



Diamond Mining Conflicts in Tanzania: Community Perspectives and Implications

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Abstract

Tanzania is one of the world's richest countries in terms of its natural resources, including its mines. In the mid-1980s, the government shifted its role from being the owner of mining companies to being the regulator and facilitator of mining. Despite these reforms, Tanzanians remain among the world's poorest people. Of particular importance are ongoing conflicts between privately owned mining companies and impoverished surrounding communities. Using Action Research (AR) methodology, this study explored community perspectives of mining-related conflicts in order to devise long-term solutions. The key findings highlight the potential of AR to achieve relative peace between mining company operations and the surrounding communities. In this case, an AR intervention conducted in 2017 (with subsequent follow up visits from 2018 to 2023) empowered affected communities to express their perspectives on ongoing conflicts, foster ties with local journalists, and create an inclusive framework for participatory decision-making. This paved the way for affected communities to receive compensation from mining companies. In conclusion, this AR study has facilitated transformative learning that enabled participating communities to develop a thorough understanding of the challenges they face, communicate their perspectives, and take appropriate action to improve their situation. This AR project was able to address challenges that had not been effectively addressed since the 1940s.

Keywords: Extractive industry, diamond mining, conflict resolution, empowerment, Tanzania

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Résumé

La Tanzanie est l'un des pays les plus riches en ressources naturelles, notamment minières. Au milieu des années 1980, le gouvernement est passé du statut de propriétaire des sociétés minières à celui de régulateur et de facilitateur de l'exploitation minière. Malgré ces réformes, les Tanzaniens demeurent parmi les populations les plus pauvres du monde. La persistance des conflits entre les sociétés minières privées et les communautés environnantes défavorisées revêtent une importance particulière. En utilisant la méthodologie de recherche-action (RA), la présente étude a exploré les perspectives communautaires sur les conflits liés à l'exploitation minière afin de concevoir des solutions à long terme. Les principales conclusions soulignent le potentiel de la RA dans l'instauration d'une paix relative entre les activités des sociétés minières et les communautés environnantes. Dans ce cas, une intervention RA menée en 2017 (avec des visites de suivi ultérieures de 2018 à 2023) a permis aux communautés affectées d'exprimer leur point de vue sur les conflits en cours, de tisser des liens avec les journalistes locaux et de créer un cadre inclusif pour la prise de décision participative. Cela a ouvert la voie à l'indemnisation des communautés affectées par les sociétés minières. En conclusion, cette étude RA a offert un apprentissage transformateur qui a permis aux communautés participantes de développer une compréhension approfondie des défis auxquels elles sont confrontées, de communiquer leurs points de vue et de prendre les mesures appropriées afin d'améliorer leur situation. Ce projet RA a permis de relever des défis qui, depuis 1940, n'avaient pas trouvé de solution.

Mots-clés : industrie extractive ; exploitation de diamants ; résolution de conflit ; autonomisation ; Tanzanie.

Introduction

At the macro level, globalisation has led to the over-exploitation of mineral resources (Madaha 2018) through the dispossession of the poor (Harvey 2011). The exploitation has led to political instability, forced displacement, disrupted and destroyed livelihoods, and violent conflicts on different scales (Knierzinger and Sopelle 2019; Kinyondo and Huggins 2019). Several studies have documented conflicts in the mining sector (Arsel et al. 2016; Furnaro 2019; Huggins 2016), highlighting the negative environmental impacts of extractive industries. Yankson and Gough (2019) reported an increase in conflicts between large-scale investors in Africa and surrounding communities following the intensification of mining. A similar situation has been observed in Tanzania. Mwaipopo (2014) highlights conflicts between unlicensed illegal artisanal miners and licensed large-scale diamond

mining companies in Tanzania. Kinyondo and Huggins (2019) say that the country's legal framework primarily benefits large-scale mining. Kinyera (2019) points out that social unrest arises from the new scramble for resources in underdeveloped, resource-rich peripheries, including Tanzania. For example, the relationship between Williamson Diamond Mining Limited and surrounding communities remained unstable throughout its history, from the time it formalised large-scale production in Tanzania in 1951 (SID 2009), to the time it was nationalised in 1971, to the time it was privatised in 1994 (Jönssona et al. 2019).

Generally, communities surrounding mining operations are often overlooked when conflicts arise. Although there is plenty of literature highlighting the importance of participation of communities in addressing conflicts in resource governance (Kant and Cooke 1999; Weitzner and Borras 1999; Bryceson et al. 2014; Arsel et al. 2016; Huggins 2016; Kinyondo and Huggins 2019; Knierzinger and Sopelle 2019), there is limited documentation of community perspectives on the mining sector. Community perspectives are those perspectives that are grounded in a particular community in its particular context. This article explores conflicts between diamond mining companies in Tanzania and their surrounding communities to highlight community perspectives on these conflicts. The article attempts to draw the attention of those interested in gaining a more detailed understanding of conflicts in the mining sector within an African context. The main thesis is that a thorough understanding of community perspectives is essential for addressing conflicts in the mining sector.

Using a case study of Williamson Diamond Mining Limited and its surrounding communities, the author highlights the views of grassroots people on how to address conflicts in the mining sector. The focus of the article is to highlight the multidisciplinary orientation of Action Research (AR) and showcase the grassroots and context-specific challenges faced by marginalised communities, aiming to help develop potential solutions for addressing them. The author has attempted to answer the following key research questions: What are community perspectives and implications for conflicts between diamond mining companies and communities?; Was AR able to generate authentic and emancipatory knowledge in the situations where it was applied?; and How did the findings reflect on natural resource governance and diamond mining in particular – did they add to it or challenge it? The article begins by discussing the mining policy framework in Tanzania; moves on to the study methodology; presents the study findings; discusses the findings, and concludes with a number of remarks.

