



Using community stakeholder interventions to increase transparency and accountability in Uganda's extractives sector

Companies working in the extractives sector are increasingly focusing on improving their accountability to communities by sharing information and engaging them in dialogue. However, decision-making in this sector is sometimes limited to one-time public meetings and prioritises private and government interests. There is a lack of rigorous evidence on the impact of stakeholder engagement on participating communities, particularly on increasing transparency and citizens' demands for accountability.

Maendeleo ya Jamii, a civil society organisation, convened multi-stakeholder forums to provide information; facilitate discussion; and address concerns amongst communities, government and corporate representatives in oil development areas in western Uganda's Albertine Graben region. A 3ie-supported cluster randomised evaluation across 107 villages assessed the effectiveness of information provision and forums in improving accountability to communities affected by the extractives industry.

Highlights

- People exposed to the multi-stakeholder forums experienced an overall increase in several measures of transparency, including their reported pursuit of independent information about oil development.
- The forums did not have any significant impacts on land management, provision of social services or local economic development.
- Civic actions increased significantly at the household and community levels.
- There was no significant differential impact on men and women in any of the key outcomes.

Intervention

Previous research by Maendeleo ya Jamii had revealed 15 major categories of barriers associated with the petroleum sector. Stakeholder engagement was the most commonly recognised barrier, followed by information and communication. The intervention sought to address these barriers. It included a combination of access to information, provided to all participating groups, and forums in which only some groups participated. At village meetings, a village chairperson delivered information packages, which included responses to questions the community and local government had raised about oil and gas activities in the region.

At these meetings, the village selected three representatives to participate in a forum – the village chairperson and two community members, one of whom had to be female. With Maendeleo ya Jamii facilitating, each of these two-day forums enabled interactions between the community members and the Association of Uganda Oil and Gas Service Providers, the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development, and the private sector.

The forums functioned as an avenue to explain to community members the key junctures in oil companies' planning cycles; explain their rights

and how to exercise them; encourage communities to formulate discussion priorities when engaging with oil companies and the government; and help them have reasonable expectations for this process. The village representatives also came up with action plans that prioritised the community's concerns and a timeline for completing the actions. These representatives were encouraged to share the information from the forums with their communities as part of fulfilling the commitments in their action plans.

Main findings

The impact evaluation shows that the forums helped increase respondents' inclination to pursue information about oil development and increased their trust and interaction with key decision makers. It also shows that the communities used civic activities, such as community members' participation in village and oil sector

meetings, to better address their oil development concerns. However, increases in transparency and the demand for accountability do not appear to have translated into meaningful change in policy outcomes related to land management, social services or local economic development in the short to medium term.

The study did not find any significant differential impact on men and women in any of the key outcomes. This could be because the intervention did not address women's practical and strategic needs and interests. Furthermore, female representation in the forums was less than expected (20%, compared with the intended 50%).



Implications for stakeholders

Government

This study provides evidence that forums can facilitate government engagement with local stakeholders. Active engagement amongst communities, companies and government actors can help prepare the community for the opportunities and impacts that the petroleum sector could bring, and inform communities of their rights, roles and responsibilities in the sector.

To improve engagement on land management, researchers recommend implementation of the International Finance Corporation's Policy on Social and Environmental Sustainability. These standards could serve as the basis for developing a comprehensive national policy that is fair and transparent to landowners and their expressed ties to land, across ethnic groups.

The study shows that an increase in transparency measures can be associated with increased trust in key decision makers. The government can generate further local support for oil development by becoming more transparent.

Community members

The study shows that active engagement facilitates a deeper pursuit of information on the part of community members, leads to a rise in other kinds of civic activity and increases communities' feelings of satisfaction with important social issues. Therefore, communities and villages should actively demand peaceful and open engagement with companies and local and national leaders.

Extractive industries

Companies should engage with communities before commencing exploration activities to understand their needs and expectations. Stakeholder engagement and information dissemination activities should be planned in consultation with the government and civil society. This is particularly effective in areas where exploration has already started.

Civil society

Civil society organisations can play an important role in facilitating dialogue and addressing community concerns. Stakeholder engagement interventions informed by rigorous evidence help communities manage their expectations, reduce the risks and enhance the benefits of development projects, and clarify communities' responsibilities.

Researchers

More evidence is needed to link demands for accountability to changes in public spending and public services over different time frames. Researchers should consider the gendered impacts of oil and gas exploration, including the impact of participatory interventions and women's involvement in civic participation. Additionally, future research should include a careful analysis of various transparency measures to avoid simply relying on disseminating information, which is not effective.





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About this brief

This brief is based on an impact evaluation report by Rani Parker, Eric Coleman, Jacob

Manyindo, Bill Schultz and Emmanuel Mukuru, *Impacts of community stakeholder*

engagement interventions in Ugandan oil extractives, published in 2019.



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October 2019