

INCREASING TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR WOODLARK ISLAND

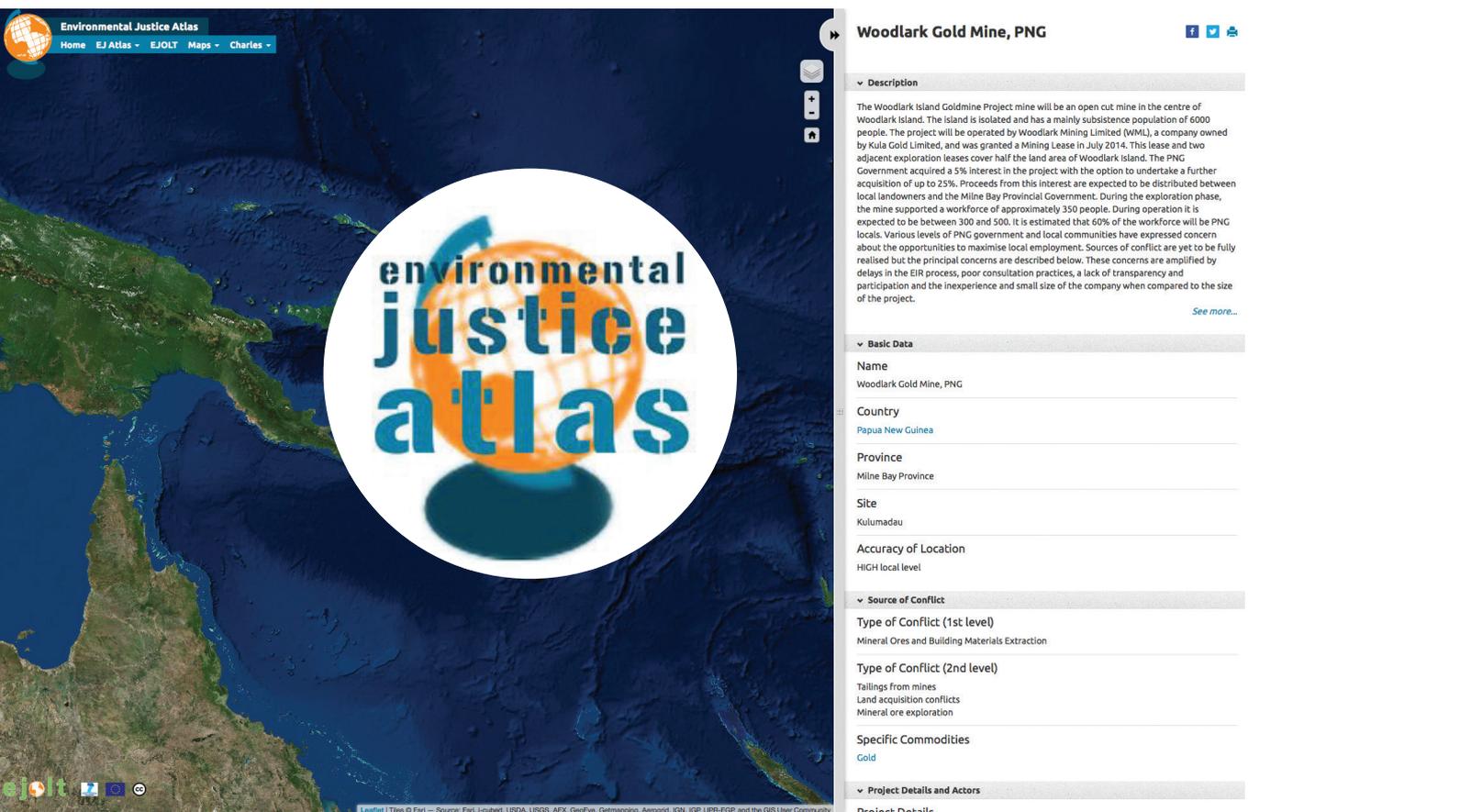
by Dr Simon Judd

In February's *Mining Monitor*, MPI outlined a proposed and potentially damaging mine on Woodlark Island in Papua New Guinea, highlighting a number of potential ecological and social impacts. Part of MPI's work is to make information about such projects available and accessible, recognising that freely available information is critical to engendering both transparency and equity in mining developments. Unfortunately, a paucity of information and a lack of transparency by Kula Gold Limited make it difficult for interested parties to access information about the project.

To highlight potential impacts and encourage more, MPI has assisted in publishing two webpages on the proposed mine at Woodlark Island, one focusing on environmental and social justice issues and the other concerned with the responsible financing of the project.

The first of these is www.ejatlas.org/ a database of teaching, networking and advocacy resources. The website is accessed through a geographical interface which directs users to global database of conflicts over resource extraction. The database includes specific details of environmental and social impacts and is an effective teaching, networking and advocacy resource which is particularly useful to strategists, activist organizers, scholars, and teachers as well as citizens wanting to learn more about the often invisible conflicts taking place around the globe. The database is a product of a project called the Environmental Justice Organisations, Liabilities and Trade which will run from 2011-2015 and is supported by the European Commission.