The Mining Policy Framework in Tanzania

Tanzania is one of the richest countries in the world in terms of its natural resource wealth. The country is the world's top producer of tanzanite. Mwadui Ward (the focus of this article) has the largest diamond kimberlite pipe in the world (URT 2015). The Ministry of Minerals is responsible for managing the policy and legal framework that pertains to the country's natural resources and the extractive industries in particular. The Commissioner for Minerals in the Ministry is responsible for supervising and regulating of the Mining Act (URT 2010, 2019). There is also a Mining Advisory Committee that advises the Minister for Minerals on matters concerning the sector. Other legislation and policies governing the industry are the Mineral Policy of Tanzania (URT 2009), the National Environmental Policy (URT 1997), and the Explosives Act (Act 56 of 1963) (URT 1963).

The conventional policy and legal framework of the mining industry emanates from market economic reforms initiated in the mid-1980s (see Kinyondo and Huggins 2019 for more detail about the history of the mining sector in Tanzania and related conflicts). Consistent with these reforms, the role of the government shifted from the sole owner and operator of mines to becoming the regulator responsible for formulating and implementing policy, guidelines and regulations, as well as promoting and facilitating private investments. The literature on the shortcomings of market economic reforms is readily available (Harvey 2005, 2011, 2014; Beder 2009). There are numerous studies that document the increasing inequalities resulting from these reforms in Tanzania (Gladwin 1991; Meena 1991; Madaha 2014a, b; Bond 2005).

The major diamond-mining corporations in the country are located in Mwadui Ward, Kishapu District, Shinyanga Region, Western Tanzania. Table 1 shows the population of each village in the ward in 2017. Mwadui Luhumbo is the capital of the ward and had the largest population. The latitude of the ward is 3°32'59" S and longitude is 33° 36' 0" E. The climate is tropical savannah, characterised as wet (Hudson Institute of Mineralogy n.d.).

There are two major diamond-mining companies in Mwadui Luhumbo Ward. Williamson Diamond Mining Limited is a subsidiary of Petra Diamonds Limited which held a 75 per cent ownership stake in the mine, with the remaining 25 per cent being owned by the government of Tanzania as of 2019 (Jönssona et al. 2019). Petra Diamonds Limited is listed on the London Stock Exchange and has its headquarters in London. In 2015, the company produced 202,265 carats. The annual production stands at 0.2 million carats with revenue of US\$78.9 million per annum. In 2023, it

produced 0.32 million carats. Williamson is renowned for its beautifully rounded white and “bubble-gum” pink diamonds. The potential mine-life will be until 2050 (Petra Diamonds Limited 2016, 2024). Based on an assessment conducted in 1994, the mine’s diamond reserves are estimated at 50.9 million carats. The latest report (i.e. 2024) shows that the reserves is 37.2 million carats. Between 1997 and 2005, the mine paid a total of US\$8.4 million in royalties and US\$16.7 million in other taxes to the Tanzanian government. In 2024, the company paid US\$15.7 million in taxes and royalties to the government of Tanzania. In 2009, the mine employed 967 employees of whom 959 (99%) were Tanzanians. The number has slightly increased to 988 in 2024 (SID 2009; Petra Diamonds Limited, 2024).

Table 1: Key demographic information on Mwadui Luhumbo Ward, Kishapu District, Shinyanga Region

| Village | Population | | | Households | Hamlets |
|----------------|------------|--------|--------|------------|---------|
| | Male | Female | Total | | |
| Wizunza | 876 | 922 | 1798 | 241 | 04 |
| Nyenze | 2,190 | 2,765 | 5,555 | 479 | 05 |
| Ng’wang’holo | 1,116 | 1,032 | 2,148 | 342 | 05 |
| Mwadui Luhumbo | 3,721 | 4,352 | 8,073 | 1,765 | 06 |
| Grand total | 9,071 | 12,224 | 17,574 | 2,827 | 20 |

Source: Secondary data from Ward Executive Office, 2017, Kishapu District Council Office, 2017

Another diamond mining company is owned by Tanzanian firm called El-Hillal Minerals Limited. It is also located in the same area bordering the Williamson diamond mine. By 2007, the company had produced 30,000 carats of diamonds, worth US\$6 million. The company has so far paid US\$300,000 in royalties and other taxes by 2009. In the same year, the mine had already employed a total of 220 persons, all of whom were Tanzanians (SID 2009). Those are the only statistics available. The findings of this research have revealed that the company has ceased its operations for no apparent reason.

Methodology

Context and study population

This study was part of a large project known as the Intensive Movement Building Cycle (IMBC). The author focused specifically on the study area around the Williamson Diamond Mining Limited through conducting an

AR intervention supplemented by additional extended visits To Mwadui Luhumbo Ward, Kishapu District, Shinyanga Region, Western Tanzania. The ward is composed of four villages, namely Wizunza, Nyenze, Ng'wamg'holo, and Mwadui Luhumbo. There are several organised community-based groups for low-income individuals. The ward is characterised by marginalisation in terms of the absence of reliable social services (such as water, health, and electricity), the persistence of gender-based violence (GBV) (physical violence against women), oppressive traditions (denying women the right to education); social ills (e.g., persistent alcoholism); conflicts between surrounding communities and the mining companies (examined in detail in the findings section of this paper); and presence of national advocacy non-governmental organisations (NGOs) attempting to improve the lives of marginalised people (see the findings section for details). The Tanzania Gender Network Program (TGNP) is one of the major advocacy NGOs operating in the ward and it provided funding to support this study. This NGO is committed to intensifying grassroots feminist interventions throughout Tanzania, particularly in the ward. Additional follow-up work on the study was supported by the Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) and the researcher's personal funds. TGNP's support has not influenced the research outcome.

