



**GUIDANCE**

Restoring Faith  
in Remedy –  
How faith actors  
can enable  
community-  
driven grievance  
mechanisms

**Swedwatch** is an independent not-for-profit organisation that conducts in-depth research on the impacts of businesses on human rights and the environment. The aim of the organisation is to contribute towards reduced poverty and sustainable social and environmental development through research, encouraging best practice, knowledge sharing and dialogue. Swedwatch has six member organisations: Afrikagrupperna, Act Church of Sweden, Diakonia, Fair Action, Solidarity Sweden-Latin America, and the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation.

**FECCLAHA** is a regional faith-based organization established in 1999 and registered in Kenya in 2001, where it is headquartered. It serves as a platform for member churches and councils to collaborate on issues of common concern, particularly peacebuilding and conflict transformation. With a mission to promote peace and social cohesion across the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa, FECCLAHA works through faith-based cooperation within the framework of holistic Christian ministry. The organization draws its membership from 11 national church councils spread across ten countries in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa and collaborates and partners with interfaith platforms/institutions.

**Act Church of Sweden** is a faith and human rights-based actor in the field of international humanitarian action and development cooperation. Together with partners, rights holders and networks, the organisation acts to strengthen civil society and sustainable development, focusing on local ownership and the rights and dignity of people in vulnerable situations. Our global and regional programmes are centred on capacity development, collaboration and advocacy

We would like to thank all stakeholders across the region for generously sharing their time and insights during focus groups and interviews.

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## Foreword by Bishop Nelson Kisare

Africa is endowed with abundant natural resources. This positions it as a critical player shaping the global economy, especially in the context of the global green energy transition. With Africa holding over 30 percent of the world's critical mineral reserves, including cobalt, graphite, lithium, nickel, manganese, and rare earth elements that are vital for driving modern technologies, the continent is experiencing an upsurge of investment in the extraction of these precious raw materials. This creates both opportunities and risks for the continent, and specifically the communities around mining areas.

On one hand, extractive activities have the potential of generating billions in revenue and centre Africa as a key player in accelerating clean industrialization, greatly contributing to Africa's progress towards local economic growth and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). On the other hand, with unchecked and unsustainable extraction, communities, who are most vulnerable, have continued to experience persistent and severe harm including those associated with conflict dynamics. This is further worsened by the fact that access to justice and remedy remains elusive.

The Bible and Quran recognize religious leaders as the defenders of the integrity of God's creation. This then places them in a strategic position to advocate for greater accountability within all investments in land including mining, especially in ensuring that the industry complies with the required standards. This is with a view to preserving human rights, protecting the environment and adhering to responsible mining and ethical business practices. With their moral authority, perceived neutrality, and deep community roots, religious leaders are uniquely positioned to not only provide the much-needed heightened due diligence for value chain actors to protect and respect people and environment during extraction process; but also, in supporting community – driven remedy for human rights violations and environmental harms experienced by mining affected communities in the region.

Faith actors' contribution across the region in amplifying the voice of communities and protecting their rights is evident through decade-long interventions. From the Alternative Mining Indaba (AMI) that has since inception prioritized community voices and challenged dominant narratives of mining; as well as, in Tanzania, where the Interfaith Standing Committee on Economic Justice and Integrity of Creation's (ISCEJIC) sustained effort and focus has resulted in positive changes in both mining industry policy and practice, documented in various publications including *Golden Opportunity* (2008), *Gold or Our People* (2010), *The Uranium Mining in Tanzania: Are We Ready?* (2012); *One Billion Dollar Question* (2012 and 2017) and *Make it Possible* (2018). We also commend FECCLAHA for their efforts towards creating opportunities for capacity enhancement for faith actors across the region and publication of resource materials such as the *Handbook for Religious Leaders on Advocacy in the Extractive Sector: A faith dimension* (2019) which highlighted the conflict dimensions of natural resources in the region, among other impacts. These are just a few examples of faith actors positioning themselves as key advocates for justice in the extractive sector.

This Guidance Note is therefore a timely and important resource, not only for faith actors, but for all actors across the global value chain in the extractives sector. It seeks to centre communities in the energy transition whilst appreciating the enabling role of faith actors in supporting community – driven remedy for human rights and environmental harms in the extractives sector across the region. At the same time, it provides guidance to value chain actors, including investors, downstream companies, and public procurers on actions they can take to enable community-driven remedy. It is my prayer that this book will greatly contribute to not only heightened due diligence for value chain actors engaged in the extractives sector but also deepened engagement of faith actors across the region on the same. We call for strengthened dialogue and engagement with faith actors who are carrying out the important role of environmental and human rights defenders of their communities.



*/Bishop Nelson Kisare, Presiding Bishop of the Mennonite Church of Tanzania, Chairperson of the Interfaith Standing Committee on Economic Justice and Integrity of Creation (ISCEJIC), Second Vice Chairperson of the Christian Council of Tanzania (CCT)*

## Executive summary

This guidance note outlines a model for community-driven grievance mechanisms, the role of faith actors in supporting community-driven remedy for human rights and environmental harms in the extractives sector across the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa, and how stakeholders across global value chains can enable this role. Extractive operations in the region are linked to persistent and severe harms and associated conflict dynamics. However, access to justice and remedy for harms remains rare. As a conflict-affected and high-risk context, the region requires heightened human rights and environmental due diligence from value chain actors.

### EXPLAINER

#### **Value chain actors**

This guidance refers to value chain actors. This refers to any company, investor, or public buyer that has minerals or oil and gas within their value chains. These include actors linked to impacts – such as downstream manufacturers, consumer companies, investors, and public procurers – as well as those that may have contributed to impacts, including investors in mining companies, equipment providers, and refiners. Their leverage and active engagement are often necessary to enable community-driven access to remedy for harms that have occurred.

## Key findings on human rights and environmental impacts of extractives operations

The guidance note identifies common harms associated with extractives sector operations across five interrelated dimensions: environmental, health, economic, violence, and land rights. While not a comprehensive study of the region, the degree of common experience identified in regional learning forums suggests the region merits heightened due diligence.

- **Environmental impacts:** Extractives operations are associated with widespread environmental degradation, including deforestation, water depletion, and water and dust pollution, with long-term impacts on livelihoods and biodiversity. Regional extractives operations and concessions overlap with key biodiversity areas for an area equivalent to the size of Albania or Rwanda.
- **Health impacts:** Environmental harms are linked to severe health impacts, including dermatological, respiratory and reproductive health issues, and chronic conditions associated with heavy metal exposure, while communities lack access to medical care and independent data to prove these impacts.
- **Economic impacts:** Impacted communities describe high levels of unemployment, corruption related to corporate social responsibility funds, and disruption of traditional livelihoods (e.g. artisanal mining, agriculture and fishing), contributing to increased poverty and inequality.
- **Violence:** Extractives sites across the region are associated with varying levels of violence. Three patterns of violence emerged in our research: sexual and gender-based violence, community specific conflict and violence, and large-scale conflicts resourced with extractive wealth.
- **Land rights:** Land acquisition and compensation practices across the region are linked to unfair and inadequate compensation and associated conflicts. Indigenous communities describe a lack of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC).

Despite the scale and severity of these impacts, communities face significant barriers to accessing justice and remedy. Restricted civic space undermines accountability efforts while operational grievance mechanisms in the region are characterised by lack of awareness and inaccessible information, opaque, slow and abusive procedures, intimidation and inadequate protection measures, and limited trust in designated representatives. This results in low trust and use of mechanisms, and escalation of conflict cycles without an avenue to address complaints.

In this context, this guidance provides a focused set of recommendations for value chain actors with the greatest leverage to advance access to justice and remedy, through either providing alternative justice pathways or using leverage to influence the behaviour of extractives companies. However, they are frequently inaccessible to communities who lack awareness, resources and information about which value chain actors are linked to their community.

## The role for faith actors

Faith actors play essential roles supporting extractives impacted communities. There are four features to faith-based engagement which address barriers to justice identified above.

- Faith actors are the most trusted institution in the region, and often first points of contact for impacted community members.
- Faith leaders are constantly present in communities enabling continuous follow-up of grievances.
- Faith leaders have advocacy platforms that enable grievances to be escalated to national, regional and global platforms for change.
- Faith leaders support conflict resolution, reconciliation and healing, which is essential when addressing prolonged harms.

Given these roles, the guidance calls for faith actors to be considered as part of a diffuse representation of communities in due diligence processes.

## Design and enabling factors for community-driven grievance mechanisms

This guidance identifies 16 design factors and six enabling factors for community-driven grievance mechanisms. These were developed collaboratively with faith leaders in the region. These factors are split across the design of grievance mechanisms, the period before a grievance arises, and the period following submission of a grievance. They offer a template which can be contextualised to communities and serve as a starting point for dialogue with companies.

## Recommendations for actors along the value chain

Engagement from value chain actors is often required to enable community-driven grievance mechanisms. Recommendations are provided according to the value chain actor's relationship to harms. Effective due diligence to prevent harms and remedy to address harms requires coordinated action across the value chain rather than isolated interventions. These recommendations are designed to enable a more integrated remedy ecosystem.

