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Research paper

## Living with conflicts in Ghana's Prestea mining area: Is community engagement the answer?

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## ABSTRACT

Large scale mines acknowledge that their continuous existence in indigenous communities is threatened without the cooperation and support of local people. In recent times, large-scale mines have attempted to secure Social License to Operate (SLO) and ensure sustainable development (SD) by reconciling business interests with local needs and aspirations. Accomplishing local cooperation and support without threatening business interest remains a top priority for the large-scale mines. Community engagement forms part of the broader Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policy initiatives which are often promoted as a way of enhancing sustainable development. This paper examines the local perceptions of the design and application of Golden Star Resources' (GSR) community engagement program. This paper contends that this community engagement model has a positive impact on conflict management regardless of age, sex, education, marital status and occupation of participants. However, presently the model remains symbolic and has not yet attain the status of a real functional strategy since many of local grievances that result in clashes are unresolved. Furthermore, it is believed that GSR's community engagement program is not adequately developed, systematic or moulded to achieve the exact or intended community relation. This paper further contends that the dominant sources and causes of conflict in Prestea is land use conflicts and environmental impact issues.

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## 1. Introduction

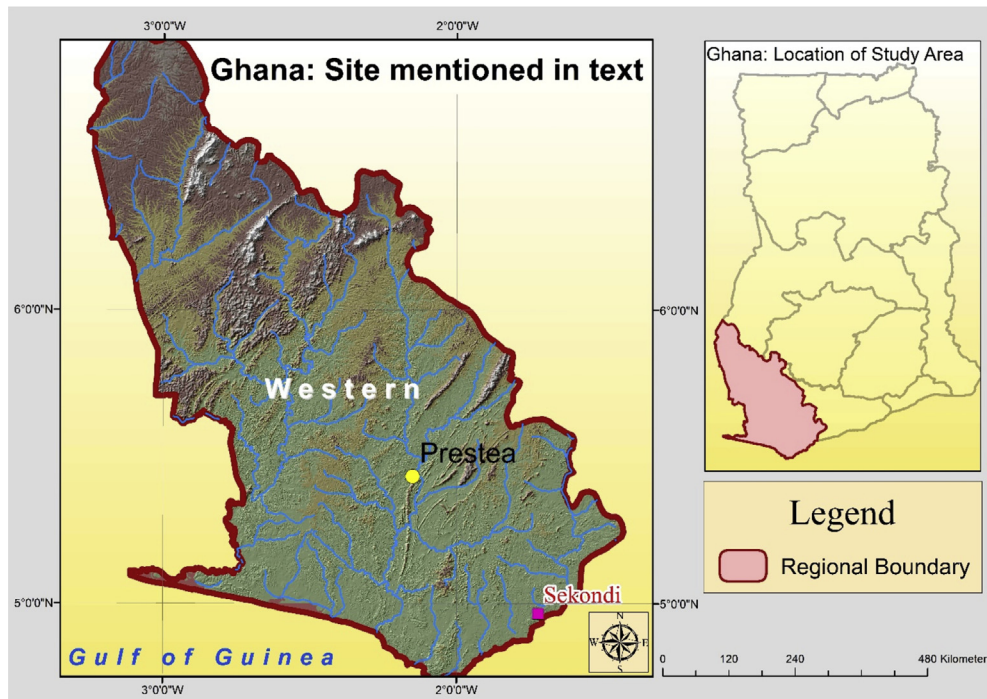
In this article, a critical synthesis of the local perceptions of the design and application of the Golden Star Resources' (GSR) model of community engagement is provided. Prestea is an old mining town in the Western Region of the south-western part of Ghana. It is about 50 km north of the coast of the Atlantic Ocean. Prestea is the forty-sixth most populous town in Ghana with a population of 35,760 people (GSS, 2012, pp. 1–103). A railway line connects Prestea to Tarkwa and beyond to the coastal city of Sekondi-Takoradi. The Prestea mines in Ghana have produced about nine million ounces of gold and this is the second highest level of production of any mine in Ghana (Adonteng-Kissi, 2015). It is an undeniable fact that some communities around the globe have been positively transformed by the mining industry, but the same cannot be said about the Prestea community. Regardless of about a century

of mining, Prestea continues to be a poor community. There are prolonged community-level differences in the face of current international standards and increasing expectations for the mining industry to convert the rhetoric of corporate social responsibility (CSR) into real practice. These kinds of conflicts may explode at different levels of the operations of a large-scale mining company's life span (see Fig. 1).

Generally, one of the sources of conflicts at different levels of the community relations is contending for mineral rich parcels of land in the Prestea mining area (Adonteng-Kissi, 2015). Thus, ownership and control of mineral rich lands is at the core of many conflicts. Conflicts amongst community stakeholders regarding land use are due to fluidity in land ownership, control and rights, which are common in local communities (Adonteng-Kissi, 2017). The economic, social and environmental welfare of the local populations are usually at the core of such conflicts (Idemudia, 2014). Moreover, the order of the day is "deagrarianization" and "depeasantization" of communities which is adversely affecting the livelihoods of farmers in Prestea (Adonteng-Kissi, Adonteng-Kissi, & Asamoah, 2016). Deagrarianization is "a process of occupational adjustment,

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**Fig. 1.** Map of Ghana with Location of Study Area.