Key demographic information about the ward in 2017 is presented in Table 1. The ward was predominantly occupied by the Sukuma Bantu-speaking ethnic group, one of Tanzania's 120 ethnic groups, and the country's largest group (Britannica 2011). The Sukuma are predominantly patriarchal, meaning women are brought up to be submissive to men in decision-making, even though they are the major source of labour in agriculture, small business, roofing, family care and household chores. Women occasionally engage in the extractive industries both legally and illegally.

Crops grown in the district include maize, sorghum, millet, cotton and beans. Nearly 97 per cent of the residents of the ward depend on agriculture. Sadly, agriculture is heavily affected by climate change which has brought about extended periods of drought. Almost 100 per cent of agricultural produce is lost during extended droughts, and over 50 per cent of livestock die. Farming and animal husbandry have become increasingly challenging, resulting in food insecurity and extreme poverty. Statistics published in 2007 showed that 22 per cent of people in the ward lived in extreme poverty (PMO-RALG 2007). Some people migrate to regions such as Morogoro, Mbeya, Kagera and Tabora to shield themselves from calamity.



Note: *Various photos taken by the author at Williamson Diamond Mining Company. Top left is the author at the Williamson statue and with the women participants). On the right are residences for employees of the mining company.*

Theoretical framework

The study employed an Action Research methodology informed by Gender and Development (GAD) theory as a lens for analysing the findings. GAD theory is a strand of socialist feminism that examines differences across class, gender, sexual and racial ways of being among men and women (Brenner 2014; Parpart et al. 2000; Madaha 2021). Relationships between women and men are socially constructed and they determine men's and women's position in society; they are not immutable reflections of the natural order. GAD examines the oppression of women and men and calls for inclusive movements by the oppressed to transform power relations towards the achievement of a more just society (Mohanty 2002; Madaha 2021). A gender-sensitive AR aims to overcome social exclusion based on gender or other forms of oppression by giving marginalised women and men voice in research as active participants (Parpart et al. 2000; Coghlan and Brydon-Miller 2014; Madaha 2018, 2020, 2021).

Action Research methodology

The author employed a qualitative AR methodology. AR requires the development of an in-depth analysis of a case, such as a programme, event, activity, process, or individual case. The participatory methodology allows the researcher to collect detailed information using a variety of data

collection procedures over a sustained period of time (Creswell 2014). AR brings together researchers and respondents to integrate joint critical dialogues, social investigation, education (or co-learning), and responsive action. Researchers and community members engage in critical and creative forms of co-learning to produce transformational actions. Respondents in an AR project are referred to as participants because they collaborate with the researcher; they go beyond simply responding to the researcher's questions. As the researcher gathers data, the community members' skills in understanding their challenges, are enhanced. The mission of AR is *to attain empowerment* for all involved (Kemmis and McTaggart 2005; Coghlan and Brydon-Miller 2014; Kemmis et al. 2014; Chevalier and Bucklesdon 2019).

Trajber et al. (2019) assert that transforming complex, oppressive, and unsustainable socio-environmental arrangements requires communities working together to overcome powerlessness. This study has focused on how AR can bring together researchers, activists, journalists, local government officials, and communities to acquire authentic and emancipatory knowledge (Pedler and Burgoyne 2008; Reason and Bradbury 2008; Coghlan and Brydon-Miller 2014). According to Coghlan and Brydon-Miller (2014), authentic knowledge ensures the achievement of multiple perspectives in a study location. Here, communities acquire information they can use in a more sophisticated manner. The research stimulates and facilitates action by the study population, and empowers host communities to take action to address local challenges. Pedler and Burgoyne (2008) argue that emancipatory knowledge enables communities and other stakeholders to overcome oppression and realise their full human potential.

Sample and sampling procedures

The sampling procedure, data collection techniques, and respondents of the study are described in Table 2. With the support of LGA (local government authority) officials, community-based organisations (CBOs), local NGO field staff and community activists working in the ward, the author managed to identify 25 community representatives to participate in the AR. Other participants are listed in Table 2.

Respondents comprised community representatives (25), ward local government officials (18), district local government officials (19), and press club journalists (21). The respondents were purposively selected in line with the objective of the AR.

Table 2: Study respondents and data collection tools

| Category/ levels | Mwadui Luhumbo Ward Female | Mwadui Luhumbo Ward Male | Age range (Over 50% in the age range of 26–35) | AR data collection tool | Procedures for the selection of participants |
|--|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Community representatives (co-researchers) | 20 | 5 | 26 to 55 | Participant observation, semi-structured interview schedules, focus group discussions (FGDs), community maps, group work and discussions, participatory analysis of existing government and non-government institutions, storytelling, role-play, poems, songs, and presentations by groups using different techniques such as posters and drawings, taking action to resolve challenges, and forming a CBO | Collaboration between author, local government officials, community leaders, and CBOs |
| Press club journalists (FGDs for journalists) | 9 | 12 | 26 to 55 | FGDs | Collaboration between author, press club leaders and CBOs |
| Ward officials (serving as key informants) | 3 | 15 | 26 to 55 | FGDs and key informant interviews | Collaboration between author, local government officials and CBOs |
| District officials (serving as key informants) | 7 | 12 | 26 to 55 | FGDs and key informant interviews | Collaboration between author, local government officials and CBOs |
| Officials of the mining company | | 3 | 30–52 | Key informants | Collaboration between author, local government officials and CBOs |
| Total | 39 | 44 | | | |

Data Collection

The researcher used AR data collection tools including participant observation, semi-structured interview schedules, FGDs, and key informant interviews (see Appendix 1). To facilitate interaction among community representatives, the author used additional AR data collection tools including community maps, group work, brainstorming, analysis of existing government and non-government institutions, storytelling, role-play, poems, and songs. The community representatives learned presentation skills using techniques such as posters and drawings. As part of the AR intervention, some proactive journalists visited and worked with the surrounding communities to further explore the situation. In line with the study objective, the author spent an extended period with the host communities from 8 February to 30 May 2017. The author also conducted follow-up visits at the study locations in 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023).