For actors linked to impacts, including downstream manufacturing and consumer companies, investors and public procurers, the guidance emphasises the use of leverage to drive meaningful stakeholder engagement and effective grievance mechanisms within their value chains. This includes:

- integrating clear expectations into contracts, investment strategies and supplier codes of conduct, on meaningful stakeholder engagement and grievance mechanisms aligned with this guidance and requiring transparent specific reporting on grievance mechanism performance;

- using leverage to encourage suppliers and portfolio companies to engage directly with community-based actors, including faith networks, to understand gaps in access to remedy;
- strengthening value chain transparency in collaboration with upstream partners;
- and enforcing zero tolerance for violence against communities and defenders.

For actors who have contributed to impacts, including investors in mining companies, equipment providers and refiners, the guidance highlights the importance of active participation in remedy processes, including:

- when individual leverage is insufficient, using collective leverage through multi-stakeholder initiatives, contributing to independent and community-accessible resources such as legal aid and environmental testing, and supporting community-informed approaches to remedy.
- moving beyond reliance on audits and certification schemes by engaging with independent, community-based monitoring and due diligence processes.
- using leverage to ensure that mining companies have concrete, community informed plans for closure, post closure and perpetual impacts of mines.

Recommendations are also provided to States to strengthen regulatory enforcement of grievance mechanism requirements and access to justice through courts, and to civil society to strengthen collaboration with faith networks. Moving forward the guidance note can be adapted at country and community levels, and with targeted guidance to specific value chain actors.

## Introduction

International responsible business conduct guidelines require companies to establish grievance mechanisms to handle complaints and provide or participate in remedies for harms they cause or contribute to. Extractives operations across the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa<sup>1</sup> are linked to persistent and severe harms for surrounding communities that contribute to conflict. However, impunity for harms linked to extractives operations remains common as grievance mechanisms are often unfit for purpose. This has created a trust deficit for communities across the region who mistrust the safety and effectiveness of seeking remedy. Without effective remedy pathways, extractives impacts are more likely to escalate conflict dynamics.<sup>2</sup>

As a conflict-affected and high-risk context, the region requires heightened human rights and environmental due diligence (hereafter: HREDD) from value chain actors. In this context, faith actors can play essential roles in enabling community-driven grievance mechanisms and remedy, drawing on their trust, embeddedness, advocacy strength, and roles in conflict resolution, reconciliation and healing. However, enabling the full potential of their engagement requires support from actors across extractives sector value chains.

To this end, this guidance note identifies: (1) high-risk factors associated with extractives operations in the region, (2) barriers to accessing justice through



Environmental monitoring training of 48 faith leaders in Northern Tanzania. In the photo (from left to right) are Sophia Mnandi, Rev. Michael B Munyoro, and Ms Johari Ismail Bigambo.

grievance mechanisms, (3) key features of faith actor engagement that can help overcome these barriers, (4) design and enabling factors for community-driven grievance mechanisms, and (5) recommendations for how actors across extractives value chains can enable community-driven remedy in collaboration with faith actors.

The note is relevant for extractives companies themselves but is targeted to those within extractives value chains including investors, public buyers, mining equipment providers, and downstream manufacturing companies and consumer companies with minerals in their supply chains. Value chain actors are critical to driving community-driven remedy but are often disconnected from communities and their support ecosystems. This guidance seeks to help bridge that gap.

## Methodology

This guidance note has been developed based on learnings from six years of collaboration between Swedwatch, Act Church of Sweden, and the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA). The analysis draws on:

- Two regional learning forums (2024 and 2025) with FECCLAHA member organisations in Nairobi, bringing together faith leaders working in mining-affected communities across the region;
- A pilot project (2024-2026) in Tanzania supporting 48 faith leaders from mining-impacted communities to engage around human rights and environmental impacts of mining operations;



Faith leaders visit an industrial gold mine in Tanzania.

- Semi-structured interviews (2026) with 22 faith leaders from, or supporting, mining communities in Kenya, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Tanzania, Uganda, South Sudan and Ethiopia; interviews covered contexts with a range of minerals and metals including gold, cobalt, fluorspar, soda ash, as well as oil extraction.
- A validation workshop (2026) with 20 faith leaders from the region.
- Independent, site-specific research conducted by the partner organisations and review of civil society reporting and secondary literature.

The guidance note is not a systematic study of extractives operations in the region; it presents qualitative insights into recurring risk patterns and community experiences. All quotations are drawn from interviews conducted for this research and are anonymised to reduce risks to participants. The primary focus is on communities near extractives operations. While impacts on workers are included at times, more specific follow-up on the intersection between extractives and labour rights is necessary to fully understand impacts on workers and pathways to worker-driven remedy.

## Regulatory expectations on grievance mechanisms

Grievance mechanisms should provide a space for impacted communities to seek remedy for harms. Remedy, restoring a person or group to their state before the harm occurred, can take many forms, including: financial compensation; rehabilitation to support recovery from harm; non-financial measures including the ceasing of abuse and apologies; and commitments to prevent recurrence.<sup>3</sup> Affected rightsholders should define what constitutes adequate remedy. Achieving adequate remedy, particularly after prolonged harm, can require mediation and reconciliation efforts.

International standards on responsible business conduct, and increasingly mandatory due diligence laws, require companies to establish grievance mechanisms and integrate meaningful stakeholder engagement. When shaped by the priorities and needs of impacted communities, they can provide access to justice and help identify issues early to prevent escalation. This section reviews regulatory requirements for grievance mechanisms for actors across extractives sector value chains.

## *I. Regulatory frameworks on grievance mechanisms*

The United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), adopted in 2011, establish responsibilities of the State to ensure access to remedy (Pillar 1) and of companies to provide or cooperate in remedy (Pillar 2), where their actions have contributed to human rights harms. Pillar 3 introduces a wider system of remedy: State-based judicial mechanisms, State-based non-judicial mechanisms, and non-State based mechanisms. Within this landscape, operational grievance mechanisms (OGMs) of extractives companies are often the most proximate to impacted communities.<sup>4</sup> The UNGPs introduce effectiveness criteria for these mechanisms: they should be legitimate, accessible, predictable, equitable, transparent, rights compatible, a source of continuous learning, and based on engagement and dialogue.<sup>5</sup>

The UNGPs (UNGPs 18,20, 29) and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises require meaningful engagement of affected groups and relevant stakeholders. The OECD Guidelines define meaningful engagement as ongoing, two-way, conducted in good faith, responsive to stakeholders' views, timely, accessible, appropriate and safe, and removing barriers for participation for more marginalised groups.<sup>6</sup> It must occur throughout project lifecycles, not only for project approval. The OECD Extractive Sector Guidance (2017) adds that engagement should be tailored to local contexts, cultures and languages, and adapted to the conditions of vulnerable groups most at risk of severe impacts.<sup>7</sup>

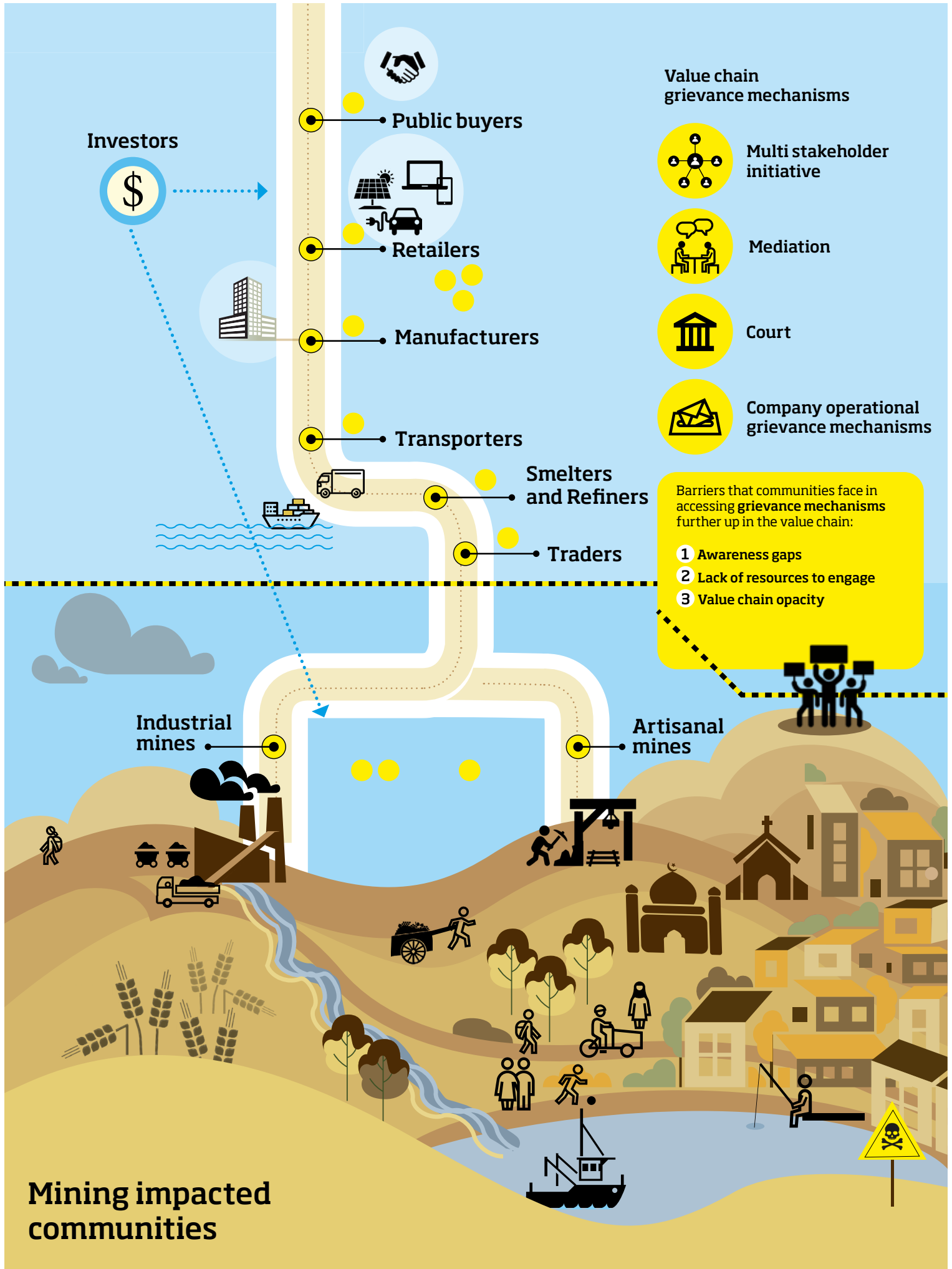
In addition, Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) is a right, in and of itself, for indigenous peoples. FPIC requires engagement and dialogue, and that indigenous communities have the right to give or withhold consent to any activities that affect their lands, resources, and territories.<sup>8</sup> Failure to respect FPIC heightens risks of severe rights violations, requiring escalation of intervention within due diligence processes.