Cartography by: Samuel Kwesi Osei (2016), Department of Environmental Planning, Brandenburg Technical University, Germany.

income-earning reorientation, social identification and spatial relocation of rural dwellers away from strictly agricultural-based modes of livelihood” (Bryceson, 2004, pp. 617–618). “Deagrarianization” in Prestea is predominantly caused by the mining operations in the area that have resulted in the removal of topsoil, vegetation and forest cover (Adonteng-Kissi et al., 2016). Additionally, “deagrarianisation” and “depeasantisation” are terms applied to describe the continuing and changing nature of the present pattern (Bryceson, 2004). The age-old arrangement of the bush fallow system through which substantial levels of nutrients are recycled in the farmland, which makes the following farming cycle fruitful, is no longer possible in Prestea due to inadequate available land area. Farmlands and forest cover in Prestea, used for agrarian production, are disintegrating and decreasing in size to the extent that biodiversity is being destroyed. This situation has led to a decline in the fallow time duration from 10–15 years to 2–3 years (Adonteng-Kissi et al., 2016). Moreover, substantial percentages of farmlands in Prestea are suffering from deprivation and the once substantial level of economic wealth is fast decreasing. Golden Star Resources (GSR) is clearly playing a major role in this situation through its extensive mining activities. There is usually intense competition for mineral rich lands in the local Prestea communities (Adonteng-Kissi, 2015). There have also been instances when land use and environmental impact issues have culminated in violent conflicts between GSR and the Prestea community with the mines forfeiting their social licence to operate (SLO). Indeed, the relationship between the local community and GSR is a battleground on which the activities of mining firms are disputed (Calvano, 2008). This paper will tackle the knowledge gaps relating to perceptions of community engagement in mining communities. This paper’s evidence emerges from surveys and key informants’ interviews in the Prestea community. Simple random sampling was used for the selection of survey respondents and purposive sampling was used for the selection of all the sample units purposely identified to provide explicit information on the study population.

The relevance of this case is that Ghana’s Prestea mining community is noted for violent confrontations with GSR over land use and environmental pollution. It is therefore important to answer the research questions below:

1. What are the sources and causes of conflicts in the Prestea mining area?
2. Is it true that community engagement has a positive impact on conflict management in the Prestea mining community?
3. Are perceptions of the impacts of community engagement on conflict management influenced by sex, age, education, marital status and occupation?

These research questions are critical in directing the analysis of the study owing to the need to develop scientific understanding of “community engagement” and formulate mining policies to address conflicts that erupt in the mining communities.

It is widely known that operating in indigenous areas is associated with a vast range of inconveniences (Spillan & King, 2017). Mining companies need to grapple with issues such as integrating or harmonizing the expression of indigenous populations about rights and justice and to utilize the minimum amount of force to suppress clashes (Gilbert, 2013). GSR assumes a firm position, acknowledging that in a local community like Prestea, the creation of a ‘win-win’ partnerships with the local interest groups must become an essential component of its business strategy to gain local legitimacy in the mining area. This orientation towards community engagement involves listening to and engaging with community groups and probably consenting to their participation in some company decision-making processes which is a viable tool to secure their SLO. Thus, GSR’s community engagement has shifted policy development which affects the local population to different interest groups, permitting them to make contributions (Leigh & Blakely, 2016). This discourse possibly expresses a shift in power relations among large-scale mining companies, local communities

and society in general (Franks et al., 2014). GSR invests \$1 per ounce of gold produced into the Golden Star Development Foundation (GSDF) which was established in 2006 (Dashwood & Pupilampu 2010). According to GSR, total investments in the GSDF amount to over \$800,000 (Pupilampu & Dashwood, 2011). There are two levels of community consultation in Prestea, namely Community Consultative Committees (CCCs) and Community Mines Consultative Committees (CMCC). CCCs are formed in all the catchment areas of Prestea and members of CCCs elect some of their members to represent them on the CMCC. Other members of the CMCC are the Chief's representatives, local government representative, artisanal miners' representative, a women's representative, a youth representative, "opinion leaders" and farmers' representative (Pupilampu & Dashwood, 2011). Proposals for community projects are offered through the CMCC. Projects sponsored by the GSDF consist of schools, electricity poles, bore holes, health clinics, nurses' quarters, assistance with medical equipment and other community-requested infrastructure (Ayisi & Akabzaa, 2010).

Mining activities in the Prestea area started centuries before the first Portuguese arrival in 1471 on the Gold Coast, now Ghana (Pupilampu & Dashwood, 2011). However, the initial involvement of the Europeans in large-scale mining activities in the area occurred in the 1880s. The first large-scale mining companies to be formed in the Gold Coast were the Gio Apanto Gold Mining Company and the Essaman Gold Mining Company (Adonteng-Kissi, 2015). In 1900, owing to changes in control and ownership, these companies changed to Apanto Mines and Prestea Mines Limited respectively. The two firms merged in 1927 and became a new entity known as Ariston Gold Mines. Subsequently, there was the acquisition of Ariston Gold Mines' leaseholds in 1933, by Ghana Main Reef Limited resulting in continuous operation until 1961. Prestea had an underground mine that operated continuously for more than 100 years until it was finally shut down in 2002 because of a change in operational direction to surface mining by GSR (Amponsah-Tawiah & Dartey-Baah, 2011). The then post-independent administration nationalised and merged these independent mining entities into a limited liability company in 1965 under the name State Gold Mining Corporation (SGMC). Nevertheless, the company was not profitable in view of inadequate and sustained investment leading to low output.

In 1985, the Government of Ghana secured a World Bank loan to resuscitate the ailing mining sector (Adonteng-Kissi, 2015). Nonetheless, after three years of uninterrupted losses, a policy of privatization of these mining companies was implemented by the government. In 1994, through the Government of Ghana's privatization drive, a bid to run the management and activities of Prestea mines was won by Johannesburg Consolidation Investment Group Limited (JCI). There was an increase in output and efficiency in the underground mines. JCI was compelled to shut down the Prestea underground mines due to the deteriorating gold prices on the international market and continued financial losses. A process was set in motion by JCI to sell its stake in the Prestea mining project. The Prestea mines' labour force opposed the shutting down of the underground mines. Consequently, in December 1998, the labour force established the Prestea Gold Resources (PGR) which was granted a licence to run the mines. In June 2001, the government of Ghana granted two different leaseholds for the concession in Prestea (Adonteng-Kissi et al., 2016). Bogoso Gold Limited (BGL) secured a surface mining leasehold to mine to the depth of 200 m below prevailing land elevation. The second leasehold covering underground mining was also secured by Prestea Gold Resources (PGR) to mine below the depth of 200 m. In March 2002, an agreement was brokered between BGL and PGR leading to a merger which led to the undertaking of the subsequent evaluation and operations of the Prestea underground mines. Currently, GSR holds

90% of the shares of the Prestea mines through its subsidiary Golden Star (Bogoso/Prestea) Limited (GSBPL) which manages its activities in Prestea and Bogoso (Pupilampu & Dashwood, 2011).