Responsive action

The final stage of data collection focused on responsive action involving the author and community representatives in addressing the challenges identified on both short-term and long-term bases. The community representatives participated in collective inquiry of the challenges that faced them and experimented with how they planned to address them. The exercise enabled the author to bring on board his expertise and that of the people to identify the challenges and devise solutions. The exercise also enhanced the researcher's understanding of the study's objective.

Data analysis

The data were collected in Kiswahili. The author transcribed data in Kiswahili and translated them into English. Care was taken to ensure that the translations maintained the meanings and intentions of the participants. Content analysis was used to analyse the data in line with the study objective. Literature on content analysis is readily available (Neuendorf 2012; Drisko and Mosch 2015).

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are about protecting humans from any harm. AR was conducted after the proposal and research tools had been reviewed and approved by the relevant ethics authorities. Permission from the local government authorities was obtained before the author interacted with the respondents. Research permits were also obtained from local government

authorities in December 2016 and national government in May 2017. Obtaining informed consent from participants was a high priority and care was taken to protect participants' privacy. The author explained the research to all respondents to obtain their consent. All participants signed a consent form before they participated. All of the responses from the respondents were anonymised through the use of codes. Individual privacy was maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study. Any potential identifiers (e.g., names and locations) were removed.



Photo: Co-researchers participating in community mapping during AR

Findings

The challenges

The AR exposed several challenges in the mining sector that had not been previously captured by studies (Lange 2011; Bryceson et al. 2014; Kinyondo and Huggins 2019; Jönsson et al. 2019). The challenges are explained in the following paragraphs.

Firstly, the surrounding communities remain marginalised due to poor land compensation and reallocation measures. Although the communities rely on peasant agriculture, a large proportion of agricultural land has been taken away for mining. Taking agricultural land way from them, at least from the community's perspective, makes them lose their means of survival. One of the community leaders said:

The mining companies have taken our land for agriculture. We have been left with nowhere to farm. This heavily affects us. There is no food to put on the table for our children. (Community leader, 21 March 2017.)

All holders of mining licences are legally required to develop and implement a plan for the relocation and resettlement of communities, as well as payment of compensation to these communities (URT 1999, 2010). During data collection time, El-Hillal Minerals Limited, which purchased 92km² of 'diamond protected' land¹ (to become the second largest diamond mine in Tanzania after Williamson Diamond Mining Limited), had not fulfilled its obligations. A reconciliation committee, composed of ward counsellors from the communities, followed up on this compensation but in vain. Kinyondo and Huggins (2019) stress that the privatisation of the mining sector does not favour the majority of Tanzanians. Similar views are shared by Lange (2011). Harvey (2011) argues that capitalist development promotes the accumulation of wealth for the rich by dispossessing the poor.

Secondly, the communities remain marginalised due to gender discrimination. There is a community representation committee composed of leaders of eight villages. The committee facilitates collaboration between the mining companies and affected communities. Because only three of the committee members are women, the voices of women are underrepresented in this decision-making body. Experiences from Costa Rica (Weitzner and Borras 1999), the Philippines (Talaue-McManus et al. 1999) and India (Kant and Cooke 1999) suggest that including previously excluded groups in decision-making structures offers new opportunities for finding better ways to avoid, resolve, or manage conflicts. Experiences from India highlight failures of local committees in addressing challenges due to inadequate and inflexible government policies (Kant and Cooke 1999).

Thirdly, the surrounding communities remain marginalised because the mining companies have not fulfilled certain obligations imposed on them by the 2010 Mining Act. Article 52(e) of the 2010 Mining Act requires all holders of mining licences to prioritise employing and training members from communities. They are also required to develop and implement a succession plan to replace expatriate employees with community members in accordance with the Employment and Labour Relations Act. This has not been applied in the study area. The findings revealed that human resource officials from mining companies often offer employment to Tanzanians from communities other than those directly affected by local mining operations. Communities believe that mining company human resource officers often hire people from their own ethnic groups. The finding confirms the findings of previous research. Lange and Kinyondo (2016) argue that local community benefits required by the 2010 Mining Act is often subject to elite capture and patronage and that the Act's requirements are weak. The findings of this study suggest that the Mining Act of 2019 has similar challenges (URT 2019).

Fourthly, women and girls in and around mining are not safe and secure. The Mining Act of 2019 requires all holders of mining companies to ensure the safety of their employees and the public (URT 2019). The findings have shown that communities around mining sites are subject to physical torture, women and girls are raped, and some people have even been murdered. This violence was mainly committed by staff of a security company that oversaw the security of the premises of Williamson Diamond Mining Limited during the initial data collection time. The quotations below shed further light on this lack of safety.

...a few months ago, I and several other women entered into the mining site to collect firewood. We have done that several times in the past. However, on that day we got surrounded by the security guards working for Zenith. The guard split us into old women and young ones. I and the rest of the other older women were told to pick up our firewood and run away as much as we could. The young and the beautiful ones were not released. I am sure they got raped. However, they cannot say anything because it is shameful for a woman to be raped...

