine was still under construction

when the survey was undertaken. Many of the surveyed residents state that the lack of jobs, the prohibition of *orpaillage* and the difficulty to survive—partly due to the loss of fields and pastureland—contribute to conflicts between the mining company and the surrounding population.

Women are especially vulnerable

Even though women are underrepresented in the survey, specific concerns of women are raised in almost every region. The lack of employment for women is repeatedly emphasised as a problem by residents around Bissa as well as in Perkoa, Youga and Taparko. The loss of livelihood profoundly affects them, as they are often responsible for bringing food to the family table. Women are involved in farming and cattle herding, as well as in trading products, *orpaillage* and providing services around artisanal mining. Furthermore, it

is mainly women who collect firewood and edible plants. Dispossession from fields, the prohibition of *orpaillage* and restricted access to communal land thus severely limits

women's daily activities. Particularly in Perkoa, the unemployment of women is seen as a negative effect of the mine. Around the Bissa mine, but not only there, interviewees point at an absence of support for women, who face more difficulties than men in getting into formal employment. Bissa Gold SA indeed offers training targeting women in

***"Before the mine, we lived better,
we had animals, we were rich."***

Peasant from Essakane

particular, but afterwards they are left without any help and thus cannot pursue the activities in which they have been trained.

Involuntary resettlement

With the construction of mining infrastructure, oftentimes households are displaced and relocated to newly constructed villages. Of the interviewees, 6% in Perkoa, 17% around Bissa and 30% around Essakane have been resettled.

The overall resettlement process lacks transparency. Information as to why, who, when and under which conditions the relocation will take place is not sufficiently given in advance. Residents feel threatened and forced to leave behind their homestead and have little possibility to take decisions in the planning of the new village or the relocation as such.

In one village affected by the extension of the Karma mine, residents complain that they were relocated to an area where they had refused to live, even though their traditional authorities had suggested an alternative location for resettlement that a majority of the villagers had agreed upon.

“I sold food at the [artisanal] mining sites, but with the arrival of the mine, I stopped this and am not doing anything now.”

Housemaker from the village Imiougou, close to the Bissa-Bouly mine

and the area allocated to each family does not allow for new construction once children become adults, something seen as highly problematic. Furthermore, in the new villages, residents live much closer to each other, and they usually have new neighbours; the social structure of the old village is thus disrupted, which is particularly challenging for older residents. Often, a resettlement also means that farmers have to walk longer distances to get to their fields. For similar reasons, resettled populations of Perkoa decided to construct their own villages, leaving the houses built by Nantou Mining Burkina Faso SA empty (Fitzgibbon 2017).

Increased pollution, respiratory illnesses and earth shaking blasts

Another concern raised by various interviewed residents is related to problems arising from dynamite blasts to access the ore-containing rocks, pollution due to toxic products or dust linked to increased traffic on non-tarred roads. Both in Taparko and around Bissa, some residents complain about not being relocated, as the proximity to the mine affects them in this regard. Seventy percent of the interviewees of Bissa, 24% in Taparko and 17% in Youga complain about health problems, specifically respiratory illnesses, which they attribute to the increased dust. The health problems underline the urge for health care, especially around Bissa. The dust is viewed as a negative effect of the mine by 19% of the interviewees around Bissa, by 26% of the surveyed residents in Taparko and by 23% of the interviewees residing in Youga.

In Perkoa and around Bissa, residents complain about pollution as a result of toxic products or waste being used or left close to the village. Defunct tailing dams or the spillover of chemical products contaminate the groundwater.

When lamgold Essakane SA's tailing storage facility yielded in 2010, nearby cattle died, greatly upsetting the residents (Porgo/Gokyay 2017: 648).



Cracks in the wall of a newly constructed house for resettlement in the new Bouly village (Photo: Merle Groneweg, 2017)

Around Bouly, an extension of the Bissa mine, residents are unhappy with the low quality of the new houses and the small size of the compounds. Both the way in which the houses are constructed

Furthermore, 29% of the respondents in Taparko, but also many around Bissa, criticise the noise of the dynamite blasts. However, it is not only the noise that is disturbing; some Taparko villagers speak of 'earthquakes' to describe how such blasts feel. According to an interviewee, a child was injured in Taparko due to flying rock parts.