## *II. The remedy landscape across the value chain*

Both the UNGPs and OECD Guidelines are clear that participation in an OGM must not preclude access to other remedy pathways.<sup>9</sup> Given the poor performance of site-specific OGMs, this guidance introduces recommendations aimed at improving the functioning of grievance mechanisms through community-driven OGM models, while also focussing on the role value chain actors can play in both supporting these models and enabling access to complementary justice pathways for affected communities.

The remedy landscape is outlined in Figure 1 below as well as the infographic following. Within industry mechanisms, a complex mix of industry actors hold different value chain relationships to extractives sites. Actors within extractives value

# Remedy landscape in mineral value chains



chains – from refiners and downstream manufacturers to consumer companies using minerals in their products, as well as investors – have varying responsibilities to facilitate or participate in remedy, depending on whether they caused, contributed or are linked to the harm (UNGP 17). These value chain actors play essential roles in driving meaningful community engagement.<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 1:** An overview of grievance mechanisms in the extractives sector

Category	Type	Examples
<b>State-based judicial grievance mechanisms</b>	Domestic courts in country of extractive operation	Kenyan Judiciary
	Courts in country of head-quarters of company	Swedish judiciary
	Inter-state courts	East African Court of Justice
	Supra-national courts	International Court of Justice
<b>State-based non judicial grievance mechanisms</b>	Mediation	OECD National Contact Points
	Public procurement	National Human Rights Institutions
<b>Non-State-based mechanisms</b>	Operational grievance mechanisms	Site-specific mechanisms
	Purchaser grievance mechanisms	E.g. a smelter, refiner, or trader grievance mechanism
	Multi-stakeholder initiatives	E.g. Fairmined, IRMA
	Investor mechanisms	Investors with extractive companies in their portfolio
	Global corporate mechanism	Companies with supply chains including minerals
<b>Relationship to impact</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	
<b>Caused impact</b>	Stop harm from occurring, prevent recurrence of the harm, and remedy the harm while engaging affected stakeholders.	
<b>Contributed to impact</b>	Stop the contributing activity, use leverage to influence the other responsible parties, participate in remedy.	
<b>Linked to impact</b>	Use leverage to prevent or mitigate harm, seek to increase leverage, and consider disengagement.	

However, due diligence practices of value chain companies are often disconnected from site-specific OGMs, rather than treated as part of a remedy ecosystem. Communities' access to State and non-State grievance mechanisms beyond site-specific OGMs is limited by: awareness gaps, limited resources to engage, and value chain opacity preventing communities from identifying linked companies. State-based judicial grievance mechanisms are also limited by legal procedures which impose a burden of proof on claimants and impose statutes of limitations which make it more

difficult for communities to access justice. If site-specific OGMs remain the only ‘accessible’ remedy pathway, they are unlikely to provide meaningful access to justice without significant reform.

Emerging mandatory due diligence laws increasingly translate these voluntary guidelines into legal requirements. However, they do not require companies to participate in effective grievance mechanisms or mandate reporting which would enable regulatory scrutiny.<sup>11</sup>

### *III. Regional guidelines*

The African Commission on Human and People’s Rights, in its State Extractive Sector Reporting Guidelines and the Niamey Declaration, requires companies to inform and consult impacted communities, including in remedying harms, and to provide accessible and adequately resourced grievance mechanisms.<sup>12</sup> While national legal frameworks are beyond the scope of this guidance, they are often of primary importance for impacted communities because they shape how grievance processes are undertaken and are more immediately accessible.

## **Impacts identified across the region: risk factors for due diligence**

This section outlines high-risk factors associated with extractives operations in the region across five interrelated dimensions: environmental, health, economic, violence, and land rights. While not a systematic study, insights from regional learning forums indicate a striking degree of shared experience between impacted communities. In risk and salience assessments, the severity and prevalence of these impacts – as detailed below – require their prioritisation. As subsequent sections demonstrate, addressing these impacts require engagement by value chain actors.

### *I. Environmental impacts*

Environmental impacts of extractives operations are widespread and linked to economic and health impacts faced by communities. Regional trends include significant environmental harm, weak accountability, and limited independent testing and community engagement. Pollution and intensified land and water use drive widespread environmental change, including deforestation, biodiversity loss, water depletion, heavy metal contamination, and land degradation.<sup>13</sup> These impacts are linked with and exacerbated by climate change, including flooding and heat. Several studies have also documented these impacts across the region.<sup>14</sup>

***“In the past, there were indigenous trees used for medicine, building, and firewood, but natural vegetation is gone.”*** Community member

***“With the rain and the flooding it makes it even worse. This has been a big challenge with climate change.”*** Faith-based organisation



Mining operations in the region have far-reaching and interconnected environmental impacts on local communities. These effects are primarily driven by three core factors: pollution, land use, and water consumption. Together, these pressures reinforce one another, creating complex and interrelated challenges that affect biodiversity and ecosystems, livelihoods, and public health.

***“There is a microclimate around the mining, there are too high temperatures, it affects the water cycle.”*** *Community member*

These impacts are particularly concerning given data on the overlap between extractives projects and key biodiversity areas. A 2025 geospatial analysis by World Wildlife Fund-Norway and Rainforest Foundation Norway, shows that land tied to extractives projects and concessions overlap with key biodiversity areas across 27,495 km<sup>2</sup>, roughly the size of Rwanda or Albania. As the data excludes Burundi and informal and unlicensed artisanal mining<sup>15</sup>, it underestimates this overlap. Most areas of overlap are concessions (98%) rather than active projects. However, impacts extend far beyond project sites. Polluted rivers can carry pollutants for hundreds of kilometres, while dust pollution can impact dozens of square kilometres and alter the local climate. Estimates suggest that the ecological zone of influence extends 50-70 kilometres beyond the site of operation.<sup>16</sup>

Concession areas likely contribute directly to deforestation through prospecting and development of related infrastructure and settlements. Analysis by the Congolese NGO AFREWATCH found that deforestation associated with the copper belt in southeastern DRC and the Lobito Corridor has led to deforestation of 8,749 km<sup>2</sup> of the Miombo forest, with resulting emissions of 108 megatons of CO<sub>2</sub>, equivalent to the annual emissions of Bangladesh or Austria.<sup>17</sup>

## Ethiopian Church Forest Initiative

In Ethiopia, mining projects and concessions cover 37,946 km<sup>2</sup> and encroach on protected lands for 8,169 square km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>18</sup> The impact on deforestation and biodiversity loss is significant. In this context, the Church Forest Initiative has proven to be an effective model protecting forests and biodiversity.

There are 35,000 parish churches and monasteries surrounded by forests. These forests range in size from 1 to 19,000 hectares and total approximately 400,000 hectares, sequestering an estimated 2 million tonnes of carbon per annum. The church tests for biodiversity and environmental health and found better water quality, and higher survival rates for tree seedlings and pollinators.

The forests face pressure from encroachment from agriculture and extractives operations including mining and quarrying. The Church mobilises to protect these forests through a multi-pronged approach, including advocacy through arguments grounded in scripture and work with communities to address their livelihood concerns through more sustainable agricultural and forestry practices. In recent years they have begun supporting buffer forests, including through interfaith campaigns, which have collectively planted over 30 million tree seedlings.