The findings suggest themes of gender-based violence, discrimination, and the impact of cultural attitudes on vulnerable host communities. There is some suggestion that the younger women were sexually assaulted but remained silent due to the stigma and shame associated with rape. The atrocity led to routine disruption of daily schedule, as well as sexual exploitation of the women. This finding underscores the power of AR to enable vulnerable communities to speak for themselves.

...there is not much we can do because the key government officials are offered bribes worth millions of Tanzanian shillings. Therefore, they cannot take action against the brutality of the mining companies. For example, two of community members who openly spoke for the welfare of the communities surrounding the mining areas were assassinated. At the time, they were about to win the case in a court in favour of the communities. The perpetrators are the mining companies because local people do not own guns. The supporters of deceased have been intimidated. For that reason, they have decided to withdraw from the fight... (Translated from original Kiswahili)

Overall, the findings suggest the systemic use of intimidation, corruption and violence to protect the interests of powerful mining companies at the expense of surrounding communities' rights and welfare. The assassination of some community members who advocated for the welfare of their communities underscores the extreme measures taken by the mining companies to silence dissent. The use of violence to suppress opposition is a grave human rights violation. This indicates a deep-rooted corruption that undermines the rule of law and good governance. The timing of the assassinations, just as the community members were about to hear the outcome of a court case they expected to win, suggests that the mining companies are willing to interfere with the judicial process to maintain their control and avoid accountability. The assertion that local people hardly own guns highlights the power imbalance between the local communities and the mining companies. This imbalance is exacerbated by the support the companies receive from corrupt officials. The intimidation of the supporters of the deceased and their subsequent withdrawal from the fight illustrate the chilling effect of violence and corruption on activism and community resistance. This shows how fear is used as a tool to maintain the status quo and prevent any challenge to the atrocities perpetuated by the mining companies. The responsible authorities have not taken measures to ensure accountability. Privatisation is not necessarily beneficial to the Tanzanian public. There is a need for urgent attention to address the incidences and protect the rights of the affected communities. The creation of local policies and laws is not adequate. The measures in place can be enhanced adopting readily available international safety standards that promote health and safety in the mining industry (Chen and Zorigt 2013).

Fifthly, the desperate situation of surrounding communities has led to an alternative way of earning a living. Here, villagers from the communities have become *wabeshi* (illegally stealing kimberlitic tailings from land owned by mining companies) with the support of *makota* (a local term referring to the relatively wealthy individuals who sponsor the *wabeshi* on the condition that they sell any diamonds to them for less than their market value). The

communities are of the opinion that they are entitled to areas to undertake their own small-scale diamond mining. The view is best summarised by the following quote:

There have been empty promises from the mining companies and Williamson Diamonds Limited in particular. The company promised that it will set aside areas for artisanal mining. Sometimes in the past, we were told by the company that communities are legally entitled to an area for small-scale mining. The promise was given to us by an official of the company. The promise made the communities to stop all illegal mining activities in the mining areas. Although we have been waiting for over a year, the promise never got fulfilled. Subsequently, the communities have resumed illegal mining activities as a source of their livelihood... (Translated from the original Kiswahili.)

An in-depth interview with one of the representatives of Williamson Diamond Mining Limited revealed that the company does not need its kimberlite tailings. In other words, there is no need for the communities to risk their lives by illegally entering the mining sites to steal the tailings the company does not want. This finding shows the lack of discussion between the mining companies and the communities. The findings suggest a need for inclusive and participatory policies that promote community engagement in addressing key issues (UN 1992; Fischer 2000; Mitchell 2005). Discriminatory approaches are not helpful because inclusive policies of the kind promoted by Talaue-McManus et al. (1999) can provide accountability to communities and, in so doing, minimise unnecessary conflicts (Furnaro 2019).

Sixthly, the mining company fails to fulfil its corporate social responsibility sufficiently. At the time of the data collection in 2017, the Williamson Diamond Mining Limited stakeholders engagement plan had not been updated for seven years. One of the officials from this mining company revealed that the plan had been prepared in 2010. According to the plan's provisions, the company had been disbursing four million Tanzanian shillings to communities every three months (approximately US\$900) (key informant interviews). At that time, there were eight villages surrounding the mines that benefitted from the financial aid, namely Mwadui Luhumbo, Nyenze, Igukilo, Maganzo, Masagala, Songwa, Buganika and Buchambi. However, since the plan had been drawn up there had been an increase in the population and two new villages had been established, namely Wizunza and Ng'wang'holo. The mining company had shied away from its responsibility by refusing to include the newly established villages in the plan. The government could not hold the company accountable, leading to a strained relationship between the company and the communities from the two new villages. The

findings suggest that not taking corporate social responsibility obligations seriously can result in increased conflict between mining companies and surrounding communities. This contradicts the argument by Pedersena and Jacob (2017) who argue that the Tanzanian government has become stronger and more able to hold mining companies accountable.

The solutions following the AR intervention

The AR intervention generated authentic and emancipatory knowledge, enabling the communities to develop functional solutions to the challenges. Firstly, the communities fostered ties with local journalists by exposing the mining company atrocities. The journalists published the findings. A select list of media links is included at the end of this paper. The publications took the form of featured articles in various newspapers as well as news stories on television and on radio stations. The findings were also shared on blogs and on social media channels such YouTube, Facebook and WhatsApp. Seven of the journalists who attended a feedback meeting organised by the author and community representatives published seven articles in local newspapers. The exercise of the journalists visiting and working with the communities strengthened the relationship between the media and communities.