The EJAtlas is not only an important communication and information dissemination



The screenshot displays the EJAtlas interface. On the left, a satellite map shows the location of Woodlark Island in Papua New Guinea. A circular logo for 'environmental justice atlas' is overlaid on the map. The right-hand side of the page contains a detailed entry for the 'Woodlark Gold Mine, PNG'. The entry includes a description of the mine project, its location, and the source of conflict. The 'Source of Conflict' section lists 'Mineral Ores and Building Materials Extraction' as the primary conflict, with secondary conflicts including 'Tailings from mines', 'Land acquisition conflicts', and 'Mineral ore exploration'. The 'Specific Commodities' section lists 'Gold'. The 'Project Details and Actors' section is partially visible at the bottom.

Environmental Justice Atlas
Home EJ Atlas - EJOLT Maps - Charles -

Woodlark Gold Mine, PNG

Description

The Woodlark Island Goldmine Project mine will be an open cut mine in the centre of Woodlark Island. The island is isolated and has a mainly subsistence population of 6000 people. The project will be operated by Woodlark Mining Limited (WML), a company owned by Kula Gold Limited, and was granted a Mining Lease in July 2014. This lease and two adjacent exploration leases cover half the land area of Woodlark Island. The PNG Government acquired a 5% interest in the project with the option to undertake a further acquisition of up to 25%. Proceeds from this interest are expected to be distributed between local landowners and the Milne Bay Provincial Government. During the exploration phase, the mine supported a workforce of approximately 350 people. During operation it is expected to be between 300 and 500. It is estimated that 60% of the workforce will be PNG locals. Various levels of PNG government and local communities have expressed concern about the opportunities to maximise local employment. Sources of conflict are yet to be fully realised but the principal concerns are described below. These concerns are amplified by delays in the EIR process, poor consultation practices, a lack of transparency and participation and the inexperience and small size of the company when compared to the size of the project.

Basic Data

Name	Woodlark Gold Mine, PNG
Country	Papua New Guinea
Province	Milne Bay Province
Site	Kulumadau
Accuracy of Location	HIGH local level

Source of Conflict

Type of Conflict (1st level)	Mineral Ores and Building Materials Extraction
Type of Conflict (2nd level)	Tailings from mines Land acquisition conflicts Mineral ore exploration
Specific Commodities	Gold

Project Details and Actors

tool for Woodlark Island, but is also useful resource in the sense that it supports the work of Environmental Justice Organisations such as MPI. Central themes of the website are Ecological Debts (or Environmental Liabilities) and Ecologically Unequal Exchange. These are issues of fundamental importance to MPI's work in Papua New Guinea. MPI's work on Woodlark Island has been added to the Environmental Justice Atlas and other work will added throughout the year.

The second website is created by www.banktrack.org, an NGO which focuses on the responsible financing of projects, which MPI has been a member of for many years. Kula Gold is seeking funds from to establish their controversial mine so working on the operations and investments of private sector banks is important . BankTrack is a particularly powerful website because it provides a cross-referencing platform for banks, deals, companies and a whole range of projects that impact negatively upon the ecological well-being of the planet and compromise the chances a decent life free of poverty and injustice for all people.

Even after the 2008 global financial crisis, private sector banks still represent a crucial source of finance for companies and governments, exerting great influence on the operations of their clients and on society as a whole. The aim of BankTrack is to make private sector banks become fully transparent and accountable for their activities to all their stakeholders and to society at large. The website is an important tool

in promoting fundamental changes in the banks and in the informing them on the expectations of global civil society regarding environmentally sound and socially just business practices. The structure of the website and its capacity to show clear relationships between various companies, banks, projects and financial deals makes it a powerful resource.

By working with, or alternatively, holding these banks to account, projects such as Woodlark Island can be assessed for their impact and operations, for example against the Equator Principles.

The question is whether or not the mine can be operated responsibly. Will it contribute to sustaining healthy and just societies and ecological well-being or will it be just another mining legacy? Real concerns about the proposed mine include: resettlement of communities, the dumping of mine waste at sea, and enduring social and environmental impacts that will affect the communities long after the mine has gone. The proposed mine's marginal financial viability multiplies the chance of interrupted or abandoned operations, increasing the risk of poor social, economic and environmental outcomes.

Both of the websites strengthen civil society's capacity to monitor mining activity, and influence private sector banks and the capacity for NGOs, to undertake their work and provide direct support for mining affected communities.

BANKS

ABC Country Nr. dodgy deals Map

DODGY DEALS

ABC Country Sector Map

COMPANIES

ABC Country Map

FOCUS

Campaign Focus Topics

Woodlark Island Kula Gold Project Papua New Guinea

Basics
Issues
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active file
This dodgy deal is updated regularly

This project is not yet fully funded, and is a no go for banks. It is closely tracked by BankTrack.