### 1.1. Background of Golden Star Resources (GSR)

GSR is a global gold mining and exploration company based in Toronto, Canada (Adonteng-Kissi & Ohene-Konadu, 2015). The firm's significant mining activities are situated in the Western Region of Ghana's Ashanti Gold belt where it has two major operational hubs, namely (i) Prestea and (ii) Wassa. GSR now carried out a combination of surface and underground mining in Prestea. The Bogoso concession was acquired in 1999 while the Prestea underground mine and surface rights was purchased in 2001. Additionally, GSR owns the Wassa Mine to the east of Bogoso/Prestea through a distinct subsidiary Golden Star (Wassa) Limited. GSR produced 261,000 ounces of gold in 2014 and estimates of the total reserves in its concession amounted to 2,140,000 ounces in 2015 (Dashwood & Pupilampu 2010). The leases in the Bogoso and Prestea catchment areas are the native hometowns of many people covering 95 km<sup>2</sup> (Bogoso) and 129 km<sup>2</sup> (Prestea) respectively (Pupilampu & Dashwood, 2011). The arrangement relating to the two concessions was a take-over by GSR from companies with a long history of strained relations with the host communities.

## 2. The concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in mining

To carry out their rightful duties, companies must meet different kinds of responsibilities assigned to them by law, shareholders and society at large. Yakovleva (2017) suggests that these responsibilities are: (i) economic, (ii) legal, (iii) moral and ethical, and (iv) social. Firstly, economic responsibility demands a firm be productive and produce goods and services that are wanted by communities. Secondly, legal responsibility demands a firm follow set legal requirements to pursue its business. Thirdly, moral and ethical responsibility demands a firm to follow recognized ethical norms and values. Fourthly, social responsibility requires a firm proactively participate in practices that profit the community beyond its economic, legal and ethical responsibilities.

There is a school of thought that suggests that a company is naturally an economic organization (Piketty, 2017). The dominant economic objective of a company is to maximize its investors' earnings through the improvement of the values of a company's stock and therefore increasing the dividends paid to each stakeholder. Nevertheless, CSR emanates from the idea that firms interact with the community (Mayes & Chang, 2014). Therefore, firms have impacts that extend beyond simple market dynamics and companies serve a broader variety of human values that cannot be exclusively considered by dwelling on economic values. Companies now adopt CSR to satisfy the expectations of stakeholders, largely as a reaction to evolving global norms, although it is a voluntary process (Ross, 2017; Smith, Smith, John, & Teschner, 2017). They pursue this by integrating ethical, social and environmental matters as well as the usual processes of income, turnover and regulatory requirements (Yakovleva, 2017).

The idea of CSR extends beyond the limited economic, technical and legal requirements of the firm (Andriof, Waddock, Husted, & Rahman, 2017). To a greater extent, a company's contribution to offset serious social and environmental impact is their production of goods and services, particularly those that firms have contributed to creating. One significant proposition that assisted in the development of the idea of CSR is the understanding that companies may no longer be considered as purely private organizations, but rather as social organizations. Companies are expected to

function in complete understanding of the broad well-being of the community and to share the profits within the community by reacting to community needs and giving the community what it wants (Brammer, Jackson, & Matten, 2012). The idea of CSR emanates from many concepts and theories such as legitimacy theory, stakeholders' theory, the concept of social contract and public responsibility, business ethics, corporate citizenship and sustainable development.

Firstly, the theory of organizational legitimacy suggests that a business functions under a mandate from the community which might be taken back if a business is understood not to be in line with the things the community expects of it. Tengö, Brondizio, Elmquist, Malmer, and Spierenburg (2014) point out that components of such local legitimacy approach include: community needs' assessment by companies and community groups; development planning and investment to improve the social structure of communities; and planning and investment in physical infrastructure needs, such as schools, hospitals, and water and sanitation facilities. CSR is seen as a contractual commitment that a firm has towards the community (Robertson, Blackwell, & McFarlane, 2017, pp. 1–15). The concept of social contract means that a company functions in a community through an implied contract. It is the community that has permitted a firm to utilize natural and human resources and has provided it with the right to carry out its productive functions to reach its power status. Hence, a firm must regularly develop and adapt to the changing needs and expectations of the community (Burke, 2017). Legitimacy theory highlights the mode of response to community expectations by a firm's management. This response is about pollution prevention and remediation of the physical environment. It also concerns health and safety assurances for employees, consumers and those who live in the communities where goods are made and waste is dumped, and responsibility regarding the implications of redundancy through technological innovation or plant shut down. Legitimacy theory means that firms will take measures to protect their activities and performances which are satisfactory to the community and meet the wider community's growing expectations, considering the growth in community awareness and concern (Andriof et al., 2017).

Secondly, the concept of public responsibility is a driving principle of CSR and highlights that firms are responsible for results regarding their primary and secondary areas of involvement with the community (Yakovleva, 2017). Firms have usually been compelled to react to various social matters that have been regarded as the consequences of their activities. Organizational behavior and methods must align with the guidelines set by the community. From this perspective, CSR is considered an obligation for a company to pursue policies and make choices that are desirable to the objectives and values of the community at large.

Thirdly, the stakeholder theory is a solid philosophy that provides a compelling explanation of CSR and it is closely related to legitimacy theory. Through its policies and programs, a firm may impact many stakeholder groups, such as communities, government, consumers, suppliers, competitors, employees and shareholders. The firm may encounter demands from their stakeholders to commit resources to meet its social responsibilities (Deresky, 2017). Yakovleva (2017) suggests that corporate stakeholders are categorized into four groups, namely: (a) organizational (including employees, customers, shareholder, suppliers); (b) community (the local population and special interest groups); (c) regulatory (municipalities, regional and central governments, regulatory system) and; (d) media stakeholders.