These environmental impacts directly affect livelihoods through declining soil quality and crop yields, reduced water availability, and livestock and fish deaths.<sup>19</sup> For example, a study by the British NGO RAID and AFREWATCH on industrial Cobalt mining in DRC found that 99% of interviewees reported reduced fish and crop yield linked to water pollution.<sup>20</sup> Another study has found a vegetation reduction of 1.3-1.5% on communities downstream of mines across the continent.<sup>21</sup>

***“In farming, soil is exhausted, and crops are weak. The investor takes the land, and after some time, he says he no longer needs it – but the land is already ruined.”*** Community member

***“As a pastoralist community we depend on grass, so when vegetation is destroyed this impacts our livelihoods directly.”*** Community member

Many of these harms persist well beyond mine closure, often without maintenance plans. They include heavy metal accumulation in water and soil, affecting food chains, landscape degradation and unmonitored waste management facilities. Abandoned stockpiles can generate mineralised dust in dry seasons, and in rainy seasons contribute to acid rock drainage which dissolves heavy metals, with concentrations up to 100-1000 times over World Health Organisation limits. Patterns of larger mines offloading ‘legacy mines’ to smaller, less resourced companies are well documented. After closure, communities often lose access to grievance mechanisms to address these impacts.<sup>22</sup>

***“Now our only hope is the mining. If the mine goes, we will have nothing left. All our land is gone.”*** Community member

Despite severe impacts, communities rarely have resources for independent testing.<sup>23</sup> Trust in company testing is often undermined by low transparency. Pollution from mining is also difficult to distinguish from other industrial sources or artisanal mining, leaving communities without access to remedy despite significant harm.

#### CASE STUDY

### **Source International and community-driven monitoring**

Source International supports communities facing pollution and related health harms linked to extractives industries (as well as other environmental crimes) by providing high quality scientific data from soil, water and dust sampling and medical testing. To strengthen trust and community agency, it also trains local personnel to establish basic environmental and social monitoring systems. This model positions community-generated data as the backbone of credible, sustained engagement, strengthening communities' leverage with companies, investors, and public authorities.

For example, Source International's work exposing environment and health impacts of a mine in Cerro de Pasco in Peru, led the government to declare an environmental and health emergency. This triggered substantial investments, including \$20M USD to clean-up the largest stockpiles and \$6M USD to clean-up the most polluted river. Other examples include a \$50M USD compensation for a community in Mexico and the construction of water-treatment plants in Liberia.

Since 2024 Source International has collaborated with FECCLAHA, Swedwatch and the Church of Sweden to begin integrating their community-driven monitoring with FECCLAHA's regional network.

## *II. Health impacts*

Health impacts linked to extractives operations are widespread, while communities lack healthcare. Risks are often disproportionately borne by groups more vulnerable to prolonged exposure, including women and children. The table below details common health impacts of different pollutants.

***“The churches can only provide basic support for health services, but these are serious health impacts because of the environmental pollution...They end up dying because they have nowhere to go. The government has nothing in this area. Even these companies are supposed to support their communities to address these impacts, but they only mind their money.” Faith-based organisation***

***“Two years ago, my aunt, who was pregnant, suffered from a mine explosion that caused her to give birth prematurely. The baby was born without a nose and died after three days.” Community member***

***“Our children...twitch in their sleep from the explosions and they are nervous all the time.” Community member***

***“There is a large pond of dirty water... When it fills, they pump it out and say they’ve treated it, but they don’t use it themselves, they release it to us.”*** Community member

**Figure 2:** Common health impacts of extractives operations

Pollution	Pollution pathway(s)	Health impacts
<b>Dust/air pollution</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Emissions from blasting, excavation, crushing, and ore transport</li> <li>▶ Wind-blown dust from waste stockpiles and tailings facilities</li> <li>▶ Indirect dust generation linked to soil degradation, deforestation, and loss of vegetation cover</li> <li>▶ Deposition of particulate matter on homes, water sources, and agricultural land and food</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Respiratory conditions</li> <li>▶ Long-term lung disease</li> <li>▶ Skin irritation and dermatological conditions</li> <li>▶ Eye irritation and infections</li> <li>▶ Heightened risks for children due to developing respiratory systems</li> <li>▶ Impacts associated with heavy metals (see below)</li> </ul>
<b>Explosions/blasting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Use of explosives during mine development and extraction</li> <li>▶ Vibrations and shock-waves from blasting activities in close proximity to communities</li> <li>▶ Poorly regulated or inadequately communicated blasting schedules</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Miscarriages and adverse pregnancy outcomes</li> <li>▶ Developmental disorders in children</li> <li>▶ Physical disabilities and injuries</li> <li>▶ Psychological stress and trauma linked to repeated blasting</li> </ul>
<b>Water pollution</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Failures, leaks, or overflows from tailings and waste-management facilities</li> <li>▶ Acid rock drainage from exposed waste rock and mine pits</li> <li>▶ Accidental spills of process water and chemicals</li> <li>▶ Seepage into groundwater and surface water used for domestic and agricultural/livestock purposes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Dermatological conditions</li> <li>▶ Gastrointestinal illness (including diarrhoeal disease)</li> <li>▶ Reproductive and gynaecological impacts (increased miscarriages and reported birth defects)</li> <li>▶ Neurological impacts linked to heavy metal exposure</li> <li>▶ Kidney and liver damage associated with chronic toxicity</li> <li>▶ Long-term health impacts due to bioaccumulation of heavy metals including cancer, congenital malformations, brain development alterations, infertility, and Parkinsons</li> </ul>

***“Women here often experience miscarriages. When I went to the hospital, the doctor asked if I was from [redacted village]. When I said yes, he told me the water contains mercury and that many people here are sick because of it.”*** Community member

***“We’ve been using river water since childhood for drinking, bathing, and livestock but now it’s polluted. When cows drink it they get sick, when we wash clothes or step in it, our hands and feet peel.”*** Community member

Workers in mines face heightened health risks from exposure to dust, toxic emissions, hazardous waste, and noise. These risks are compounded by limited transparency about workplace exposures and insufficient investigation of health outcomes, leaving workers without clear pathways to prevention or remedy. Risks are significant at artisanal sites, where workers wash ore with hazardous chemicals such as mercury without protective equipment and face elevated mine shaft collapse risks due to weak safety standards and oversight.<sup>24</sup>

***“My father is currently admitted at hospital, on a breathing machine. He used to work at the mines, but after falling sick, he hasn’t received any support.”*** Community member

***“The mining area looks like Mars, there are holes everywhere and people are dying.”*** Community member

#### CASE STUDY

### **Environmental impact of cobalt sector in DRC<sup>25</sup>**

RAID and AFREWATCH visited 25 villages around five of the world’s largest cobalt and copper mines. They identified at least 14 significant toxic incidents in the previous few years. Of the 144 people villagers interviewed they documented wide-spread health impacts attributed to water pollution from industrial mining activities:

- ▶ 56% reported increased gynaecological and reproductive issues.
- ▶ 72% reported recurring skin diseases.
- ▶ 56% reported concerns for health impacts on children.

Interviews with medical professionals report alarming increases in rates of diseases linked to the beginning of the mining boom. Meanwhile cost of health care is inaccessible, with 75% reporting they could no longer afford healthcare when sick. A follow-up study from Source International demonstrated that water and sediments in the area are polluted with heavy metals. Copper and cobalt are the more abundant elements, but manganese was found in concentrations up to ten times the limit. Furthermore, there are very high levels of PM10 and PM2.5, harmful particulate matter, and high concentration of cobalt and other heavy metals in the inhalable dust in the entire area.

Communities often lack independent data, fuelling mistrust and uncertainty on causes of health impacts. Presence of artisanal mining and other industrial activities, and legacy of pollution from previous mining activities<sup>26</sup>, further complicates attribution and limits access to remedy.

***“Experts come to test it and say it’s safe, but when we drink it, we suffer.”*** Community member

### *III. Economic impacts*

While extractives operations can contribute to economic growth of countries in the region, affected communities experience high levels of poverty. Pollution linked to extractives activities undermines land-based livelihoods, while economic benefits are unevenly distributed and often fail to reach affected communities. Growing demand for transition minerals often leaves producing communities and countries without equitable benefits or access to the technologies derived from them.

***“We live surrounded by wealth, yet we face huge challenges, mainly unemployment and health problems.”*** *Community member*

Communities near extractives sites often report high unemployment, as traditional livelihoods are displaced and formal industrial jobs are limited, with higher-paid roles often accessible only to those with education, filled by external workers.<sup>27</sup> One academic review linked industrial mining with poverty exacerbation and artisanal mining with poverty reduction.<sup>28</sup>

***“Life around mining areas is very expensive. Goods and rent prices are extremely high. Most of those employed in the mines come from outside the area. Locals are only hired for low-paying jobs..”*** *Community member*

***“Most of the mining companies working here use the manpower coming from outside, and even the food they eat comes from elsewhere. They could at least consume local production.”*** *Faith-based organisation*

These employment gaps have significant consequences for children and young people. In some communities, children leave school to contribute to household income through hazardous work and are also more vulnerable to reductions in food intake as family income decreases. Young people have increased reliance on informal or hazardous income-generating activities.

