

Indigenous perspectives for a just transformation of the mining sector



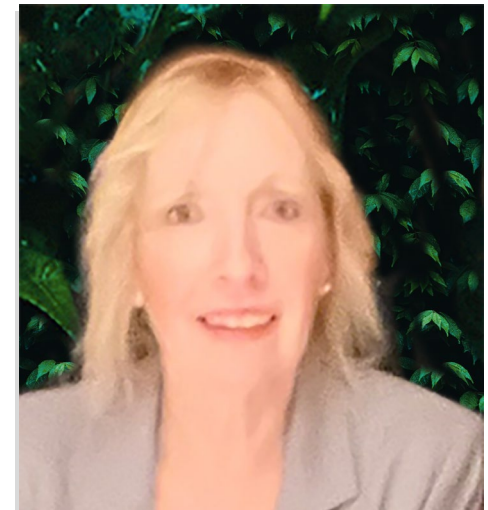
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Indigenous and tribal peoples of Suriname play a key role in decision making towards a just transformation of the mining sector



About Suriname


- 94% of its area (163,820 km² or 63,251 mi²) covered by forests.
- Estimated population: 600,000 people (2022).
- Indigenous and tribal population:
 - 3-4% Indigenous of Amerindian descent (24,000 people)
 - 17-20% tribal maroon population of African descent, (120,000 people)

Note. From this point forward, Indigenous and tribal peoples will be referred to as Indigenous and tribals.




Introduction


Public consultation and stakeholder engagement are essential for promoting sustainable development, particularly in projects impacting Indigenous and tribal communities.



In Suriname, a Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) of the mining sector identified critical gaps in the mining legal and regulatory framework procedures, public consultation mechanisms, and institutional capacity.



The study highlighted the potential environmental and social consequences of mining on Indigenous and tribal communities, whose traditional way of life is directly or indirectly affected by mining activities.



Recognizing Indigenous and tribal people participation in decision-making processes is fundamental for achieving a just transformation of the mining sector in Suriname.

Development of the SESA



A SESA (Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment) is a participatory tool that aims to integrate E&S considerations into policies/plans/ programs in sector decision-making and reform.



RINA Consulting Inc. was retained by the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) to conduct a SESA of the Mining Sector financed by the World Bank.



The SESA required stakeholders' feedback to guide the process throughout the consulting period.



The SESA process lasted 18 months.