Stakeholder theory highlights the need for firms to consider the needs, influence and interests of those affected by its policies and operations. Stakeholder management involves taking the concerns

of these various individuals and groups into account in the process of decision-making so that they can be satisfied to a certain degree. Stakeholder management is a core element of CSR. If the interests of all corporate stakeholders and their need to be given consideration by the firm are ignored, this can damage or stop the firm's activities. An explanation for the stakeholders' participation in corporate decision-making is that the community affects and are affected by the company's activities. Stakeholders' capacities and power might go for or against the firm. Hence, the firm needs to react to stakeholder demands (Andriof et al., 2017).

Fourthly, Business ethics theory, which is usually considered as a "normative theory", concerns holding management and the firm responsible for executing ethical principles in their organization and applying moral explanation in their choices in the design of policies and strategies and the broad direction of the organization (Bowie, 2017). In terms of CSR, management acts as moral players and are obliged to exercise the discretion of management, which is available to them in every sphere of social responsibility, towards socially responsible results (Arnaud & Wasieleski, 2014). An ethics motivated interpretation of CSR means that the choices of the company are not just made in the name of self-interest which is projected by social and stakeholders' responsibilities, but also in line with ethical values such as equality, rights and justice.

Fifthly, the concept of CSR is closely connected with the broader concept of corporate citizenship. A company assumes the status of a corporate citizen once it meets its fourth kind of responsibility, thus, a philanthropic responsibility. Resources are provided to the community, while quality of life is improved through the philanthropic responsibility of the firm (Yakovleva, 2017). Corporate citizenship submits that there is a parallel line between companies and individual citizens and that companies are endowed with both the right and responsibility to undertake their operations. Like individual citizens, firms are expected to make voluntary donations to assist in sustaining the general well-being of the community that sustains those individuals (Zandvliet & Anderson, 2017).

Finally, the concept of sustainable development (SD) is strong and promotes CSR's long-term viability based on a company's environmental, social, and economic performance through the design and application of a community engagement strategy (Schaltegger & Wagner, 2017). In the last two decades, community engagement functions have been identified under the remit of SD and CSR by large-scale mining companies (Kemp & Owen, 2013). Hence, there is the need for development models that recognize conflict as a possible barrier to SD (Charter & Tischner, 2017; Weaver, Jansen, Van Grootveld, Van Spiegel, & Vergragt, 2017). Acknowledgement of conflict as a possible barrier to SD would help manage its adverse effects and change it from residual to a constructive outcome (Clegg & de Matos, 2017). Commitment to SD and CSR, particularly by those who operate in indigenous communities, is crucial to the survival of large-scale mines (O'Faircheallaigh & Ali, 2017). In addition, large-scale mining companies in the long-term are required to measure and assess their SD performance and to determine regular advancements (Charter, 2017). Mining industry discussions on self-regulation, CSR, and risk management remain "fragile" (Sethi, Martell, & Demir, 2017; Sullivan, 2017) and the intensifying activism against mining imply "many actors remain unpersuaded" by corporate commitments to CSR (O'Faircheallaigh & Ali, 2017). The SLO principle within the community engagement strategy also forms part of the company's CSR activities that are focused on the community, individuals and groups. Therefore, community engagement permits companies to demonstrate SD (Dobele, Westberg, Steel, & Flowers, 2014) and this forms an integral part of organizational CSR towards local interest groups (Andriof et al., 2017). A significant number of large-scale mining companies have

improved their commitments to community-level conflict management as part of CSR policies (Himley, 2013).

### 3. Methods

The research was designed to utilize mixed research techniques in order to collect the data needed for this study. A convergent parallel mixed method was applied in the data collection process in this study. This type of mixed method represents the simultaneous application of qualitative and quantitative approaches in which there is limited interaction between the two data sources at the data collection stage (Morse, 2003). A mixed method is a novelty, with an unequivocal, deliberate and distinctive fusion of varied types of data and techniques for analysis (Creswell, 2009). The use of a mixed method provided the researchers with the diverse perspectives of the study participants. The goal of suitably mixing data is to ensure an outcome from which data sets complement or reinforce each other in data analysis and interpretation. The reasoning for the suitable combination of data is to put forward consistent results for a holistic analysis (Rauscher & Greenfield, 2009). It is useful for generating supplementary, explanatory data to augment the findings from the key informant interviews. The mixing is the actual process of merging or combining the qualitative and quantitative data in the data collection, analysis, or explanation phases of the research process (Creswell, 2013). There are approximately 400 indigenes who belong to the various interest groups and have had the opportunity to represent their group in the community engagements programs in Prestea. We administered 80 questionnaires to a randomly selected sample of the 400 participants of the community consultation program which is 20% of either previous or current local participants of the program and who are broadly spread across the community. The justification for this sample size is based on rationale concerning feasibility, precision about the mean difference and variance and regulatory considerations. Members of the community who could not read or write were assisted (via interpretation) to answer the questions. The impacts of the community consultation are captured by the following variables: age of respondents, sex of respondents, marital status of respondents, educational profile and occupation of respondents. Chi-square was used to test the independence of variables and analyze the results. Accurate interpretation of data obtained with Stata Version 13 software for all items to reflect the major themes of the study with significance level set at 5% was also carried out. The age variable is significant because a greater number of the indigenes involved in ASM are young and they occasionally engage in violent confrontation with the mining company. Again, the sex variable was included because ASM is a male dominated occupation and men have been violently confronting the mining company since the inception of their operations. Furthermore, the educational profile of the respondents is significant because a considerable number of the respondents have low level primary education. Furthermore, the marital status variable is significant since a substantial number of the farmers are married and relocating them and their families to new land is going to cause community and social dislocation. Finally, the occupational profile of the respondents was significant as considerable number of the indigenes who occasionally have violent confrontations with the mines are “galamsey” operators.