***“Many have dropped out of school to collect gold fragments because of family poverty.”*** *Community member*

***“Malnutrition is increasing, and there are many children who no longer attend school. Because of poverty and land loss, we now have more street children in our area.”*** *Community member*

While Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs can be popular, some communities report concerns about their use to manufacture consent for extractives operations, as well as issues with low transparency and unequal benefit distribution.<sup>29</sup> While not the focus of this guidance, tax avoidance and evasion further deprives governments of the resources needed to invest in essential goods that benefit communities.<sup>30</sup>

*“There are five villages surrounding the mine that each get 1% of the mining revenue, deposited in the village account but we don’t know how it’s spent. During the last elections, village chairmen spent over 100 million shillings in bribes to get elected because they know leadership brings benefits.” Community member*

*“The hospital sponsored by company used to work but now it’s not offering services required. Those who are vulnerable cannot access any other medical attention from far hospitals.” Community member*

Industrial and artisanal mining have a complex relationship. Artisanal mining is a major source of community income. However, where industrial mines consolidate land rights, artisanal miners may be displaced into more precarious, informal activities. Large workforces<sup>31</sup> operate with a limited safety infrastructure, exposure to hazardous substances, and unclear access to legal protections.<sup>32</sup>

Women are disproportionately excluded from the economic benefits of the extractives sector.<sup>33</sup> They are less likely to gain employment and are more likely to perform unpaid care work, including for relatives harmed by extractives activities. When employed, they face pay gaps and greater vulnerability to sexual abuse. They are often excluded from negotiations around benefit sharing, and in some contexts lack land rights, or enforcement of their rights.<sup>34</sup>

*“The work in mining and oil is only for men, excluding women.”  
Faith-based organisation*

#### CASE STUDY

### **Inter-faith Village and Community Banks (VICOBA)**

Economic dependence on mining companies can impact communities’ ability to negotiate effectively. Supporting their independent economic power can strengthen their leverage in negotiations. In Tanzania, interfaith VICOBA bring together Christian and Muslim members and link livelihood support with deliberate focus on peacebuilding, justice and interfaith cohesion. In mining-affected areas, some interfaith VICOBA have become community-mobilisation platforms. These small, self-managed savings and loan groups strengthen economic agency while providing spaces for learning, dialogue, and collective decision-making. They also offer member trainings, from climate smart agriculture to human rights and gender justice, as well as trainings, monitoring visits, and awareness campaigns targeted to local leaders and ward authorities. VICOBA have become recognised community actors who can voice concerns, participate in local governance processes, and influence dutybearers, thereby strengthening accountability, inclusion, and community-driven development.

## **IV. Violence**

The prevalence and form of violence linked to extractives operations varies across the region. High- risk factors include sexual and gender-based violence, localised violence, and large-scale violence linked to mineral extraction.<sup>35</sup> Well-functioning grievance mechanisms should enable companies to address issues before they escalate into conflict cycles which are much more difficult to resolve.

### ***Sexual and gender-based violence***

Women and girls near extractives sites face heightened risks of sexual and gender-based violence, including abuse by workers and community members. Migrant sex workers in these areas also face high levels of violence and exploitation.<sup>36</sup> Community members indicate rising teenage pregnancy rates in some mining-affected areas, alongside increased domestic violence as economic pressures intensify. Women who speak out against extractives projects are also at greater risk of violence.

***“Many women have turned to sex work because they have no jobs. Diseases have increased here because wealthy men exploit jobless women.”*** Community member

***“When it comes to schooling, girls will go to early marriages or prostitution with all the risk of early pregnancies... we saw young girls between 12 and 15 they had big bellies they were pregnant, how can these girls who should be in schools, how can they be here in prenatal consultations.”*** Faith-based organisation

### ***Violence around extractives operations***

Securitisation of extractives sites can expose nearby communities to violence. When private and state security forces control access to extractives operations, confrontations with community members can escalate rapidly. In one case, clashes involving mine security and police resulted in serious violence including towards community members intruding on mine property, as well as incidental, indiscriminate, or directly targeted violence towards villagers with no connection to intruders.

***“Security guards throw bombs at intruders, but even those doing normal business near the mines get injured.”*** Community member

***“People live in fear, there is murder and harassment, people feel humiliated.”*** Community member

***“One time I was walking with my friend...The guards had been targeting him for a while. They shot him dead right in front of me. We carried his body away ourselves.”*** Community member

***“They have dug almost all the ground, leaving a lot of unattended space. There is conflict with the pastoralists because they don’t have a space for their animals to graze.”*** Community member

### ***Large-scale violence***

Parts of the region have experienced prolonged, large-scale violence in which mineral and oil revenues have played a contributing role. Ongoing conflict in the DRC illustrates how extractive wealth can fuel armed violence, exacerbate instability, and deepen risks for nearby communities. The Belgian research NGO IPIS surveyed 829 active artisanal mining sites in eastern DRC, representing over 132,000 miners, and found armed actor interference at 52% of sites.<sup>37</sup> This interference manifests as illegal taxation or extortion of miners and communities adjacent to these sites. While these revenues can finance conflict, they are not its root cause.

***“In mining areas, normally populations are forcibly displaced by the armed groups, both the army and those who took arms against the government. Communities are also forcibly displaced from oil fields. They are displaced to the UN IDP camps or the refugee camps in neighbouring countries...Meanwhile, oil money is sponsoring warlords.”*** Faith-based organisation

### ***V. Land rights***

Land acquisition linked to extractives operations is often characterised by a lack of FPIC for indigenous communities and unfair or prolonged compensation for other local communities.<sup>38</sup> Failure to respect FPIC rights additionally risks escalation of impacts including conflict and makes satisfactory remedy harder to reach. Community members report lack of information about their legal rights within acquisition and valuation processes, increasing vulnerability to abuse. Common concerns include delayed and unfair valuation and compensation, gendered gaps in compensation, and threats to livelihoods.

***“Sometimes when you start farming, you’re told to stop because a foreign investor wants the land. You wait for compensation, but later the investor changes his mind and says he doesn’t want it anymore, leaving you helpless.”*** Community member

***“Mining started here in 1973 and up to now the landowners have not been compensated.”*** Community member

***“These situations happen all the time, where authorities sign contracts, send companies to mining areas without free consent of the communities.”*** Community member

***“You just come and demolish my farm and my house and just give me peanuts to relocate, but in most cases they don’t, or it’s given to the commissioner and police and they take half, and what comes to the affected person is peanuts.”*** Faith-based organisation

In some cases, community members do not receive copies of contracts or agreements, limiting their ability to challenge decisions or seek redress. Even where procedures are followed, compensation often falls below replacement value, particularly where land is a primary income source. These land-related impacts contribute directly to reduced income and increased economic insecurity for affected communities. Prolonged compensation delays leave households without viable financial support.<sup>39</sup> Women are often disproportionately affected, especially in contexts where their land rights are weak and mediated through male relatives.

***“An assessment might state that you will receive ten million shillings, but when you go to claim it, you are given only one hundred thousand and told to leave. If you complain, they tell you to go ahead and complain elsewhere, saying nothing will help you.”*** Community member

***“We have never negotiated on terms of the lease; we don’t even know what the terms are. We are the owners of the land, but we don’t know the terms.”*** Community member

***“Normally, issues related to land follow-up are handled by men. If the husband doesn’t follow up or is absent, the woman has no right to pursue the matter.”*** Community member

***“I have a niece whose land was taken. She was a widow, and although an assessment was done, the compensation she received was very small. Her husband was killed by the mine security guards.”*** Community member

## **Barriers to accessing justice through grievance mechanisms**

This guidance identifies consistent barriers to accessing justice through grievance mechanisms including: civic space restrictions, lack of awareness and inaccessible information, opaque, slow and abusive procedures, intimidation and inadequate protection measures, and limited trust in designated representatives. This reflects trends seen in reporting from other civil society.<sup>40</sup>

Where cases require escalation beyond site-specific grievance mechanisms to multi-stakeholder initiatives, OECD National Contact Points (NCPs), or courts, major gaps in awareness and capacity persist, making access heavily dependent on external support. With declining global funding, this limited support is likely to weaken further. Moreover, substantial research has demonstrated structural barriers in grievance processes from OECD NCPs, judicial complaints, and multi-stakeholder initiatives.<sup>41</sup> However, some cases cannot appropriately be addressed solely through company-level mechanisms, for example, sexual and gender-based violence and other forms of violence which also require courts.

## *I. Civic space and company-state collusion to repress dissent*

Restrictions on civic space significantly reduce the likelihood that harms are identified through common due diligence practices. The 2025 CIVICUS Global Findings Report found that all countries in the region have closed or repressed civic space. Repressive tactics include judicial harassment, arbitrary arrest of protesters, defenders and journalists, and violence, sometimes in collaboration with organised crime.<sup>42</sup> This creates a chilling effect, discouraging community members from speaking out and independent media from reporting harms.<sup>43</sup> These trends are particularly significant in cases of government co-ownership of mines, increasingly common in the region. In this context, investor due diligence that relies on ESG providers' collection of data through media and other secondary sources will likely be insufficient to detect actual harms. This is particularly true for impacts to more vulnerable populations which have the least access to raise their voices.