The study facilitated the creation of an inclusive framework to enable the communities to participate in decision-making. Confirming the findings of previous research on AR, the study served as a critical milestone in empowering communities (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller 2014; Kemmis et al. 2014). Community members were of the opinion that they needed a CBO to be in a position to address the challenges and make use of the opportunities highlighted through the AR. It was argued that with a legal identity, the CBO could write official letters to different stakeholders to advocate for holding the mining companies accountable. A CBO with a constitution could bring together like-minded activists to fight for the rights of marginalised people in the area. A constitution could also limit the possibility that certain members of the CBO might become too powerful at the expense of others.

The 25 co-researchers then established a CBO called Mtandao wa Nyuki Mwadui Luhumbo [translated into English as the Network of Bees – Mwadui Luhumbo] and registered it with local government authorities at the district office in 2017.² The author worked with the co-researchers to draw up a constitution for the CBO and an annual action plan. Establishing their own legal entity enabled the representatives to operate in the district and address the challenges prioritised in the action plan. Further information is included in a list of media links at the end of this article.

The CBO was also linked to a regional press club located at Shinyanga municipality. This further enhanced the action space for affected communities. The community representatives wanted to make their voices heard through the media as one of the activities in their action plan. The press club comprises community journalists who represent different media outlets operating in the district and the entire region. Twenty journalists and four leaders of the CBO came together in a two-day workshop with funding provided by TGNP. The author and the four CBO leaders jointly presented the findings of the AR study to the journalists for possible publication.

Finally, the CBO organised communities in the surrounding area to form over 80 registered groups. The author's follow-up in late 2020 revealed that the Williamson Diamond Mining Limited had started providing diamond kimberlitic tailings to the groups. The achievement would not have been possible in the absence of advocacy efforts by the CBO. The communities have developed skills to extract small amounts of diamond from the tailings. The income gained from the tailing supplements household incomes. During an official visit by the late President John Pombe Magufuli, the CBO presented a request to him to help secure compensation from the mining companies. The president agreed to facilitate the process.

The outcome was that the Williamson mining company compensated the communities by giving them 2,000km² of land for agricultural production (not mining). Creating a CBO gave voice to women and other marginalised people on mining issues. The level of conflict between the mining companies and the communities has been reduced. Williamson Diamond Mining Limited has increased its corporate social responsibility funding to local mining affected communities to over 100 million Tanzanian shillings per annum. Among other things, the company has also provided piped water distribution and built a health centre to serve the communities. This means the AR interventions have led to the achievement of key milestones that have been needed since the 1940s (key informant interviews with local government officials and representatives of Williamson Diamond Mining Limited).

The achievements are sustainable. At some point, the mining company tried to avoid meeting commitments it had made. Among other things, it continued to fail to offer employment opportunities to local communities. The security company continued to harass the communities by invading their residences and torturing people. In response to these atrocities, the CBO mobilised the communities to put up roadblocks to block mining company vehicles from passing through the villages. This brought the matter to the attention of the local government authorities. The authorities intervened to address the challenge. Subsequently, the attacks on the villages have

stopped. The gender-based atrocities and murders of community members have also stopped. The CBO continues to bring together researchers, activists, journalists, local government officials and communities to co-create relevant and context-specific knowledge about the ward and what its communities need.

An interesting finding is that, the Non-executive Chair of Petra, Varda Shine, proudly claims: "I am particularly pleased with the business's work in the communities around our operations. It is perhaps in adversity that both these intentions and relationships are tested. I have seen first-hand the impact of the Tailings Storage Facility (TSF) failure on the 12 villages around Williamson in Tanzania and our response. That failure should never have occurred, but our swift and appropriate response was about more than meeting just our obligations. The team on the ground has done a fantastic job supporting affected people, including through initiatives to restore the environment and livelihoods. I believe it is worthy of a case study for our industry." Petra Limited (2024:6). Although, there are several actors claiming credit for addressing the atrocities, one is left to wonder where were they before this AR intervention in 2017.

Timeline of conflict and long-term achievements, 1940 to 2023

Dr John Williamson discovered and operated the mining during the first phase (1940–1958). The mine was bought by De Beers and the colonial government in 1958. The two entities operated the mining, in equal partnership, from 1958 to 1973 (second phase). The colonial government was replaced by the nationalist government following Tanzania's independence on 9 December 1961. The first two phases were characterised by the absence of conflict between the mining company and local communities.

In the third phase (1973–1992), the State Mining Corporation (STAMICO) owned 100 per cent of shares in the mine. At the time, the nationalist government nationalised most of the major means of production in the country through its *Ujamaa* policies (Cranenburgh 1990; Hyden 1980). In this phase, illegal mining activities started at the mining site around 1989. Local communities bribed police officers in charge of the security of the mine to facilitate illegal mining activities. The act fuelled conflict between local communities and the company.

The Tanzanian government decided to sell 75 per cent of its shares to De Beers in the fourth phase (1993–2008). During that time, the government engaged in the privatisation of parastatals following the adoption of neoliberal policies in the country (UNDP 2015). De Beers hired a private

security company known as Gray Security Services Ltd. to combat illegal mining activities by members of the surrounding communities. In this phase, conflict between the mining company and local communities intensified.

The peak of the conflict happened in 1999 when the security company attacked the villages of the local communities. The villagers joined hands and counter-attacked the security guards. Men used slings to fight back. Women and children collected stones and gave them to fighters. The villagers managed to capture all of the security guards. The police force negotiated with the host communities for the release of the captives. This event is known locally as 'the Mlimba war' after Mlimba, the head of the security guards, who was also captured during the battle. The security company never went into the village again, it confined its services to the mining site.

During the fifth phase (2009 to 2020), Petra Diamonds purchased shares from De Beers starting in November 2008. Petra Diamonds started operating the mine in February 2009. The mining company hired the services of Zenith Security from 2011 to 2021. As per the findings of this study, the security company committed the worst atrocities that had ever happened in the history of the mine. The AR intervention took place during this time. The exercise brought the atrocities to the attention of the Tanzanian public and the international community (see the select list of articles at the end of this paper). Mtandao wa Nyuki Mwadui Luhumbo CBO was established to implement actions planned during the AR intervention.

