

# KALONG-TONGA

# THE ROAD OF MISERY

**SINOHYDRO is trampling on the rights of local populations at the Makenene stone quarry and destroying the environment**



**Policy brief**

April 2021

According to the **African Development Bank** (AfDB), «Environmental and social sustainability is the cornerstone of economic growth and poverty reduction in Africa» (AfDB, 2013:3). To ensure the environmental and social sustainability of its financing, the AfDB has adopted an Integrated Safeguards System (ISS) which was last updated in 2013. The question remains as to how this system is implemented in the various projects they finance?

In this regard, the President of the Republic of Cameroon authorised the Minister of the Economy, Planning and Regional Development to sign a loan agreement of 270,155,000 Euros with the African Development Bank (AfDB), which equates to some 177,208,000,000 CFA Francs, for the partial financing of the Transport Sector Support Project, Phase 2 and, in particular, the rehabilitation of the Yaoundé-Bafoussam-Babadjou road section. An international call for tenders was launched following this loan agreement

*«Environmental and social sustainability is the cornerstone of economic growth and poverty reduction in Africa»*

in view of rehabilitating the Yaounde-Bafoussam-Babadjou road, divided into three (3) lots. Lot 2, covering the Kalong-Tonga section (67km), was allocated to a Chinese company known as **SINOHYDRO**<sup>1</sup>.

As part of the implementation of this road construction project financed by the AfDB, SINOHYDRO CORPORATION LIMITED undertook to rehabilitate and exploit the stone quarry, located in the Makenene Sub-Division, Mbam and Inoubou Division. This quarry seeks to provide the Kalong-Tonga road rehabilitation work with stone aggregates. In addition, this site is home to the project's asphalt and concrete plant. The exploitation of this quarry has disastrous environmental and social impacts on the locality of Makenene due to the lack of prevention/avoidance measures for environmental and social risks and the lack of mitigation/minimization/compensation measures for the risks associated with the exploitation of the quarry.

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<sup>1</sup> This award was made following the International Call for Tenders No. 085/AOIO/MINMAP/CCPM-TR/2016 of 21/06/2016. It was launched to rehabilitate the Yaounde-Bafoussam-Babadjou road including the construction of a crossover at the Obala junction and is divided into three (3) lots as follows: lot1 : Ebebda-Etoundou section (63.75km); lot2: Etoundou-Tonga section (67km); lot3: Tonga-Bafoussam-Babadjou section (110.242 km), the Chinese companies CGCOC GROUP, SINOHYDRO and CHINA RAILWAY No5 ENGINEERING GROUP CO.LTD have been respectively awarded lots 1, 2 and 3.

## Gross violations of the rights of Makenene populations

According to the AfDB's Operational Safeguard 2, people affected by these projects must be consulted before the commencement of works, compensated at full replacement cost for the damage they suffer due to the project, relocated so as to improve their living standards and preserve their ability to generate income and overall means. However, within the framework of the exploitation of the Makenene quarry, the local populations were neither consulted nor compensated, let alone relocated which caused negative impacts on their lives from a socio-economic and environmental point of view.

## Irregularities in the consultation process with the local populations in the neighborhood of the Makenene quarry

As per the AfDB's Integrated Safeguards System, the borrower commits to have a genuine consultation (i.e., prior, free, and informed consultation) with local stakeholders and potentially affected communities; especially vulnerable groups, to enable them actively participate in decision making as to know whether to avoid environmental and social impacts or accept and manage them.

Populations affected by the Makenene quarry exploitation did not take part in the working sessions organised by the property assessment and evaluation commission with the aim of issuing an authorization to occupy the natural public domain constituted by the quarry, due to the lack of publicity surrounding the commission's work. Similarly, the public consultation organised on the occasion of the environmental and social impact study (ESIS) was poorly advertised as the 30-day deadline for sending the public consultation programme to the representatives of the populations concerned was not respected. In addition, when the ESIS was carried out, the letter approving the ToRs and the project descriptive memo

were not made available to the populations.