Industrial mining sites and adjacent communities can be heavily monitored and difficult to access without the company becoming aware. Non-local monitoring partners are easily identifiable, putting community members speaking with them at risk. This guidance identifies several cases of civic space restrictions limiting investigations into harms. For example, Swedwatch received reports that the CEO of global mining company operating in the region told a village meeting that residents should report to the mining company and police anyone collaborating with 'foreigners', alluding to international organisations conducting research on mining impacts. In another case, Swedwatch and partners were denied access to land adjacent to a mining site to conduct environmental testing, because it was deemed that the safety of those conducting the testing could not be guaranteed by the authorities. These types of repressing conditions require heightened due diligence practices.

***“So when communities want to raise their voices, they are categorised as rebels and go to jail. This includes civil society who raise their voices on behalf of communities.”*** Faith-based organisation

## *II. Lack of awareness and inaccessible information*

Communities often lack information about OGMs and their related rights. Companies may provide information in foreign or overly technical languages, or only on digital platforms. Illiterate community members are excluded when only written information is provided. In a survey of mining impacted communities in Tanzania, only 23% were aware of the grievance mechanism.<sup>44</sup> Even when general awareness of a mechanism is high, awareness of the specific procedures is often low. Low awareness and engagement are also linked to weak community involvement in mechanism development.<sup>45</sup>

***“Most women don't even know that the mining company has a grievance office, nor how to submit their complaints. Usually, people take their complaints to the village office, but they don't know whether the complaints ever reach the mining company.”*** Community member

***“Systems do not exist...Citizens are not involved, only the government and investors. It has never happened that investors and citizens met. We were never invited.”*** Community member

### *III. Opaque, slow and abusive procedures*

Grievance processes typically lack transparency, clear timelines, and independent oversight, while slow and opaque procedures undermine trust and discourage use. A history of poor practice results in mechanisms with low use, contributing to rising tensions without outlets to resolve grievances. Because relations between communities and companies are frequently marked by mistrust, opaque information often feeds that mistrust, no matter how the mechanism is otherwise functioning.<sup>46</sup>

***“There are many meetings to discuss these issues, but they are useless, people have lost hope and stopped attending.”*** Community member

***“It [mechanism] has been in existence for 25 years there has not been a single concrete solution to a grievance. You find things from five years still on the table. There is no action or responsibility.”*** Community member

Swedwatch received a report of community members forced to sign away their right to sue in exchange for use of the mechanism. Other reports have found cases where members were discouraged from appealing claims,<sup>47</sup> illustrating how mechanisms can suppress more powerful paths to remedy.

### *IV. Intimidation and limited protection measures*

Some communities report feeling unsafe using grievance mechanisms, particularly when complaints must be submitted on mine premises. Defenders may also face intimidation, including threatening phone calls. In one case, a community reported disappearances of members who spoke out publicly. These risks are heightened for women who face a confluence of threats, harassment, and sexual violence from companies and within their own communities. Lack of gender sensitive procedures can render mechanisms inaccessible to women who have experienced gender-based violence.<sup>48</sup>

***“When someone reports a problem, they often disappear so people have become afraid to speak. The area is male-dominated, so women find it hard to complain because they’re looked down upon.”*** Community member

***“Some people are targeted, youth, those leading the demonstrations. Workers are fired if they lead such protests. They end up demoralising them.”*** Community member

Faith leaders across the region report being targeted by both the company and state actors as instigators if they speak out.

***“Religious leaders have been condemning evil and have been accused of being instigators.”*** Faith-based organisation

***“If you are friend to the company, you will live comfortably, if you are fighting for your rights, you become an enemy.”*** Community member

***“If you are alone they put you in prison, but if we are a group we can act, but currently the situation has become more difficult because of rebellion, who would dare speak up now. They come up with military who can beat them...But we [faith-based organisation] organised communities in local secure communities to come up with alert mechanisms.”*** Faith-based organisation

## ***V. Lack of trust in designated representatives***

Communities express frustration with designated representatives, often local authorities. Concerns are reported as ignored, downplayed, or suppressed, weakening confidence in grievance processes. In some cases, representatives are perceived to be co-opted through bribes from extractives companies. These barriers are more pronounced for marginalised community members. Individual members may face varying levels of violence, exploitation, exclusion and harassment when speaking up depending on their gender, age, indigeneity, orientation, disability, among other characteristics.

***“Some meetings are held in secret. The chairman and village leaders organize. There is no equality and leaders forget their responsibilities.”*** Community member

***“When high-level leaders visit, they are given pre-arranged answers by local leaders who try to protect themselves by claiming that the community is just causing trouble and has no real grievances.”*** Community member

***“They have specialised in that manipulation, giving small handouts so they don’t air out grievances. The leaders are compromised because of the benefits they receive.”*** Community member

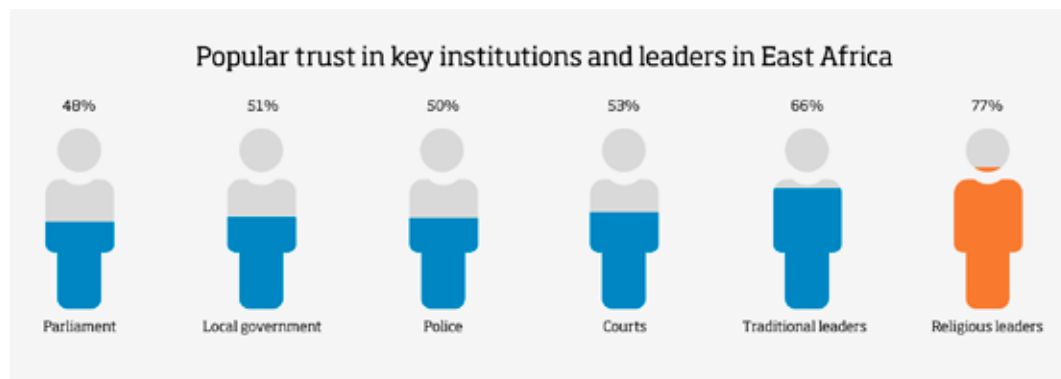
In this context, efforts to support community-driven remedy require support for trusted actors capable of responding to the trust deficit. The next section will outline the role of faith actors.

## The role of faith actors

Faith actors can play essential roles supporting community-driven grievance mechanisms when included as part of a diffuse representation of communities. We have identified four features of their engagement which help respond to the barriers to justice identified above: trust, embeddedness, advocacy capacity, and conflict resolution, reconciliation and healing.

### *I. Trust*

Trust is foundational to meaningful engagement, but communities often distrust the effectiveness, responsiveness and safety of grievance mechanisms. Addressing this trust deficit requires collaboration with legitimate and credible actors within affected communities. Afrobarometer survey data identifies religious leaders as the most trusted institution in East Africa, with 77% surveyed indicating they have somewhat or a lot of trust in religious leaders. Across Africa, trust in religious leaders is highest within demographics most likely to be impacted by extractives industries, those who have moderate or high lived poverty, without formal education, and in rural areas.<sup>49</sup>



SOURCE: AFROBAROMETER

### *II. Embeddedness*

Unlike external supporters, faith leaders live within impacted communities, possess contextual knowledge of local issues and conflict dynamics and are continuously present. As frequent first points of contact for grievances, they identify issues early, reflect community priorities, and sustain follow-up to ensure remedy. Exclusive reliance on external representatives, by contrast, is often constrained by short funding cycles and intermittent engagement, undermining accountability.



48 faith leaders in Northern Tanzania in training on business and human rights engagement strategies.

### *III. Strength of advocacy*

Faith leaders often have advocacy platforms extending beyond their community. Interfaith advocacy can draw attention to emerging issues and sustain pressure to secure and implement remedy. National and regional faith-based networks enable escalation of grievances from communities to national and regional platforms. Faith-based institutions also operate independent media outlets, amplifying visibility of unresolved grievances. Faith leaders can also articulate the struggles of communities through faith-based narratives which resonate within religious populations.

***“Continuous peaceful protests send a message to company and management...They listen to that. They fear the community coming together. A recent achievement, for all that time, we have never gotten someone from the community as a liaison officer. The recent protest, they put one of us from the community in that office.”*** Community member

***“Church leaders can talk to the government, it is the only institution left who can challenge the government. The government respects the church. Communities see the church as the only institution that can be their voice. Even those who take up arms respect the church.”*** Faith-based organisation

## **Interfaith engagement on extractives justice in Tanzania**

The Interfaith Standing Committee on Economic Justice and Integrity of Creation (ISCEJIC) in Tanzania is constituted of the Christian Council of Tanzania (CCT), the Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC), and the Muslim Council of Tanzania (Bakwata). It works to support communities impacted by extractives projects. The Committee has formed regional level Peace Committees. These interfaith platforms engage communities around impacts they face, support dialogue with companies, and escalate issues to the national level where appropriate. Due to their contextual knowledge, trust and moral authority within communities, they are well placed to engage in early warning and response and in mediation, especially in mining affected areas. They engage in community dialogues, reconciliation efforts and advocacy on behalf of communities to secure fair compensation for resettled communities, safety of mining workers and communities, and environmental protection.