Dust whirled up by mining vehicles on the public road between Bissa and Bouly (Photo: Merle Groneweg, 2017)

The mine as a threat to cultural sites

With the reallocation of land, cultural sites such as graves or religious sites on that land become inaccessible or are threatened by the mine operations. In rural areas, family members are often buried in the homestead; hence a resettlement of a household implies the relocation of the grave, which does not comply with religious norms.

Around the Karma mine, dynamite blasts are viewed as a threat to the Ramatoulaye Mosque close to the mine, a religious symbol and pilgrimage site of immense importance for the whole region. Even if in the ESIA the operator, Riverstone Karma SA, offered assurances that no harm will be done



Against the wishes of the local population, the mining company has decided to relocate a cemetery in order to expand the mining zone (Photo: Hermann M. Konkobo, 2018)

to the mosque, the residents remain very sceptical. Thus, not only the blasts but the mine in general is considered a threat to the mosque. Protests took place for several days in early 2015, leading to the temporary closure of the construction site, as well as in May

2015, when construction was taken up again. In the end, representatives of the mine promised not to damage the mosque and went ahead with the installation.

In 2018, Riverstone Karma SA started to extend the Karma mine, requiring a cemetery to be relocated; something that many residents understand as yet another offense. Around other mines, too, the relocation of graves is mourned. When the Bissa mine was extended to Bouly, residents resisted the resettlement of their houses due to the presence of family graves in their homesteads

Conflict and mistrust in the village

Rifts among the residents, between proponents and critics of the industrial mines, emerge, which become even deeper as a result of ongoing conflict with the operators. Some villagers are against protests as they fear the repression, and thus turn against those who demonstrate. Meanwhile, other villagers are perceived as cooperating with the mine operators and might therefore be attacked by those who feel marginalised. Especially around Bissa and Karma, as well as in Taparko, villagers complain about such conflicts since the mine has been installed.

Cleavages are also related to other issues. In Youga, residents have the impression that rates of robbery, sex work and tobacco consumption are rising. Another kind of rupture of village life is related to emigration, specifically highlighted in

Taparko. The loss of trust between villagers and the negative changes of the social context thus far are experienced as highly disturbing. Specifically in Taparko, the wish for more solidarity among the villagers is widespread.

Repression and defamation fuelling conflict

In various ways, residents who stand up for their rights experience repression by state authorities and operators. Repression includes unlawful dismissals of those who unionise, as around Essakane, Youga and Taparko (Chouli 2012: 42f; Gouba/Bologo 2012; Le Reporteur 2013). Demonstrations and roadblocks are also countered with physical violence by police or special security forces (*Régiment de Sécurité Présidentielle*, RSP) and protestors are arbitrarily arrested. Particularly around Karma and Bissa, as well as in Perkoa and Youga, residents report that protest has been repressed. Around Bissa and in Youga, there are also cases of harsh prosecution by the mine operator, in collaboration with the local police, of those who illegally pursue *orpaillage*. Repression is therefore generally attributed as a negative effect of the mine.

After the protests against the construction of the Karma mine in January 2015, the population faced “threats, intimidations and diverse humiliations for several days” (MBDHP 2015: 49, our translation). When residents wanted to peacefully demonstrate against the threats and intimidations, the demonstration was not allowed by the mayor. The march was violently repressed after people nevertheless took to the streets.

According to residents in Youga, the repressive approach by the government became stronger after parts of the equipment of the Karma mine were set on fire in January 2015. Following this incident, protestors around other mines, too, have been generally denounced as violent and

angry youth planning to demolish the mining equipment. Their demands, as well as the right to free speech, have thereby been delegitimised. Not only does the repression cause frustration among the population, thus fuelling their wish for change, but the defamatory strategies of the operators and government, which imply a lack of respect towards those who suffer, contribute to further conflict between local populations and operators.

Unfulfilled promises by the mine operators

Around all mines, the interviewed residents complain about unfulfilled promises. Often, the mine management attempts to counter the negative impacts of the mine by promising infrastructure developments and employment during the construction process, as well as later in

“The mine has sabotaged us; it promised not to tramp on our backs and today it tramples on our heads. The mine lacks respect for our village when arresting and imprisoning our youth.”