In May 2020, Leigh Day issued a claim in the High Court of England and Wales in relation to alleged breaches of human rights, personal injuries and deaths suffered at and surrounding the mine arising from the security operations. In November 2020, an independent NGO, Rights and Accountability in Development (RAID) published a report outlining similar allegations during the same period.

In the sixth phase (2021 to 2024), relations between the Williamson Mining Company and the local communities were relatively peaceful. Informed by AR, the Mtandao wa Nyuki Mwadui Luhumbo CBO managed to take action to address the challenges emanating from the conflict between the mining companies and the communities. The CBO continues to serve as a platform for community organising, and advocacy. The mining company has addressed all of the AR requests raised in 2017 by the CBO (see the section on challenges). The company has significantly improved its relationship with the CBO and the rest of the community members it represents (see also Petra Limited, 2024). In April 2021 the mining company issued fair portions of land for artisanal mining. In May

2021, the international media reported that Petra Diamonds Limited had confirmed a settlement in the amount of £4.3 million to compensate the victims of the atrocities. The mining company fired Zenith Security and hired a new security company. The CBO leadership reports that the new security company has good relationship with the host communities. The CBO leadership has continued liaising with the mining company. In 2024, the Non-executive Chair of Petra, Varda Shine, proudly claims that engaging with and supporting communities at Williamson mine is worthy of a case study for the industry (see Petra Limited, 2024:6).

Discussion

A growing body of literature supports the view that active participation of communities (as opposed to passive participation) is essential for addressing conflicts in the extractive industries (Dyball et al. 2009). Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development highlights that environmental issues are best handled with the active participation of all concerned citizens and emphasises the right of all individuals to participate in decision-making processes. The principle further pinpoints that the full participation of women in such efforts is essential to achieve sustainable development (UN 1992).

Although one of the objectives of the Mineral Policy of Tanzania is to strengthen the involvement and participation of communities in mining (URT 2009), communities hardly participate in the sector. Furnaro (2019) highlights the lack of community participation in decisions as one of the main reasons for the increased conflicts in the sector. Similar views are shared by Singh et al. (2007), who state that weak public participation in decision-making processes leads to conflicts between communities and mining companies. Singh et al. (2007) assert that meaningful participation gives citizens voice and legitimacy in decision-making. Active participation of citizens builds trust and effective communication among concerned parties including local governments, environment monitoring authorities and civil societies. The uniqueness of the AR intervention study is that it has highlighted the potential of AR to capture the local perspectives that are essential for addressing conflicts between mining companies and surrounding communities. AR is an innovation that embeds active participation of participants in a development intervention (Kemmis et al. 2014).

A call for active participation is supported by research worldwide (Lee 1993; Fischer 2000; Mitchell 2005). Mitchell (2005) observes that participation of communities in natural resource governance can improve

environmental management, and can thereby contribute to enhanced quality of life. According to Lee (1993) inclusive participation of stakeholders is one of the primary elements for effective decision-making in natural resource governance. Participation of communities in resource governance, as promoted by Talaue-McManus et al. (1999), can lead to the development of a sense of ownership and of accountability by the surrounding communities.

The study findings support the views of Mitchell (2005) who believes that participation of communities in natural resource governance can improve environmental management, thereby contributing to enhanced quality of life. Further, participation allows effective decision-making in natural resource governance (Lee 1993), as well as a sense of ownership and of accountability by the communities (Talaue-McManus et al. 1999).

Secondly, the AR intervention study facilitated the creation of a critical culture that sustains ongoing transformation in the interests of marginalised communities. The AR led to the establishment of a CBO that has successfully organised the communities it represents in order to hold government, mining companies, and other key stakeholders accountable. The CBO serves as a vehicle to facilitate participation of community members in the management of locally available resources. In line with past research, community participation in the management of community resources is essential (Kinyondo and Huggins 2019; Knierzinger and Sopelle 2019). AR initiated an empowering platform that continues to improve the welfare of the communities. Establishing a CBO makes a unique contribution to the AR literature that calls for the empowerment of communities (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller 2014; Kemmis et al. 2014).

The goal of AR is the co-production of knowledge with the co-researchers through 'learning by doing' (Freire 1999), and transformations in the community to enable the participants to take more informed actions and co-develop systems that address the challenges sustainably (Trajber et al. 2019). This study has attained the goal. The study took the local context on board by focusing on participative, action-oriented inquiry to enable communities flourish in their social and physical environments (Bradbury 2019; Swantz 1975, 2008). Informed by this participatory, bottom-up perspective, the researcher did not tell communities about their problems but worked with them to identify their problems themselves and what action they would take to tackle those problems (Marja-Liisa Swantz, originator of 'participatory action research', cited in Bradbury et al. 2019). A study conducted by Mwaipopo (2014) highlighted some related issues but was not able to develop a strategy to address them.

Finally, the AR enabled the communities to take action against atrocities perpetrated by the mining company's security company. It continues to serve as a focal point for community mobilising and organising. This is in line with past AR literature which asserts the ability of such research to facilitate joint critical dialogues, social investigation, education (or co-learning), and responsive action (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller 2014; Kemmis et al. 2014). Even so, the AR suggests a need for strengthening legal frameworks, empowering independent bodies, enhancing transparency, promoting whistleblower protection; strengthening civil society; international cooperation; public awareness and education; judicial reforms; economic reforms; and community engagement to sustain the effective measures taken so far and address atrocities in the mining sector on sustainable basis (Lee 1993; Talaue-McManus et al. 1999; Coghlan and Brydon-Miller 2014; Kemmis et al. 2014; Kinyondo and Huggins 2019; Knierzinger and Sopelle 2019; Onyango 2021).