Since 2024, Church of Sweden, Swedwatch, FECCLAHA, and CCT have developed a pilot project with the ISCEJIC, supporting 48 faith leaders from mining impacted communities in Geita and North Mara to monitor, document and engage companies around human rights harms their communities face. Faith leaders have supported communities facing land rights disputes, environmental pollution, and harmful working conditions.

### *IV. Conflict resolution and reconciliation*

Extractives activities frequently intersect with conflict dynamics at multiple levels, as seen in the previous section. As grievances become entangled with conflicts, pathways to satisfactory remedy narrow. Faith leaders often play key roles in conflict resolution, mediation, and reconciliation due to faith leaders' trust and positions of moral authority within communities. Through use of religious texts, they mobilise communities to protect human rights and promote peace through locally resonant calls to action. They can help deescalate tensions and support dialogue where trust between communities, companies and authorities has eroded. This role is essential to mediation, reconciliation and healing, which are the foundation of satisfactory remedy for protracted harms.

## **Regional Faith Women Mediation Network (REFWOMEN)**

The FECCLAHA Regional Faith Women Mediation Network (REFWOMEN) consists of women from the Christian and Muslim faith with a current membership spread through 7 countries: Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, and South Sudan. It was formally launched in 2017 as a structure to coordinate and consolidate the women of faith's voice for sustainable peace in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa region. At community levels, members engage in inter-generational dialogue, community conversations, and local advocacy missions including around violence against women. At the regional level members have advocated towards regional governance bodies, including the African Union Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), engaged in election observation missions, and participated in regional faith-based peace advocacy missions. Mediation networks like these, which are grounded in women's leadership, could play essential roles in mediating disputes around grievances which can become closely intertwined with local community conflict dynamics.

## Diffuse representation strategies

Faith actors do not represent all community members and should not be treated as a sole channel for representation. Effective grievance mechanisms require intersectional approaches recognising differing impacts by gender, age, livelihood, and social status. A diffuse representation strategy, where faith leaders are one component alongside women-led organisations, traditional authorities, and other diverse representatives, is essential to reflect the perspectives of the most marginalised.<sup>50</sup>

## Design factors for community-driven grievance mechanisms

Drawing from the experience of faith leaders and community members, this section identifies factors necessary for community-driven grievance mechanisms. These apply to the design of grievance mechanisms, the period before a grievance arises, and the period following submission of a grievance. The factors focus on site-specific OGMs, while the recommendations section outlines how value chain actors can support both their implementation and enable complementary justice pathways.

### *I. Design of the grievance mechanism*

Meaningful community engagement in grievance mechanism design is critical to their use and legitimacy. It builds trust, awareness and ensures responsiveness to community needs. This requires partnership with community-identified representatives. When representatives are selected without transparency, communities describe the manufacturing of consent through selective representation and patronage-based CSR. External civil society can support but not replace community-based representation and should be engaged only at the community's direction. Representatives should be drawn from multiple groups, with particular emphasis on more marginalised members.

This phase should include collective design over the mechanism's scope and avoid restricting the issues addressed (e.g. by limiting review to areas necessary for certification schemes). Communities should be able to choose whether to establish independent platforms or to participate in the company mechanism. Mechanisms should also have independent governance, meaning that company representatives who could be subject to a grievance should not be in a decision-making position within the mechanism. Power asymmetries must be addressed in mechanism design or patterns of abuse will replicate in its operation.

## II. Prior to a grievance

In the period before grievances arise, there are several key features essential to make the grievance mechanism process community-driven. The following table breaks down key design factors, and the role faith actors can play in supporting implementation of them.

Design factor	Role of faith actors
<p><b>Strengthen community awareness of their avenues for seeking remedy and rights within grievance mechanism processes.</b></p> <p>Lack of awareness of the mechanism, and their rights within them, make community members more susceptible to abuse.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✔ Collaborate with diverse community partners to raise awareness.</li> <li>✔ Make sure community dialogues are scheduled at times which enable all members of the community to participate.</li> <li>✘ Do not rely on digital platforms, foreign languages, and formal channels.</li> </ul>	<p>Engage wide parts of the community and help translate information in an accessible manner.</p>
<p><b>Clear policies and guidelines which outline in accessible language the processes and procedures that will be followed.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✔ Publish and promote all information related to the policies and procedures of the mechanism and collaborate with community partners to ensure information is understood.</li> <li>✘ Do not provide information in overly technical language.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Multiple avenues for submitting grievances are essential to ensuring access to the entire community.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✘ Do not provide only one location for submission.</li> <li>✔ Where possible, engage existing and trusted community structures.</li> <li>✔ Include options accessible for illiterate community members and information in local and accessible language. Different options include toll free hotlines, suggestion boxes, and independent community-based entities who can transmit complaints to company structures.</li> </ul>	<p>Support community-led documentation of impacts. Faith leaders can host sites for grievance identification.</p> <p>Raise awareness of the different methods available.</p>
<p><b>Strong protection policies to ensure mechanisms are safe for defenders and community members.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✔ Institute confidentiality procedures, anonymous complaints, zero tolerance policies towards attacks against defenders, and collaboration with community members to identify safe avenues for use.</li> <li>✘ Do not assume presence of a policy is sufficient to ensure protection, continuously monitor protection concerns.</li> </ul>	<p>Places of worship can offer safe sites for dialogue and submission of grievances.</p> <p>Faith leaders can help contextualise protection procedures to the community level.</p>

### III. When a grievance has occurred and complaint been filed

Once a grievance has been filed, there are design factors necessary to ensure fair review of the grievance, and a reasonable pathway to remedy.

Design factor	Role of faith actors
<p><b>Collective design of parameters for review of grievance.</b></p> <p>When companies unilaterally define the parameters for what elements of a complaint will be reviewed by the mechanism it reduces trust.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✔ If there is a need to prioritise claims, do so in collaboration with trusted community representatives.</li> <li>✘ Do not limit review of a complaint based exclusively on criteria necessary to meet certification standards.</li> </ul>	<p>Engaging community to identify areas of priority in review of complaints.</p>
<p><b>Clear procedure and timeline for how the grievance will be reviewed.</b></p> <p>Information on how and when complaints will be reviewed builds trust, enables follow up, and reduces conflicts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✔ Steps should be articulated clearly and timebound.</li> <li>✘ Do not review complaints without informing the community of the processes, and do not only communicate to the community at the beginning and end of the review.</li> </ul>	<p>Communicating procedures and timeline to the community to increase transparency and understanding within the community, and to manage expectations.</p>
<p><b>Impartial review process.</b></p> <p>Impartial reviewers are essential for building trust in the outcomes within grievance mechanism processes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✔ Consider using independent multi-stakeholder advisory panels.</li> <li>✔ Ensure the independent review has the resources to conduct an impartial investigation and that staff have appropriate training and autonomy over policies, procedures and budget.</li> <li>✘ Do not have staff involved in the grievance mechanism who may be subject to a claim.</li> </ul>	<p>Faith leaders external to the community can provide impartial review. Faith leaders can also help engage community members to identify trusted representatives.</p>
<p><b>Transparency integrated across the mechanism</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✔ Be transparent about staffing, governance and handling of grievances.</li> <li>✔ At a minimum the mechanism should publish details, while protecting the identity of claimants if desired, of the harms identified, the timeframe of the process, and the remedy provided.</li> </ul>	<p>Monitor the grievance mechanism to build trust in the information provided.</p>
<p><b>Appeals process and access to alternative forms of justice.</b></p> <p>Alternative pathways to justice, when OGMs give unsatisfactory remedy, are crucial.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✔ When relevant provide all relevant information about the mechanism's function to courts and other State-based bodies.</li> <li>✘ Do not require community members to forego alternative pathways to justice in exchange for use of the mechanism.</li> </ul>	<p>Faith leaders can be advocates for their communities within alternative justice mechanisms, including by representing communities in additional judicial or non-judicial processes.</p>