The qualitative sample consists of 20 key informants: 13 males and 7 females. Purposive Sampling was used for the selection of all the sample units deliberately identified to provide specific information about the study population. The majority of the respondents were males because illegal ASM and farming are male dominated occupations. The following is the breakdown of the sample size; 3 members of the environmental NGOs/civil society

organizations, 5 community farmers affected by mining activities, 5 members of illegal ASM, 2 members of registered ASM and 5 members of GSR management. Results of data obtained to reflect the major themes of the study were accurately interpreted. The ASM cohort, farmers and petty-trader variables were significant because they are the major identifiable interest groups in the community with a range of differences with GSR. The GSR variable was significant because it is the main large-scale mining company in the community. The qualitative research approach enabled the author to gather sufficient, in-depth and detailed knowledge on the issue. All interview sections were tape recorded, transcribed and translated. An interview schedule, mainly consisting of open ended questions, was prepared and used for the interviews. Details that were not brought out initially were sought through follow up questions or probes.

### 4. Results

#### 4.1. Sources and causes of conflict in Prestea mining communities

The dominant source of conflicts in Prestea is land use conflicts (75) representing 93.8% and the least source of conflicts is environmental pollution related conflicts (5) representing 6.2% of respondents in Prestea mining communities.

Presently, all stakeholders recognize that land use issues coupled with environmental matter such as impacts on local farmlands by GSR are the major sources and causes of conflict in Prestea. There is fluidity in land acquisition laws in Ghana since aspects of the laws related to land acquisition are inconsistent with customary laws. Interestingly, customary laws are recognized by the constitution of Ghana. The government has the power to compulsorily acquire parcels of land and lease it out to large-scale mining companies. Parcels of land in areas close to GSR operational areas have been the subject of disagreement which usually leads to clashes between artisanal miners and GSR. Other community interest groups that feel marginalized by GSR or socially isolated from the community occasionally engage in violence. The upsurge in tensions and levels of clashes in land use are indications of the government's inability to act as a credible mediator. It appears artisanal miners want to claim their right to operate unhindered. This has strengthened local opposition to GSR's activities, generating a divided and damaging context and increasing the difficulties in the social viability of Prestea. This complicated background makes dialogue among all interest groups more difficult. A significant majority of key informants suggested that dialogue on land use is difficult in Prestea, therefore making it the major cause of conflict. For example, an artisanal miner said:

*We have disagreements with GSR because we've been deprived of our rich lands. You see, this situation has affected our cultural heritage and many of our people have been socially dislocated. I believe you've heard about the destruction of our livelihoods. GSR should know that, if they contend all the good parcel of land are their concession, there is no way, we will understand because this is where we come from. We'll mine with all the force because we must make ends meet and they can bring in security forces and that would not stop us from mining here.*

**Table 1**  
Sources and causes of conflicts in Prestea mining communities.

Types of conflicts	Number (n = 80)	Percentage % = 100)
Land use	75	93.8
Water pollution	5	6.2
Total	80	100

Additionally, there has been an improved level of awareness of the increased environmental costs of contemporary large-scale gold mining. Impacts on local farmlands, water quality and quantity are some of the most contentious parts of large-scale mining. Reckless environmental practices connected with the removal of forest cover through GSR's mining operations, water and waste management have increased communities' mistrust and social opposition to large-scale mining operations situated close to water bodies or affecting natural water supplies. Although the government and society emphasizes the need for GSR to operate in an environmentally responsible manner, this has not happened. Many members of the local population are doubtful when it comes to GSR achieving good environmental performance in the medium and long term. The anti-mining organizations in Prestea, led by some environmental NGOs combined the resistance of some farmers and local artisanal miners to advocate for environmental friendliness. Many of the local population believe that GSR's mining operation is a danger to land use and the traditional way of life. According to key informants, the second highest cause of conflict in Prestea is environmental impact. For example, an environmental NGO officer in Prestea explained:

*Impacting on local farmlands and mining projects close to water bodies are some of the matters that don't obtain a social license from local communities. These issues are creating a lot of conflicts in Prestea. We've been fighting GSR together with local farmers, artisanal miners and other environmental NGOs to change their way of operation for a long time.*

In reaction, GSR has been increasing investments in its Alternative Livelihood Program (ALP) which is intended to give skills training to the local population. This program is part of the solution, but does not appear to deal with communities' expectations regarding CSR for employment, environmental impact and the government's role in regulating mining environmental standards. A farmer explained:

*Our farms are impacted by the operations of GSR and so we have disagreements with them. Our livelihoods are being destroyed and this makes us impoverished. GSR gives us some compensation for impacting on our farms which is inadequate, and this becomes a key source of disagreement. GSR never meet our expectations. This is not the first time we have had disagreements with them. Some years ago, when the underground mines were shut down, a significant number of local people were fired, and this brought a lot of social problems in this community.*

Many avenues for dialogue targeted at managing conflict and encouraging positive resolutions have been made through CMCC to settle the land use connected social conflicts in Prestea. Another farmer commented:

*I think our views in CMCC should carry more weight so that this forum won't be just like one of the talking shops. In that case, the CMCC will be more inclusive and balanced where critical local decisions are made. I also believe our cultural values and interests must be paramount. Again, GSR should not see us a homogenous community with similar interests. There are a lot of migrants with different interests. If they begin to see things in that way, the decision-making process in CMCC will be more effective.*

Even though, GSR has begun to recognize that time and effort are needed to facilitate peaceful resolutions to land use and

environmental impact conflicts, there has been a delay in their execution owing to the government's inability to monitor and enforce such matters. GSR have assumed the role of negotiating agreements with local interest groups and civil society organizations since there is no clear governmental participation. Nevertheless, some members of the community's discontent considering the power imbalances between GSR and the community is manifested through violence, whenever there are differences and the absence of an arbitrator.

Table 1 presents the major sources and causes of conflicts in the Prestea community.