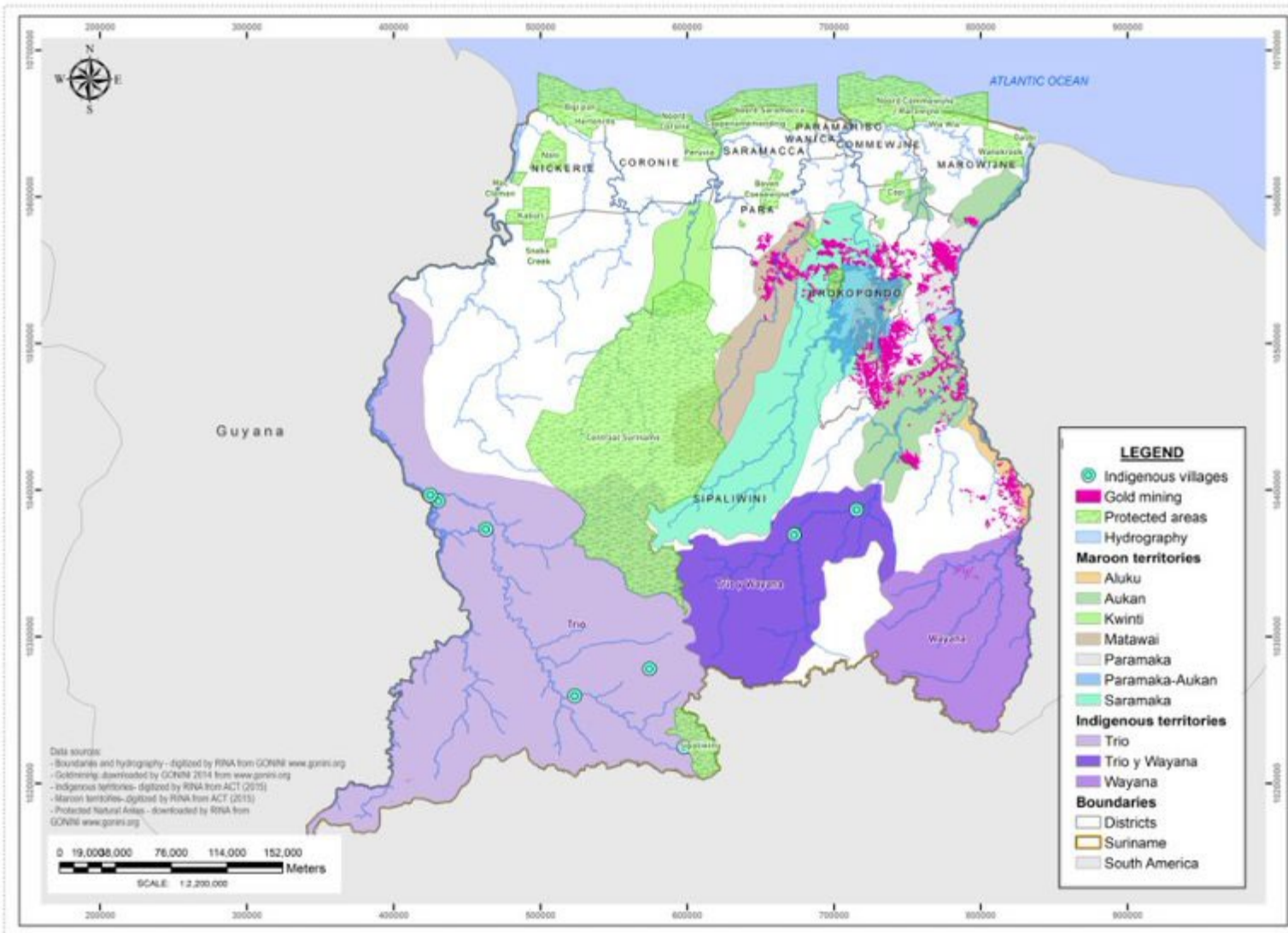


The SESA is to help ensure that mining development will proceed sustainably, in accordance with best international environmental and social practices and standards.

Indigenous and tribal peoples in Suriname



- Indigenous and tribal peoples are present in all parts of Suriname.
- Their lives are deeply interwoven with their environment (i.e. , hunting, fishing, collecting, domestic uses, myths, and rituals).
- They have a profound understanding of ecological dynamics and resource management.
- They are interconnected with all life forms and cohabit in biodiverse ecosystems.
- Indigenous and tribal peoples have their own traditional leadership structures.
- Authorities (tribe chiefs – Granman, and village captains) are not legally recognized).



Indigenous and tribal communities and Mining activities

Differences of involvement between Indigenous and Tribal Maroon peoples in the mining sector

Indigenous peoples

People live off the land through hunting, fishing, and gathering. (Some sell fish, for example, to French Guyana.) They are directly or indirectly affected because mining activities occur on their land. They provide various goods and services to the miners and the mining companies.

Maroon peoples

Directly involved in mining activities. They work for mining companies or as ASMs.

Indigenous and tribal people consultation process

The SESA employed the Krutu model for its consultation.

The Krutu is a culturally appropriate consultation process that involves all members of Indigenous and tribal communities while respecting their hierarchy.

It involves gathering community members to discuss and resolve issues affecting their community.

It is a communal decision-making and conflict-resolution process.

The Krutu model facilitates culturally appropriate information exchange and ensures that the voices of Indigenous and tribal community members be heard.



Indigenous and tribal peoples Consultation in Suriname

Representatives from 3 of the 5 Indigenous communities consulted for the SESA included:

Wayana, Lokono, Kaliña

Additional consultation with the Association of Traditional Indigenous Leaders (VIDS).



8 representatives from Indigenous communities engaged directly.

3,788 Indigenous persons engaged indirectly.

20,344 total Indigenous persons potentially engaged with sharing information through VIDS.

4 of the 6 Maroon tribes in Suriname were selected for their proximity and activities in the sector:

Okanisi, Matawai, Paramaka, Saramaka.

Additional consultation with the Association of Saramacca Traditional Leaders (VSG),



85 Maroons directly engaged.

15,090 Maroons indirect engagement.

25,000 Maroons potentially engaged with the sharing of information through VSG.

Other Indigenous and tribal peoples were not consulted as they are not directly nor indirectly involved in mining, nor did they express interest in participating in the SESA process.