Peasant from Perkoa

the mine. A blurry vision of ‘development’ for the village is proclaimed, but these promises do not materialise for the vast majority of the surveyed populations. Residents outline how the plans regarding infrastructure, compensation or local

employment have not been followed, and also complain of the low quality of construction. In Perkoa, 48% of the interviewees indicate unfulfilled promises as the main source of conflict. In several demonstrations and blockades of the entrance to the mine in 2015, the surrounding population showed their anger over not profiting from the mine.

All in all, the survey reflects that the mines mainly have a negative impact on livelihood and/or income generation. However, resettlement, health problems, threats to cultural sites, conflict in the village, disrespectful treatment and repression are also seen as problematic. Though the mines do have some positive impacts, they do not outweigh the negative effects in the eyes of the interviewed residents.

5.2 Perceived positive impacts of the mines

The main advantages of a new mine in the neighbourhood are related to investment in the infrastructure of schools and health centres, or for interconnection such as roads and electricity. However, even if the populations acknowledge the positive impact of such investment, they oftentimes do not see it as an improvement of their living conditions. Reasons for this may lie in the fact that the residents are in general negatively impacted and thus the few positive changes do not make a significant difference. This may include, for instance, the fact that even though there is a new school, fees cannot be paid by the parents due to a loss of livelihood.

Investments in infrastructure for education, health care and access to water

Residents around the mines Bissa, Essakane, Perkoa and Youga appreciate that the mining company has invested in educational infrastructure. According to the local population, Bissa Gold SA built a primary school, as well as housing for the teachers. As there had not been any school before, this is a big change. However, while 25 interviewees mention the investment as a positive effect, only one person thinks it contributes to an improved overall situation. Similarly, in Essakane, 75% of the interviewees see the investment of lamgold Essakane SA in a primary school, a training centre and/or a secondary school as positive, but not a single person perceives this as an improvement of their living conditions.

This is also the case in Perkoa, where nearly all interviewed residents appreciate that a secondary school has been built and 26% of them understand the opening of an alphabetisation centre as



Signpost for Youga's primary school, sponsored by the Turkish mining company MNG Gold (Photo: Sarah Kirst, 2017)

positive. Still, only four mention this investment as helpful for the overall situation. While the former owner of the mine, the Swiss company Glencore, congratulated itself on its contribution to local development by investing in education (ICIJ 2017), this does not necessarily reflect the necessities of the population.

Meanwhile, in Youga, 85% of the interviewees welcome the secondary school, 51% are pleased with the primary school, and 37% do believe that the school improves their standard of living. They explain that before the installation of the mine, students either had to go to the district capital, 35 km away, or to neighbouring Ghana to pursue education.

Similar reasons are stated by Youga residents in regard to easier access

to health services. The vast majority of those interviewed understand the construction of a maternity centre as a positive effect and 25% feel that it enhances their living conditions. In Perkoa, nearly all see the investment in a health centre as positive and 64% also consider it a contribution to the improvement of the overall situation. On the contrary, while in Essakane, 22% value the construction of a health centre as positive, no one recognises it as an improvement.

"Everything has become difficult in the village. Until now, I have not yet paid the tuition fees of my children, something which had never happened to me before."

Former orpailleur around the Karma mine

Around Bissa and Essakane, residents mention having better access to drinking water, and in Essakane as well as in Karma the construction of a reservoir is highlighted. In Youga, the building of wells is seen to be a positive effect of the mine, and some also understand the wells as improving their living conditions. Especially in Perkoa, improved access to drinking water is positively connoted, but few view it as an enhancement of their standard of living.

Roads, electricity, bridges and more

Investment in interconnection infrastructure includes the construction of roads, bridges, housing as well as community centres and electrification, all of which enable trade and communication. Around the Essakane mine, road construction and electricity is acknowledged. Those living close to the Perkoa mine rather emphasise bridges as a helpful investment. In Youga, electricity is also an issue: villagers emphasise that only the main road has been electrified, while the village remains in the dark. Investment in housing is further mentioned as a positive effect by interviewees around Bissa (11%) and Essakane (31%). The populations around the mines in Bissa and to a much greater extent in Perkoa remark on the construction of a community centre.