The following variables; age groups, sex of respondents, respondents' educational profile, marital status and occupational profile of respondents were captured in the local perceptions of the community consultation program. Chi-square was used to test the independence of variables with significance level set at 5%. This was also used to explore differences across respondents using this control variable.

#### 4.2. Perceptions of community consultation and age characteristic of respondents in Prestea mining communities

Table 2 shows local perceptions of community consultation and the age characteristics of the study respondents. The results show that local perceptions of community consultation were not dependent on the age of study respondents ( $p > .05$ ). The participants ( $N = 50$ ) surveyed strongly agreed that community consultation in Prestea community has a positive impact on conflict management. The majority of the respondents (20) representing 25% of the study sample were between the ages of 19–26 years.

A significant number of the young informants suggested that GSR has integrated the local interest groups into the wider and strategic business thinking of the mining company. Additionally, democratic principles have been integrated into community consultation with representation from all the interest groups in the committees. A 20-year-old ASM operator said:

*GSR has built a hospital, library, police station and a school for the people after discussions in community consultation. Don't get me wrong, there are still many problems that community consultation hasn't been able to address. In my view, the community consultation is not well-structured even though it has helped address conflicts in this area*

This suggests that the design and implementation of community consultation has to some extent decreased mistrust and suspicion in the mining area. The social performance of the extractive industry is linked with the local expectations of the industry. During the phases of exploration, prospecting and developments of the

**Table 2**

Perceptions of community consultation framework and age characteristic of respondents in Prestea mining communities.

(i) Is it true that community consultation has a positive impact on conflict management in Prestea mining area?

(ii) Are these perceptions influenced by age?.

Age	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)	Indifferent (%)
19–26	20 (25.00)	17 (21.25)	1 (1.25)	1 (1.25)	0 (0.00)
27–34	18 (22.50)	5 (6.25)	2 (2.50)	3 (3.75)	0 (0.00)
35–42	8 (10.00)	1 (1.25)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
43–50	4 (5.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
Total	50 (62.50)	23 (28.75)	3 (3.75)	4 (5.00)	0 (0.00)

$\chi^2 = 13.40$ ;  $p = .145$ .

mines, expectations of indigenous populations have been exaggerated to generate local support. There is the need to unmistakably distinguish between the stakeholders' expected CSR and the stakeholders' perception of the CSR that is executed. A 25-year-old youth said:

*In fact, community consultation is just a public relations gimmick or something symbolic because we're still disappointed. We are expecting GSR to provide us with jobs so that we can look after our families. There are no jobs since the underground mining was shut down. This explains why the great majority of illegal miners are the youth. Illegal mining was minimal when the underground mining facility was operational. We were made to believe that GSR was going to reopen the underground mining facility in this area which has not happened yet.*

The perceptions of the youth prior to the take-over of the Prestea mines by GSR is different from what is happening on the ground now. Most of the youth had the impression that the underground mines were going to be reopened which would enable them to get jobs. However, GSR has changed its operational direction and engaged in surface mining which requires relatively fewer operative hands. Most of the underground facilities inherited by GSR through the take-over are obsolete and need to be changed. Replacing the underground infrastructure is capital intensive which is why the company is still engaged in surface mining.

#### 4.3. Perceptions of community consultation and sex characteristics of respondents in Prestea mining communities

Table 3 shows local perceptions of community consultation and the sex profile of respondents. The local perceptions of community consultation were not dependent on the sex of study respondents ( $p > .05$ ). The participants ( $N = 50$ ) surveyed strongly agree that community consultation has a positive impact on conflict management. Males (42) represented 52.50% of the study sample.

#### 4.4. Perceptions of community consultation and education characteristic of respondents in Prestea mining communities

Table 4 shows local perceptions of community consultation and the educational profile of study respondents. Local perceptions of community consultation were not dependent on the educational level of study respondents ( $p > .05$ ). The participants ( $N = 50$ ) surveyed strongly agree that community consultation in the Prestea community has had a positive impact on conflict management. The majority (34) representing 42.50%, of the study sample had primary education.

**Table 3**  
Perceptions of community consultation framework ratings and sex characteristic of respondents in Prestea mining communities.

- (i) Is it true that community consultation has a positive impact on conflict management in Prestea mining area?  
(ii) Are these perceptions influenced by sex?

Sex	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)	Indifferent (%)
Male	42 (52.50)	16 (20.00)	2 (2.50)	4 (5.00)	0 (0.00)
Female	8 (10.00)	7 (8.75)	1 (1.25)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
Total	50 (62.50)	23 (28.75)	3 (3.75)	4 (5.00)	0 (0.00)

$\chi^2 = 3.40$ ;  $p = .334$ .

#### 4.5. Perceptions of community consultation and marital status characteristic of respondents in Prestea mining communities

Table 5 shows local perceptions of community consultation and the marital status of study respondents. Perceptions of community consultation were not dependent on the marital status of study respondents ( $p > .05$ ). The participants ( $N = 50$ ) surveyed strongly agree that community consultation in Prestea community have had a positive impact on conflict management with 37 respondents representing 46.25% of the study sample being married participants.

#### 4.6. Perceptions of community consultation and occupational characteristic of respondents in Prestea mining communities

Table 6 shows local perceptions of community consultation and the occupational profile of study respondents. The results show that local perceptions of community consultation were not dependent on the occupation of study respondents ( $p > .05$ ). The participants ( $N = 50$ ) surveyed strongly agree that community consultation in Prestea community has had a positive impact on conflict management with 32 ASM respondents representing 40.00% of the study sample forming the majority.