Furthermore, the ad hoc committee set up by Divisional Order No. 467/AP/SAEF allocated the mining site occupied by the artisanal miners to SINOHYDRO without consulting them. As a result, the artisans occupying the site were evicted without being offered an alternative. In the absence of an interface committee and a framework for consultation between the population and the company, the wishes of the population are generally not taken into consideration by the company or the local authorities. This results in a tense climate that has sometimes translated into road blockades and uprisings, becoming the only means of expression for the population.



*14<sup>th</sup> October 2020 populations block the road to the quarry*

## Homes destroyed and artisans deprived of their livelihoods due to non-compliance with safeguard measures

In its various constitutive acts, the AfDB considers economic and social rights as an integral part of human rights. As such, its actions are supposed to respect, and even guarantee the compliance of its safeguard system. The exploitation of

the Makenene quarry, having failed to respect these safeguards, has led to the destruction of the homes and livelihoods of farmers and mining artisans.

Firstly, due to the poor definition and non-mate-

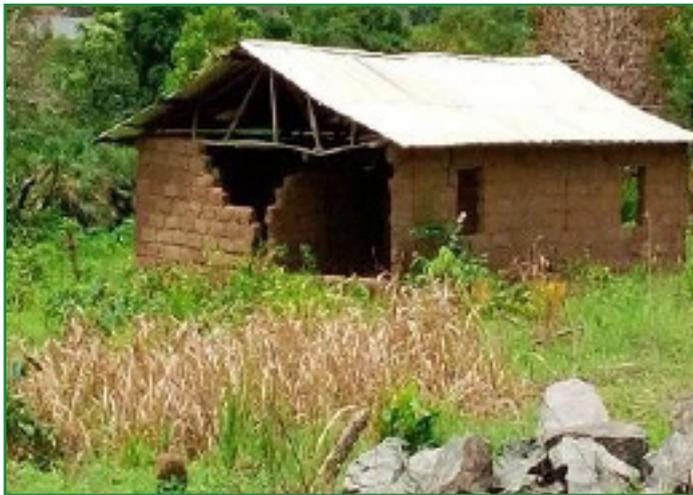
rialisation of the security area, the right to housing of the local population was violated. In fact, the blasting operations to break up the rocks generate vibrations and projectiles that cause cracks in walls of houses, destruction of roofs and the collapse of houses. In the words of a resident of the quarry, “the vibrations are knocking down our houses and the company is doing nothing about it”. Despite several complaints from the local chief and local residents, no remedial action has been taken. While a total of 147 houses have been destroyed, a meeting between the young residents of the quarry area and SINOHYDRO officials was held where the latter promised to provide the victims with seven (07) trucks of sand and seven (07) trucks of gravel as reparation, which is largely disproportionate as compared to the damage suffered by the victims.

Secondly, while AfDB-funded projects are supposed to improve the livelihoods of the population, the exploitation of the Makenene quarry has led to the unemployment of about twenty mining artisans according to whom “each time the quarry is allocated,

we are evicted” and the destructuring of their activities, as illustrated by the words of one artisan: «Before the arrival of SINOHYDRO, we earned 50,000 to 60,000 CFA Francs per month, but since their installation... we barely earn 20,000 francs, because we no longer have the possibility of selling aggregates as we did before the company arrived». This has increased the cost of construction materials (rubble, gravel) for the people of Makenene and surrounding localities.

Ultimately, **the company has no local content policy**, which creates tension between the company and the local population. Local populations are not given priority when it comes to recruitment, as one witness said, “We don’t know on what basis recruitment is done and how salaries are set”, and the road that serves the quarry is not even paved, which leads to environmental pollution from dust.

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*Houses destroyed due to vibrations from quarry blasting*

## Open-air environmental pollution by SINOHYDRO

The AfDB's Operational Safeguard 4, which deals with the prevention and control of pollution, hazardous materials and efficient use of resources, aims at managing and reducing pollutants resulting from the projects, and defining a framework for the efficient use of all raw materials and natural resources relating to the project. This has not been the case with the Makenene quarrying operation.