Other positive effects: from jobs for some to fame for the village

Some non-infrastructure-related positive effects are job creation—at least for some people—as well as support provided by the operator and certain fame for the village. 26% of the interviewees from Perkoa state that jobs for some local youth have been created in the mine, even if badly paid and only temporary. Around the Essakane mine, some highlight the support of fisher people by the operator. Residents around Bissa acknowledge the training of women, while in Taparko, some residents are happy with a new image of the village as well as more publicity due to the mine. Furthermore, it is seen positively that the village has grown since the mine was installed and is therefore changing.

No real improvement despite the realisations

Though the operators, to a varying extent, do invest in infrastructure, the majority of the respondents do not perceive this as an improvement of their living conditions. The interviewees repeatedly emphasise that what has been done is not enough, or the investment has not had positive effects on their living situation. Especially around Bissa, Essakane and Karma, as well as in Taparko, interviewees state that the situation is either as bad as it was before or even worse. The populations around Bissa and Karma are particularly dissatisfied. Around Bissa, nearly half of the interviewees see no positive impact at all and nearly all surveyed residents around Karma state that the mine has not brought any benefit to them.



*Non-functioning well in the newly constructed Bouly village
(Photo: Merle Groneweg, 2017)*

5.3 Demands toward the mine management and the government

Generally, people wish to benefit from the mine. Instead of suffering from the negative impacts of the industrial mine, residents want to see something given back by the operator or the government. The claim to see some benefit is mostly raised concretely, in terms of an improvement of livelihood and the construction of infrastructure, or it is spoken of more broadly, such as regarding higher tax revenue. Due to the timing of the survey, when the new *code minier* had not yet been implemented but was being widely debated, in Youga, residents demanded a new mining code from which they would profit more. Residents in all areas furthermore want to be respectfully treated, and thus they also appeal to the government to change the behaviour of the operators.

The affected populations use different ways of addressing the actors they see in charge: letters, meetings, petitions, press conferences, demonstrations, marches, roadblocks and sit-ins are just some of the highly diverse array of strategies that the residents employ to raise their claims. For example, after calling on members of the government without success, villagers in Taparko protested by blocking the entry and exit to the mine for several days in 2016, demanding better working and living conditions as well as the resignation of certain managers, the cessation of the blasts, more local employment and the realisation of health, education and interconnection infrastructure (Somé 2016).

Demands concerning livelihood and infrastructure are directed to the mine operators rather than to government institutions. This is also due to the fact that public institutions are underrepresented in rural areas. It might moreover be a consequence of mine operators using the rhetoric of corporate social responsibility (CSR), implying that they will

build schools and/or other infrastructure as a way of appeasing the population.

Livelihood options: from formal employment to compensation and new ways of generating income

Local employment in the mine, mainly for youth and women, is the main demand being brought forward. Around Bissa, nearly all interviewees, around Essakane 59%, around Karma 54%, in Youga 55%, in Perkoa 42% and in Taparko 17% raise this claim. In Essakane, people have repeatedly protested for more local jobs, sometimes by blocking the road

that leads to the entrance to the mine. This has also taken place in Bissa, where in April 2016, women blocked the road to the mine as a way to claim jobs for the local population (Radio Oméga 2016). In Bissa, 89% of the interviewees call for employment for women. Around other mines, too, the request for employment for women is raised. Additionally, employees in various mines have demonstrated or gone on strike for the payment of extra hours, for a change in the rhythm of working and non-working days, or against unlawful dismissals.

The residents close to the mining sites do not only wish to improve their situation by being formally employed in the mine, but also by directly changing their options for generating income. As such, around Essakane, Bissa and Karma, as well as in Youga, interviewed residents want the operator to assign a site for artisanal mining. The lack of a reaction from the company Bissa Gold SA led youth to begin to engage in artisanal gold mining as a form of protest in July 2016.

Another request is empowerment for women, e.g. through a social centre or professional training. In Youga and Perkoa, residents insist on an improvement of the situation of women. Around Bissa and Essakane, as well as in Perkoa, the populations wish for funds or credit to finance projects or small businesses, in particular for women.

"If orpaillage is not allowed, what can we do?"

Former orpailleur from Youga

24% of the interviewees around Bissa ask for at least some kind of support or aid for farmers. More concretely, in Youga and Taparko, but also around Essakane, a water reservoir is wished for. Reservoirs are used for irrigation as well as to feed animals and thus directly improve the situation of farmers and cattle herders.