A significant number of key informants suggested that corporate interactions with the local interest groups appear to have positively enhanced conflict management in Prestea. Many key informants attested to improvement in communication through community consultation. An illegal ASM said:

*For me, I believe the community consultation is very good because we don't see the usual loss of lives and properties that used to occur because of the violent clashes. It appears we're equal partners in our meetings because we say what is on our minds and they also tell us about the available funds for projects. However, I want to get the opportunity to represent my people and tell GSR that, the devil finds work for idle hands so if they don't employ us in the mines we'll continue to invade their concessions. This place is the land of our birth and therefore we have nowhere to go. Their operations are also affecting our farms and buildings.*

The sentiments of the key informants suggest that GSR needs to review their CSR strategies to deal with local population's reservations related to their livelihoods and environmental unfriendliness. Key informants suggested that there are many unresolved issues in the community. There are some environmental NGOs who are part of deliberation in the community consultation. An officer of an environmental NGO said:

*Well, the community consultation provides us with the opportunity to talk about our feelings. I'll say it's quite democratic and we must find ways of improving it. If I had my way, I'd stop mining altogether. Look at the way GSR is destroying our forest cover through surface mining. Do you think they can do that in the Western world? How much does the government get from mining through taxes? How many local people do GSR employ?*

It appears, all stakeholders in the community are strongly committed to the community consultation and therefore they have relegated their individual programs to the periphery and completely engaged themselves in an open discussion where there is sharing of ideas. In the context of practicality, GSR seem to be rising above organizational culture and moving into community culture. Several GSR study participants were impressed by the community engagement: Another senior manager of GSR said:

**Table 4**

Perceptions of community consultation framework and education characteristic of respondents in Prestea mining communities.

(i) Is it true that community consultation has a positive impact on conflict management in Prestea mining area?

(ii) Are these perceptions influenced by education?.

Education	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)	Indifferent (%)
Primary	34 (42.50)	11 (13.75)	2 (2.50)	2 (2.50)	0 (0.00)
Secondary	14 (17.50)	12 (15.00)	1 (1.25)	2 (2.50)	0 (0.00)
Tertiary	2 (2.50)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
Total	50 (62.50)	23 (28.75)	3 (3.75)	4 (5.00)	0 (0.00)

 $\chi^2 = 5.11$ ;  $p = .530$ .**Table 5**

Perceptions of community consultation framework and marital status characteristic of respondents in Prestea mining communities.

(i) Is it true that community consultation has a positive impact on conflict management in Prestea mining area?

(ii) Are these perceptions influenced by marital status?.

Marital status	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)	Indifferent (%)
Married	37 (46.25)	14 (17.50)	3 (3.75)	2 (2.50)	0 (0.00)
Single	3 (3.75)	6 (7.50)	0 (0.00)	1 (1.25)	0 (0.00)
Divorced	2 (2.50)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
Separated	2 (2.50)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
De-facto	6 (7.50)	3 (3.75)	0 (0.00)	1 (1.25)	0 (0.00)
Total	50 (62.50)	23 (28.75)	3 (3.75)	4 (5.00)	0 (0.00)

 $\chi^2 = 10.26$ ;  $p = .594$ .**Table 6**

Perceptions of community consultation framework and occupational characteristic of respondents in Prestea mining communities.

(i) Is it true that community consultation has a positive impact on conflict management in Prestea mining area?

(ii) Are these perceptions influenced by occupation?.

Occupations	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)	Indifferent (%)
ASM	32 (40.00)	15 (18.75)	3 (3.75)	4 (5.00)	0 (0.00)
Farmers	4 (5.00)	1 (1.25)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
Petty-Traders	9 (11.25)	5 (6.25)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
GSR	5 (6.25)	2 (2.50)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
Total	50 (62.50)	23 (28.75)	3 (3.75)	4 (5.00)	0 (0.00)

 $\chi^2 = 4.19$ ;  $p = .898$ .

*We would never have peace if we continue to engage with only the traditional authorities. For example, whenever GSR wants to fill in some of its pits where some of the artisanal miners operate, extensive consultation and feedback from communities are gathered through the CMCC. The local people tell us whatever they feel is important for them and not knowing that we also have the right to express our views on such issues. In relation to the impact of community consultation, I don't want to talk about things that I don't know; I have not investigated the impact of community consultation on conflict management. If we jointly pursue sustainability policies, it will be beneficial to all stakeholders.*

Generally, CSR is considered to be a largely ethically dispassionate exercise. The interaction between GSR and stakeholders should be structured in a manner that reinforces the interest of the organization. This contrives a concealed strategy of scheming geared towards aligning stakeholders to the organization's ultimate interest.

## 5. Discussions

The perceptions of the causes and sources of conflict in Prestea

are clearly associated with land use and environmental impact. The analysis carried out in this paper highlights the fact that land use is the most reported cause and source of conflict and this is followed by the environmental impact of mining. Although, land use and the environmental impact of large-scale mining are the main causes of conflict in Prestea, they are not the only sources of disagreement. There is a long history of strained relations between previous mining companies and the host communities that existed before GSR took over the Prestea mining project. Some of the causes of the strained relations are not related to land use and environmental impact, but rather concern the dismissal of a significant number of local people when the underground mines were shut down and the lack of social cohesion created by the mines. The government and society highlight the need for GSR to operate in a responsible way by applying various measures to decrease environmental impact. Nevertheless, a significant number of the local population are sceptical about GSR achieving good environmental performance in the medium and long-term. The anti-mining organizations in Prestea, led by some environmental NGOs combine some resistance from farmers and local artisanal miners to advocate for environmental friendliness. Many of the local population believe that GSR's mining operation is a danger to land use and the traditional way of life.