### Poor management of pollutants resulting from the SINOHYDRO project

The dumping of industrial waste (used oil, hydrocarbons, bitumen) in nature caused by the open-air maintenance of machinery and the excessive accumulation of waste... leads not only to soil pollution, but also to groundwater and disturbance of faunal and/or floral biodiversity. Also, the transportation of SINOHYDRO equipment and other materials causes a modification of air components due to the emission of fumes and the raising of dust as SINOHYDRO uses trucks and other vehicles on the road leading to the quarry for a whole day without ensuring regular watering of the road. As a result, all vegetation and houses are now covered with dust, hence the recurrence of respiratory diseases in the area.



*Raising of dust by a quarry machine*

### Inefficient management of water resources by SINOHYDRO

The company gets water for various works (watering the road, washing machinery, gravel, etc.) from the Mock River, which the communities use for washing, drinking and farming. This inevitably leads to a decrease in water volume and the reduction of the streambed. The dumping of hydrocarbons, used oil, grease and bituminous products into the environment leads to their immediate run off into the Mock river as well as the Makenene river of which it is tributary. This naturally changes the surface water composition, but also endangers aquatic biodiversity. Consequently, people that draw from these rivers are exposed to water and skin diseases. « This company wants to kill us, because water is life and they even deprive us from our water... » reports a local resident.



*Spillage of bituminous products on the ground*



*Soil alteration*

## Lack of compensation, indemnification or adequate resettlement measures for inhabitants, farmers and mining craftsmen

Pursuant to **Article 116** of the Mining Code, landowners, occupants of the land, right-owners and usufructuaries' who are victims of expropriation in the public interest are entitled to compensation for losses suffered and rights infringed.

In this regard, several farm owners claim not to have been informed about the visit of the property evaluation commission sent by SINOHYDRO. As for those who were present, they received no information on the crop evaluation grid. The list of those compensated was not made public prior to the payment. Consequently, no possibility of contradiction was opened to the affected populations. According to the officials we met, «expropriation in the public interest was not made conveniently. For instance, an ad hoc commission was set up, with the administration in charge of mines acting as secretariat, in violation of the law that provides for a commission to establish and evaluate the property to

be expropriated”.

Moreover, several people who do not own property in the quarrying area received compensation, whereas some others with land in that area were not compensated, even though their fields were within the SINOHYDRO premises. In addition, some unidentified fields were destroyed during the quarry works as the site is still occupied till date.

Again, about twenty artisanal miners whose main activity was the exploitation and sale of quarry products were expelled from the quarry without any economic relocation or compensation measures. No measures were taken to ensure the resettlement of people whose houses or fields were affected by the quarrying operation due to poor delimitation of the project impact zone. This has resulted in a violation of the economic, social and environmental rights of the people living near the Makenene quarrying area.

## Conclusion and recommendations

In a nutshell, the exploitation of the Makenene quarry for the rehabilitation of the Yaoundé-Bafoussam-Badajou road, lot 2 between Kalong and Tonga, financed by the AfDB, has had negative environmental and socio-economic impacts due to the low level of compliance with the Bank's Integrated Safeguards System.

Based on this analysis note, we have come up with the following recommendations:

### To the AfDB,

- Commission a monitoring and auditing mission for compliance with its environmental and social safeguards system regarding this project;

### To the Government,

- Set up a framework for consultation between the administration, the company and the population with a view to repairing the environmental and social damage caused by the quarrying operation;
- Ensure that the company takes appropriate measures to mitigate, minimise and compensate the environmental and social damage caused by the quarrying operation.

### To SINOHYDRO:

- Repair damaged houses, compensate mining artisans, build social infrastructure (boreholes...), level the public-school yard at the quarry, improve the state of the road leading to the quarry, and repair all damage caused by quarrying operation.



Dypamak is a non-profit organization established in 2012(ASBL), incorporated in October 2013 under declaration N° 057/RDA/J04/SAAJP/BAPPCT at Bafia DO's Office. Our areas of intervention are the defence of the interests of the populations, education, health and natural resource management

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*Agir et avancer ensemble*