

PROJECT HEPA AND THE QMM MINE ANOSY



One of the outcomes of the HEPA project has been a significant widening of the debate about challenges arising from the QMM /Rio Tinto ilmenite mine in southern Madagascar.

Stories that relate difficulties with access to forest and poor compensation for loss of lands have reached the attention of international environmental and human rights activists, researchers, and government representatives.

ALT engaged the mining company locally in an informal dialogue about the testimonies prior to their publication (October 09), recognising the value of the testimonies as a means to understand the complex weave of environment and poverty in this fragile zone. The dialogue was cut short due to a breach of the terms of engagement by QMM.

The testimonies were subsequently highlighted to the parent company, Rio Tinto in London, and its shareholders in an effort to draw attention to unresolved problems that villagers perceive to have been caused by the arrival of the mining project, with direct impacts on their livelihoods and natural resources.

Shortly after their publication the company's claimed that the testimonies were 'no longer relevant', but subsequently the company told its Independent Advisory Panel that it has discussed the testimonies and held a workshop (internally).

Evaluations and visits to the Anosy villages in 2009 and 2010 and revealed that many of the issues raised in testimonies are still current.

ALT believes that the testimonies offer a unique and powerful insight into the development challenges in the region and can be used to help lever more national and international supports and funding. They can also orient development practitioners and the company towards a more integrated approach for social and environmental programmes in Anosy.

They also offer an example of a positive communications model, to empower local people to speak for themselves, and to enfranchise them in the development debate at local level.

Given the low levels of literacy amongst villagers and their impoverished and marginalised circumstances, ALT believes that this type of communications work is vital to ensure that local people benefit from international investments in the region in a way that is appropriate and sustainable for them.

OPENING UP COMMUNICATIONS IN ANOSY

For many years Andrew Lees Trust has highlighted the problems arising from poor communications around the QMM mining project in Anosy and has advocated for an independent neutral stakeholder platform in line with ICMM (International Council on Mining and Minerals) guidelines.

Such a forum would offer villagers and other all stakeholders an opportunity to highlight problems and discuss areas of concern, without prejudice, and to engage the company in mechanisms to resolve issues in a safe, secure environment that places a premium on open participation, empowerment, and dialogue.

Despite the significant changes brought about by the mining project and accompanying investments in the Anosy region since 2005, no such independent forum exists where local people feel free or confident to speak out about how they are affected by the rapid local changes.

Communications remains a vital part of the development scenario. Failure to generate a transparent flow of information and open dialogue risks to negatively impact on the weakest stakeholders, as well as the overall result of the project.

Other resources

[Rio Tinto & Madagascar – is it equitable? : Vola Parker](#) (PDF 271Kb)

[Scoping of Impacts – Amy Glass](#) (PDF 94Kb)

[A Mine of Information - Rod Harbinson](#)

[ALT Statement on the QMM Mine](#) (PDF 20Kb))

[Map of HEPA sites in Anosy](#) (PDF 173KB)

[Vegetation Map of Anosy](#) (PDF 2.87Mb)

Thanks to J.Moat and P.Smith for this map from their publication "Atlas of the vegetation of Madagascar" (2007).

[Climate change and forests](#) – Ingram/Dawson (PDF 144Kb)

[Mapping forest cover](#) – Ingram et al (PDF 589Kb)

[Forest condition](#) – Ingram et al (PDF 472Kb)

[Tree structure & Diversity](#) – Ingram et al (PDF 425Kb)