Claiming compensation for fields lost due to the mine is particularly present in Youga and around Bissa. The demand for a renewal of the financial compensation is specifically raised around the Bissa mine. Also at other mines, the wish for just compensation and for the allocation of fertile land instead of a financial payoff is outlined. In Perkoa, 38% raise the demand for just and effective compensation.

Better infrastructure: education, health care, housing, water, roads and electricity

The affected communities make strong claims towards the government and mine operators with regard to investments in diverse infrastructure, including the construction of roads and housing, electrification, as well as access to education, health care and water.

Around Bissa 37%, in Youga 34% and in Perkoa 28%, as well as residents from other areas, demand that the mine operator and/or the government invest in

education, specifically in training centres. In Perkoa and Youga, as well as around Bissa, education, particularly for women, is wished for. Not only is education a value as such, but people also hope that it will increase the chances of villagers being employed in the mine or of finding other ways of generating income.

More investment in health care is another important demand. 43% of the interviewees around Bissa demand better treatment possibilities, mainly due to increased cases of respiratory illnesses. But also around Karma, in Perkoa, Taparko and Youga, residents ask for the construction of clinics. Iamgold Essakane SA did invest in a centre for basic health care (*Centre de Santé de Promotion Sociale, CSPS*), though the residents still see a necessity for more investment.

The population in Youga makes general requests for infrastructure, which might be due to the remoteness of the area. Especially important to the interviewees is electricity, which the operator only realised for the main road, while the village remains in the dark. However, roads and a market are also wished for, as the village can become isolated during the rainy season. Apparently, robbery has also increased since the arrival of the mine, so

Youga village without electricity next to the power poles leading to the Youga mine (Photo: Sarah Kirst, 2017)



people direct their demand for higher security to the government, including the request for a police station in the village.

The interviewees also call for access to water, particularly around Bissa. In some cases, the sources they used to get their water from are located within the mining concession, so new sources need to be offered by the operator. Furthermore, the wish for better access to water than before is connected to the promise of the mine operators of modernising the whole area with the installation of the mine.

Many claims are put quite broadly, such as wanting the operator and/or government to do good in general for the society, the youth, the village, or to contribute to local development and better living conditions, as well as expressing the wish to benefit from the mine.

Respectful treatment by the operator

When it comes to how the population wants to be treated by the mine operator, they have quite concrete demands. In all areas under survey, the population wants respectful and honest communication with the mine management. Promises should be kept and the operator should give something back to the population, since they get the resources in exchange.

Particularly in Perkoa (52%) and around Bissa (37%), the interviewed residents wish for the operator to keep their promises. In Perkoa, one reason might be their bad experiences with the Nantou Foundation. Repeated encounters with the operator Bissa Gold SA led to disillusionment, since the population around the Bissa mine has the impression that promises are only made to keep people calm, while no actual change has been realised. Thus, respondents also ask the government to guarantee that the operator keeps the promises made.

It is the wish for an improvement of material conditions that is put forward most by the surveyed

populations. However, in their requests for such improvements, people experience disrespectful treatment, and a lack of transparency and information. This drives them to demand respect from the mine operator and government officials, including their willingness to listen to those affected by the mine. Residents want the mine management to be aware of the living conditions of the local population and to understand their necessities. More explicitly, the interviewees demand respectful treatment as equals, as well as honest and open communication. Around Karma, Youga and Perkoa, the wish for the management to act in a pacifying, harmonising way—instead of issuing threats—is particularly expressed. All in all, these statements show how little the people living around the mines feel respected by the operators and how great the wish for dignity is.

Control over the mine operator

Against this backdrop, around all the surveyed mines, the villagers demand that the government control the operator and protect the residents. They also want to be part of decision making structures and as such call for better access to public institutions.

Particularly in Perkoa, Taparko and Youga, the interviewees want the government to mediate between the residents and the mine management. The government should guarantee that the problems of the community are solved in favour of the population. This implies the avoidance of repression of protest and listening to the problems people face living next to the mines. It is specifically highlighted by the residents around Bissa that repression does not contribute to any kind of solution; it might also be the reason why in Taparko, interviewees claim that the government is the actual source of all their problems. Villagers want to be taken seriously, to be understood in their necessities and supported.

Related to this wish is the demand for greater

"I ask the government and the mine not to turn their backs while we suffer."