Conclusion

The uniqueness of this study is that it has highlighted the potential of AR for capturing community perspectives. A thorough understanding of such perspectives is essential for addressing conflicts between mining companies and the communities that surround them. The article highlights the multidisciplinary orientation of AR in showcasing grassroots and context-specific challenges of marginalised communities as well as potential solutions in addressing them in a variety of contexts. As has been the case with other AR studies (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller 2014; Kemmis et al. 2014), this intervention has facilitated transformative learning that enabled the local communities to thoroughly understand the challenges they face and then take appropriate action to address them.

Apart from generating concrete actions in the short term, the AR developed the transformative potential of the communities to address their challenges in the long term. The CBO enabled the communities to gain collective legal status to operate in the district and address the challenges prioritised in the CBO action plan. With this, the study attained the goal of effecting social change and creating knowledge in collaboration with local participants. As has been found in previous AR studies, this study integrated joint critical dialogues, social investigation, co-learning, and responsive action to attain empowerment for all involved (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller 2014; Kemmis et al. 2014).

It is worthwhile mentioning that past efforts hardly addressed conflicts between the mining companies and the communities. The creation of the CBO, as one of the major outcomes of AR, to facilitate a dialogue between the communities, the mining companies, and other actors, has resolved conflicts to a large extent.

Finally, this article has added to the literature on extractive industries and society as well as the AR methodology in an attempt to spark action by local communities. Scholars studying the interaction between extractive industries and society are encouraged to increase the use of AR methodology to boost the surrounding communities and mining companies' ability to address conflicts at mining sites.

Notes

1. The land is believed to have been purchased under fraudulent circumstances because at the time El Hillal, the owner, was the secretary of the ruling party in Shinyanga.
2. See <https://mtazamomedia.blogspot.com/2017/03/mtandao-wa-jinsia-tanzania-tgnp-watoa.html>.

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 - <https://habariswitch.blogspot.com/2017/03/wachimbaji-wadogo-wamuomba-eneo-rais.html>.
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 - <http://www.mtaakwamtaa.co.tz/2017/03/wachimbaji-wadogo-wa-madini-wabeshi.html>.
- Online media links on the outcome (sub-topic: Williamson Diamond Limited offers diamond kimberlite tailings to the surrounding communities free of charge) include:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rchvwYerIII>.
 - https://www.facebook.com/channeltentz/photos/habari-serikali-kupitia-wizara-ya-madini-imetatua-mgogoro-wamuda-mrefu-baina-ya/2855578291133686/?locale=th_TH&paipv=0&eav=AfYL0ARmlXpd4EqGOvQqE46fhjmkijVXjTn66KXqJ8SkbPMln_Umw6GzqJXqU-aCxs&rdr.
 - <https://www.madini.go.tz/page/eca6da63-7a2a-4e0a-a4b6-91d6d1799bc8/>.
 - <https://www.jamiiforums.com/threads/mgogoro-wa-wachimbaji-madini-watatuliwa.1665782/>.
- Online media links on the outcome (sub-topic: Press Club meeting) include:
 - <https://mtazamomedia.blogspot.com/2017/03/mtandao-wa-jinsia-tanzania-tgnp-watoa.html>.
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Appendices

Appendix 1: Key questions/ issues explored through participant observation, semi-structured interview schedules, focus group discussions and key informant interviews

- i. Safety and security of women and girl children in and around the mining sites as reflected in laws and regulations.
- ii. Surrounding community's participation in decision-making in the mining sector, including employment and local content. (local content refers sourcing resources i.e. workforce, goods, services etc from the surrounding community as a way to empower them and their economy)
- iii. Compensation for land taken for mining and reallocation of land for surrounding communities.
- iv. Surrounding communities' participation in decision making.
- v. Presence and impacts of conflict between mining companies and surrounding communities.
- vi. Gender relations including gender discrimination, incidents GBV and gender-responsive budgets as cross-cutting issues.
- vii. Proposed solutions to address the challenges:
 - a. establishment and registration of a CBO.
 - b. strengthening of relationships with journalists.

Appendix 2: Initial data collection at the study location in 2017¹

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| 8 February 2017 | Planning the initial data collection. |
| 7–16 February | Mapping study location with CBO members near the mining site. |
| 19 February | Arrival in the field. |
| 20 March | Courtesy call and planning with local participants. |
| 21–25 February | Participatory action research field work with kikundi mama every day and with other groups in the second half of the day. |
| 26 February | Sunday break. |

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 27 February | Reflection and preparation for ward and district feedback workshops. |
| 28 February | Ward feedback followed by reflection. |
| 1 March | Preparation for district feedback session and collection of relevant data. |
| 2 March | District feedback workshop followed by reflection. |
| 3 March | Preparation for press clubs workshop and CBO training. |
| 4 March | CBO training and formation. |
| 5 March | Sunday break. |
| 6 March | CBO training and formation. |
| 7–8 March | Presentation of findings to press club. |
| 9 March | Orient investigative journalism team and print and disseminate CBO action plans at ward level. |
| 9–14 March | Investigative journalism continues unaccompanied. |

Note

1. Initial data collection refers to the initial AR Action Research (AR) Intervention in 2017. The initial data collection was accompanied by follow up visit in 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2023, and 2024. The follow up visits were geared at monitoring the progress of the AR intervention. That, the researcher monitoring how the surrounding communities used the capabilities acquired through AR to address the challenges they faced. The follow up visits also monitored the achievements of the AR intervention over the years.