There are different dynamics that are considered in terms of assessing land use and environmental causes of conflict in Prestea. However, there are two clearly distinct groups of local players in terms of why land use and environmental impacts are causing conflict in Prestea. In a way, the arguments of both groups reproduce the classic reasons of mining conflicts. In the context of land use, many artisanal miners argue that they have differences with GSR because they have been deprived of rich lands and therefore their cultural heritage has been destroyed, they have been socially dislocated, and their livelihoods have been destroyed. Regarding the environmental causes of conflict, environmental NGOs and local farmers whose farms are impacted by GSR point out that they have disagreements with GSR because of the destruction of their livelihoods which has made them impoverished. They also claim compensation from GSR is inadequate. The present legal regime governing land use and environmental impact is inconsistent with the local people's worldviews and customary laws. Many local people find it difficult to understand how and why their lands can be taken by the government and given out as large concessions to GSR. Similarly, the ideas of some of the local representatives about respecting and preserving nature clash with the operations of GSR which they suggested is not environmental friendly. GSR has had a considerable impact on the environment and produce associated risks. In terms of assessing the environmental risks connected with the mining operations of GSR, their activities must particularly be assessed in terms of how the local population perceives the environmental dangers, the mechanisms of decision-making preferences, the trust in GSR and other government agencies, and the feeling that the costs and benefits have been equitably distributed. GSR must consider the need to develop a more inclusive and balanced community engagement framework where important decisions are made. The framework must consider the values, interests and diversity of the interest groups with the aim of offering local people the power and the opportunity to be effective in the decision-making process.

The survey responses reported in this article reflect the perception that community engagement has a positive impact on conflict management. On the other hand, key informant responses indicate mixed feelings of a love-hate relationship between the Prestea community and GSR. The Prestea community opposes GSR for destroying their livelihoods and environment, yet some of the local people are content with the design and implementation of the community consultation program as they realize that community engagement provides them with the only way to voice their grievances. For example, whenever GSR wants to fill in some of its pit where some of the artisanal miners operate, extensive consultation and feedback from communities are gathered through the CMCC. Usually, a leap of faith will produce outcomes that surpass the more traditional institutional methods of communication (Andriof et al., 2017). Broad consultation and feedback also provide essential ammunition to address community challenges (Alley, 2017). Community interest groups' engagement in community decision-making is increasingly considered as a critical element in community development models. This broadens the extant literature which suggests that company and the community are better off through exchanges developed through community engagement (Andriof et al., 2017). This is because community interest groups' involvement in decision-making in the community has the possibility to maximize interest groups' sense of community with those around them, while concurrently ensuring that the local population can be active agents in their own development and to improve the communities in which they live. This ensures a positive conflict management process through the sharing of responsibilities which offers the unique possibility to improve understanding of the matters at stake. Wang, Tong, Takeuchi, and George (2016) find that

stakeholders share responsibilities and leverage their unique strengths to enhance the understanding of the targeted issues which may usually be a social or cultural issue. For example, Vogus and Graff (2015) find that community engagement becomes a sustainable approach with greater community ownership that attempts to maximize the impact of investments by targeting evidence-based interventions for major geographic areas and populations. Given that the need to belong is a basic human instinct, it is not unexpected that there is ample empirical evidence indicating that isolation and exclusion from social groups is a potent source of conflict, stress and tension. Because corporate-community isolation and negative assumptions about community interest groups are typically embedded in subtle ways within institutions and communities, they are often not recognized by the company. In contrast, the community is keenly aware of their isolation and the stereotypes about their groups. This awareness can add significant developmental risks to the lives of many interest groups. The strongest data on the negative effects of isolation is from studies in communities. There is consistent data, for example, indicating that community interest groups that feel rejected by a large-scale mining company or socially isolated from the community are more likely to engage in violence. In view of this, Frederiksen (2017) finds that community engagement may create politics of stability.

Key informants also suggested that GSR has integrated the local populations into the broader and strategic business thinking of GSR (Charter, 2017). All stakeholders consider the various challenges confronting the community as their own. Based on common ownership of the challenges, stakeholders have designed a strong basis for internal capability. Furthermore, the results of this study's analysis present clear and consistent evidence that shows the community engagement process ensures common ownership and response to the challenge.

Additionally, the results of this study's analysis suggest that community engagement is not well developed and moulded to attain the status of a real functional strategy, although conflicts resulting in costs incurred as a result of "accidents, loss of life, destruction of properties, expansion in costs of capital and insurance, huge legal fees arising out of litigation, private security costs, low level of productivity, and loss of business associates such as suppliers and customers" (Adonteng-Kissi, 2015, p. 67) have reduced.

The survey responses reported in this article reflect the fact that the local community's perceptions about the impact of community engagement on conflict management are not affected by age, sex, education, marital status or occupation. This finding is consistent with literature elsewhere in the world (Salanova, Lorente, Chambel, & Martínez, 2011) which indicates that participants' responses are not dependent on these factors.

## 6. Conclusion

There is strong sufficient empirical evidence to conclude that community engagement must be conceptualized as a basic strategy to address conflicts in mining communities. Thus, engaging community interest groups in decision-making expresses a direct strategy to address corporate-community isolation. Existing research exploring community engagement across settings indicate that such a strategy can have positive influences on community development. Engaging in community decision making seems particularly influential when the discussion is oriented toward finding win-win solutions to problems and when interest groups are given the opportunity to define and reflect on the limits of a given matter. The challenge, therefore, is to integrate interest groups into community structures and organizations as

contributing community members, not only as individuals in need of social and economic welfare or as objects of concern. In view of this, large-scale mining companies can pursue widened policy conceptions of conflict management in order to concentrate on positive community development, interest groups' engagement and community membership. As wider and more correct understandings of conflict management are accomplished, there will be the possibility to establish and align policies that support community engagement. Sustained attempts will be needed to engage community interest groups in community-building attempts, particularly in actions through which they can observe the motivation and competence of interest groups. A community development approach requires that interest groups at greatest risk must be targeted.

This paper has revealed that organizational commitment to corporate interaction is a strategic approach for fostering community participation. Despite improved corporate interactions in Prestea, there is the need for greater understanding of the challenges involved in these efforts. Some critical perspectives have emerged, suggesting some level of uncertainty about the intent of GSR. Key informants also suggested that the CCF is not satisfactorily advanced, organised or moulded to achieve the precise or envisioned relationship with the community. Key informants also suggested that the CCF model of community engagement remains a symbolic template that has not yet reached the level of real functional strategy owing to the many unresolved local grievances that used to result in violent confrontations.

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## Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data related to this article can be found at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsm.2017.12.005>.

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