*Housemaker from the village Imiougou,
close to the Bissa-Bouly mine*

accessibility of government institutions— physically and structurally. For residents close to certain mines such as Youga, the next town hall is far away and due to lacking public transport it is not easily reachable. Some respondents thus call for a town hall close by. However, the main decisions in respect to the mining sector are taken at the national level, from which the local populations feel excluded. To gain access to decision making structures is therefore another claim.

The demands addressed to the government and the mine operators generally encompass some kind of benefit from the installed mines, mainly in terms of improved living conditions and physical circumstances, as well as infrastructure for education, health and basic needs. Of course, due to the lost sources of income and the proclaimed advantages of a new mine in the area, the claim for formal employment of the local population, also for women, is particularly important. The interviewees want the government to control the operators and to protect the affected populations. Furthermore, they want to be heard, and to be part of the decision making process on an equal basis.

6 CONCLUSION

In the last twelve years, 15 industrial mines have opened in Burkina Faso. Currently, two have already closed, one is under maintenance, three more are under construction and many exploration permits have been granted. The analysis presented in this report leaves no doubt about the difficult situation of the people living close to the mines. The loss of livelihood in terms of fields, grazing land and artisanal mining sites, added to the loss of other natural resources such as foraged food, firewood and medicinal plants, and sometimes also access to water, poses an existential threat to the villages close to the mines. Health problems, damage to cultural sites such as a mosque or cemeteries, and conflict among villagers are further negative impacts. The promises made by the government and the mine management to develop the areas—to create jobs and other income generating activities, and to provide education, health services and infrastructure—have not been kept. Residents thus do not see that their living conditions have improved with the new mine in the neighbourhood, but rather the opposite: their daily life has become more difficult and many experience persistent or previously inexistent poverty.

Residents feel that the mining companies are taking from them without giving enough back. People direct their claims for local employment, infrastructure for health, education and roads, access to artisanal mining sites, micro-credit schemes and training, among others, to the mine management and the local and national authorities, but often remain unheard. In contrast, once they stand up for their rights, they often face repression, giving them the impression that the state sides with the companies instead of fulfilling its duty to protect its citizens. Fewer and fewer people see it as necessary to be open for dialogue because of the prevailing impression that it is not them who should cooperate or start an appeasement

initiative, as they have not done anything wrong by protesting. Though at the lower levels, government officials do sometimes support the demands of the population, at the national level they do not listen to the residents. Many people feel that the mine management and the government are in cahoots. This leads to the feeling that residents cannot do anything: the companies and the government seem to be too powerful.

Still, the communities do get organised and raise their claims. Protesting via demonstrations and roadblocks is one way to demand what is first asked for in letters and meetings, though they often receive no response. The local communities are partly connected to national civil society organisations. It is due to the relentless efforts of these organisations that the new mining code was voted on in 2015, focusing on more state revenue and local development. This new legislation, which is still being implemented, will not, however, lead to a substantial change in the mining politics and its impacts. Still, the newly introduced FMDL will provide mining affected communities with more public funding, allowing for investment in health care, education, roads, electricity and the like.

However, even if this contributes to improvements in the rural areas, the question remains in which direction Burkina Faso will head with respect to its overall national development strategies. A gold mine has a general life expectancy of ten years and the land will not be suitable for arable cultivation long after the closure of a mine. The huge open pits will simply be covered and left to regenerate, likely for decades. Moreover, dependency on the extractivist sector—and thus on world commodity prices—is risky; and the price to be paid in terms of social and ecological impacts remains high.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Franza Drechsel

Franza Drechsel was predoctoral researcher in the junior research group GLOCON until end of 2018 and responsible for scientific coordination. In her research, she focuses on conflicts over gold mining in Burkina Faso as well as state-society relations and post-coloniality in Africa.

Bettina Engels

Bettina Engels is Junior Professor for Conflict Research focussing on sub-Saharan Africa at the Otto Suhr Institute for Political Science, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany. Together with Kristina Dietz, she is joint director of the junior research group GLOCON. Her research focuses on contentious politics, conflict over land and mining, critical agrarian studies, and class theory.

Mirka Schäfer

Mirka Schäfer works as a student assistant in the junior research group GLOCON. She is currently studying in the Master programme social and political sciences with a focus on social inequality and postcolonial and feminist theories at Humboldt University in Berlin.

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