Direct E&S Impacts of Mining on Indigenous and tribal Communities

Land Displacement and Loss in their traditional territories (i.e. land traditionally used for agriculture, hunting, gathering...

Environmental Degradation associated with deforestation, soil erosion, and habitat destruction, during mining construction (land clearing, cutting trees, access roads, tailing ponds, etc.). Loss of biodiversity, resources...

Water Contamination from mercury, heavy metals, cyanide, and acids used in the extraction process...

Air Pollution especially open-pit mining and blasting operations...

Health Risks such as neurological disorders, respiratory illnesses, reproductive health problems, and increased cancer rates associated with the use of mercury, lead, arsenic and cyanide.

Cultural Impacts such as indigenous cultural heritage, sacred sites, and traditional knowledge invaded.

Social Conflict such as competition over land, resources, and benefits from mining projects, employment opportunities.

Direct E&S Impacts from Mining on Indigenous and tribal Communities (Positive)



INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT
ROADS, ELECTRICITY, WATER SUPPLY
AND SANITATION SYSTEMS,
TELECOMMUNICATIONS, INTERNET,...



**BETTER SOCIAL SERVICES SUCH
AS SCHOOLS, HEALTH SERVICES...**



**BENEFIT SHARING AND/OR
COMPENSATION FROM MINING
COMPANIES.**

E&S Indirect Impacts of Mining on Indigenous and tribal Communities

Economic Shifts: positive/ negative changes such as inflation, employment opportunities and losses, better social services, loss of traditional livelihood...

Social Disruption: influx of migrant workers, contractors, and other personnel associated with mining projects...

Cultural Change: technology, languages, customs, social norms...

Land Tenure: land rights which can lead to legal disputes and social unrest...

Gender Dynamics: changes in traditional roles, new types of services incl. prostitution, women in mining...

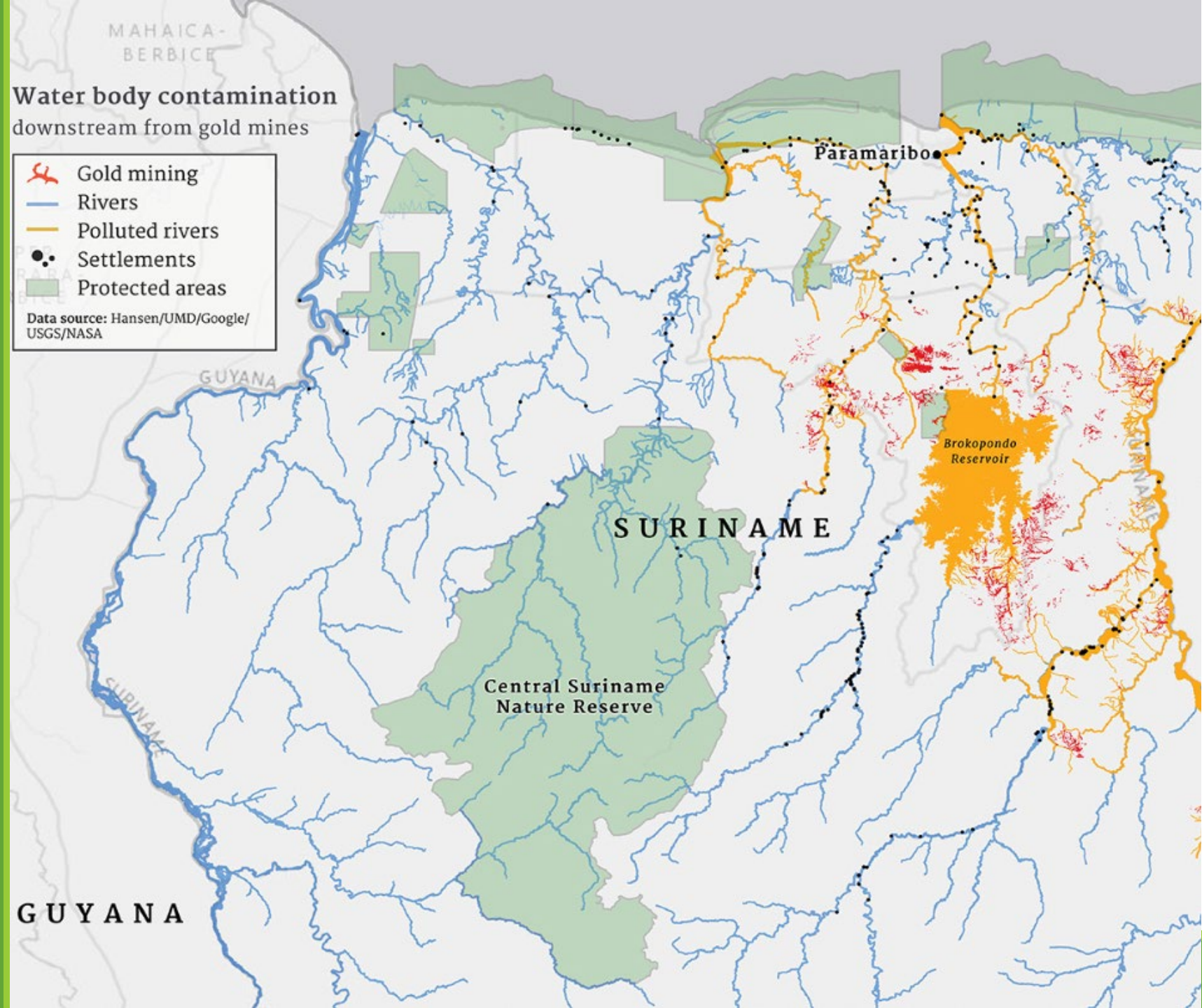
Environmental Migration: loss of fertile land, proximity of hunting and fishing grounds...

Impacts on health: contaminated water and fish from mercury, changes in diet...

Water Contamination and its Impacts

Contamination of the water has a direct impact on:

- Social – Changes in traditional consumption of fish.
- Health – Consumption of contaminated water and fish containing mercury (Food Insecurity).
- Economic – difficulty in selling fish (i.e. French Guyana) because of water contamination.



Essential factors that make the recognition and engagement of Indigenous and tribal communities instrumental for public consultation and ESIA

Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) about their environment (i.e. biodiversity, ecosystem functions, and sustainable resource management practices).

Integrating this knowledge into Impact assessments and project design enhances the assessment's accuracy and allows for project designs to minimize environmental and social disruptions.

Meaningful engagement of Indigenous and tribal communities ensures their concerns are heard and respected.

- Helps protect their cultural sites and sacred areas.
- Minimizes disruptions on their traditional way of life.
- Promotes transparent and trustworthy communication .
- Strengthens the credibility and legitimacy of the assessment process.

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Obtention of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) and respect for Indigenous and tribal land rights are ethical requirements and should be included in the legislation.

Conflict prevention early in the process will help prevent disputes between mining companies and Indigenous communities, contributing to the overall sustainability of mining operations.

Long-term Sustainability can be achieved by engaging Indigenous and tribal communities in the process to fosters a collaborative approach to sustainable mining development environmental harm, protects biodiversity, and supports community well-being.

Critical Gaps identified

- Suriname is one of the few countries in the Americas that has not ratified the ILO Convention 169.
- FPIC is not yet regulated; therefore, communities often face situations where mining projects are initiated without their prior knowledge and/or consent.
- Public consultation is not compulsory in Suriname.
- Resettlement has yet to be regulated.
- Government officers need capacity strengthening.
- Suriname's current legislation lacks explicit recognition of Indigenous and tribal land rights, which jeopardizes the legal protection ensured by documented land titles.



Recognition of Indigenous and tribal authorities can facilitate traditional governance structures within their communities and the incorporation of customary law into the decision-making process.

Sustainable development of the mining sector hinges on robust legal frameworks and adherence to international standards.

Meaningful consultation with Indigenous and tribal communities contribute to impact mitigation, conflict resolution, and sustainable development.

Synergizing traditional knowledge with modern development practices contributes to safeguarding environmental and local resources and helps mitigate the impacts of mining projects.

Holistic approaches that integrate community engagement, participatory decision-making, and respect for Indigenous rights, land, and knowledge systems promote balance between environmental protection, social justice, and equitable social distribution of benefits to local communities.

Incorporating Indigenous perspectives into decision-making processes and impact assessment is fundamental for achieving sustainable development and a just transformation of the mining sector.

Conclusions

THANK YOU!



Let's continue the conversation!

Post questions and comments in the IAIA24 app.



#iaia24

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