Design factor	Role of faith actors
<p><b>Community engagement throughout the review including through regular communication and feedback in both formal and informal settings.</b></p> <p>Regular dialogue with the community throughout the review processes is key to maintaining trust and transparency and facilitating feedback from the community throughout the process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✔ Provide all information to the community through multiple channels. Where relevant accompany this information provision with dialogue and mediation.</li> <li>✘ Do not only use formal channels to communicate.</li> </ul>	<p>Ensure community members understand the status of the grievance process, and their rights within it. Facilitate dialogue through more informal channels.</p>
<p><b>Strong protection protocols.</b> See above.</p>	<p>See above.</p>
<p><b>Address barriers to participation.</b></p> <p>Many community members may face added barriers to participating including losing wages from work, difficulties in accessing childcare and transportation, and low access to legal support services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✔ Provide funds to address these barriers.</li> <li>✘ Do not impose fees for lodging grievances.</li> <li>✔ Allow collective lodging of grievances.</li> </ul>	<p>Help identify barriers, facilitate transportation, and help represent community members.</p>
<p><b>Contractually binding decisions.</b></p> <p>Enforcement of decisions requires provisions which bind companies to follow through on remedy recommended by the mechanism.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✔ Include contractually binding language to enforce decisions, with clearly stipulated consequences for non-compliance.</li> <li>✔ Support external partners to provide monitoring and oversight to ensure implementation.</li> </ul>	<p>Monitor implementation and raise cases of non-compliance with relevant oversight authorities.</p>
<p><b>Community informed remedy.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✔ Remedy for grievances should be identified in consultation with affected community members, including through gender sensitive engagement.</li> <li>✔ Where necessary support mediation to determine a satisfactory remedy, particularly for prolonged grievances.</li> <li>✘ Do not delay implementation of remedy.</li> </ul>	<p>Contribute to community organising which is essential to determining community priorities for remedy. Faith leaders can also support dialogue and mediation efforts.</p>
<p><b>Feedback processes for reform of the mechanism.</b></p> <p>Continuous learning requires regular feedback loops with the community to track the trust, effectiveness and satisfaction within the community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✔ These learnings should inform the function of the mechanism and be used to prevent future harms from occurring.</li> <li>✔ Use independent reviewers to ensure trust in learning processes.</li> </ul>	<p>Faith leaders can help companies understand how mechanisms are failing, and strategies to respond to those barriers.</p>

## Enabling factors for access to justice

Several enabling conditions are critical to strengthening access to justice for impacted community members. These complement the design factors and describe the conditions necessary for communities to access justice, beyond mechanism design. Access to justice for communities impacted by extractives operations rarely results from one strategy or tactic. When remedy is reached it often comes from communities employing a mixture of protest, media outreach, legal strategies, and negotiations with the company. While effective, these multi-strategy approaches are difficult to employ. The enabling factors below outline the conditions that support those approaches. These may be influenced by several actors along the value chain. The roles of those actors are detailed in the recommendations section based on their relationship to the harm that has occurred.

### *I. Spaces for independent organising*

Independent community organising is the bedrock of community-driven remedy, enabling wider sensitisation of impacts, collective voice and agreement on remedy priorities, while strengthening the resilience of communities to divisive tactics. However, levels of organisation vary widely and those most vulnerable are least likely to have the time and resources to support organising. Faith structures can provide important spaces for organising within communities, through physical venues with wide community engagement, and through framing community struggles through locally resonant narratives. Organising enables communities to articulate visions for the future of the community and can form the basis for negotiations or mediation on remedy.

### *II. Support for awareness raising and capacity exchange*

Awareness of legal rights under national and international laws and frameworks governing businesses activities is often low in extractives affected communities. Strong rights awareness and capacity increases the likelihood of accessing justice and preventing harms. It strengthens individual leverage, and collective negotiating power. Capacity exchange requires sustained commitments and collaboration with trusted community-based partners, including faith actors.

### *III. Financial support and technical assistance*

Access to justice often depends on support services out of reach of impacted communities, including environmental assessments and legal services. Declining global funding risks further undermining access to justice by deepening an already wide inequality of resources. Where mechanisms lack independent investigatory functions, long-term financial support for communities is required.<sup>51</sup>

#### *IV. Open civic space and free independent media*

As collusion between governments and businesses to restrict civic space grows, communities' ability to document and raise grievances diminishes. Support, including funding and diplomatic pressure, is essential to enabling communities to safely document harms and advocate for remedy. Faith actors can provide safer spaces for identifying grievances and dialogue within communities. However, those roles come with substantial risks to faith leaders, requiring protection related support.

#### *V. Value chain transparency*

Extractives value chains include a range of companies with different obligations to provide and facilitate remedy for harms, depending on their relationship with the harm. Given the poor performance of OGMs, exercising the leverage of value chain actors is critical for communities to access justice through either influencing the performance of OGMs or providing complementary pathways to justice. This requires value chain transparency, so communities can identify responsible companies. However, extractives value chains are frequently opaque and tools and services to uncover value chains are out of reach for communities. Transparency is particularly limited for artisanal miners and surrounding communities, who due to informality and poor regulation often lack access to site specific grievance mechanisms and court-based claims.

Efforts to improve traceability must reflect regional political realities and power dynamics to avoid causing further harm. For example, exclusion of artisanal mined minerals from value chains, due to difficulties in traceability for the sector, can undermine essential local economies and push artisanal miners into more precarious informal economies.<sup>52</sup> Measures must avoid placing disproportionate burden on upstream actors (e.g. artisanal miners) who lack the capacity to comply.

#### *VI. Access to justice mechanisms outside of grievance mechanism*

Communities must have access to alternative pathways to seek justice, including domestic courts, courts in extractives company headquarter countries, and multi-stakeholder mechanisms. These provide independent routes to remedy and increase the likelihood that operational grievance mechanisms operate fairly. While communities often prefer domestic courts, harmonised civil liability regimes in regions where companies are headquartered can provide extraterritorial ways for communities to access remedy, particularly if domestic legal frameworks are weak, under resourced or politically captured. In one case, a court in the United Kingdom ordered the development of a new OGM with independent governance, factfinding, review, and provision of free legal services. Subsequent complaints around failures of implementation reflect the need for continuous follow-up.<sup>53</sup>

## Alternative justice pathways and the case of Lundin Oil

Communities in what is now South Sudan have alleged serious human rights violations during Lundin Oil's operations in the country (1997–2003). These include allegations that the activities of the oil company contributed to killings and mass displacement, perpetrated by Sudanese armed forces and its allied militias, within its concessions area. Those communities have long struggled to obtain remedy directly from the company, a challenge compounded when Lundin Oil later sold major assets to Aker BP. As a result, they pursued justice through both judicial and non-judicial State mechanisms.

**OECD NCP Complaint:** In 2022-2023 eight civil society organizations, including the South Sudan Council of Churches and Swedwatch, filed an OECD NCP complaint on behalf of around 200,000 South Sudanese people. In 2025, the Norwegian NCP found that there were shortcomings in the human rights due diligence conducted for AKER BP's merger with Lundin Oil. They found AKER BP's human rights due diligence did not adequately assess the impact of the merger on the victim's right to an effective remedy. It recommended renewed due diligence including with strengthened stakeholder engagement and participation in remedy where appropriate.

**Swedish court case:** Swedish prosecutors announced in November 2021 that they indicted two former Lundin Oil representatives for alleged complicity in grave war crimes in Sudan. The subsequent trial, opened in Stockholm in September 2023.

Faith leaders played several critical roles in both cases. They were claimants in the OECD complaint, and plaintiffs within the court case. They issued a call to end the oil conflict leading to the development of the European Coalition on Oil in Sudan (ECOS), which includes several faith based actors, and a subsequent report, *Unpaid Debt*, which helped lead to the prosecution.

## Recommendations for value chain actors

This guidance note outlines impacts of extractives sector operations in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa. It introduces design and enabling factors for community-driven grievance mechanisms and articulates essential roles faith actors play in enabling community-driven remedy. State and business actors along extractives value chains are necessary to enabling community-driven remedy and have responsibilities to do so. This section outlines concrete actions they can take to enable that vision.<sup>54</sup>

### *1. Investors, public procurers and companies within extractives value chains*

The responsibilities of different value chain actors vary depending on their relationship to the extractives operation and harm, as stipulated in the UNGPs (UNGP 17). While the sections on design factors provided direct recommendations to extractives companies, this section focuses on value chain actors who have contributed to or are linked to impacts. Recommendations are identified based upon the caused-contribute-linked framework, focussing on actions which are linked to or contributed to harms.

**Figure 3: Cause, contribute, linked framework within the UNGPs**

Relationship to impact	Responsibility
<p><b>Contributed to impact:</b> the actor's activities facilitate, encourage or assist the company to cause the harm.  <i>e.g. an investment in a mining company facilitates the actions causing a harm</i></p>	<p>Stop the contributing activity, use leverage to influence the other responsible parties, participate in remedy.</p>
<p><b>Linked to impact:</b> a company with a value chain relationship to the actor that causes a harm. <i>e.g. an electronics company has minerals from a mine within its products</i></p>	<p>Use leverage to prevent or mitigate harm, seek to increase leverage, and consider disengagement.</p>

**For value chain actors who are *linked to impacts*:**  
*(e.g. downstream manufacturers and consumer companies, investors in downstream manufacturers, public procurers)*

- Exert purchasing power, or investment influence to require companies in your value chain to adhere to standards on meaningful stakeholder engagement and grievance mechanisms with specificity in line with this guidance note. Where individual leverage is insufficient, each actor should look for opportunities to use collective leverage with other procurers, companies and investors and encourage full engagement along the entire value chain. For public procurers this includes integrating, and monitoring implementation of, requirements in contract clauses with suppliers. For investors this includes using shareholder leverage through company engagement and voting strategy. For downstream manufacturers and consumer companies with minerals in their supply chain, and extractives equipment providers, this includes integrating legally binding requirements in supplier-company codes of conduct and global framework agreements. Specific strategies are detailed below.
- Request, from companies within investment and lending portfolios or value chains, reporting on grievance mechanism function when making an investment decision or procurement, and regularly in high-risk contexts including the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa. Reporting should include details on: quantity and types of grievances received, trends identified in grievances, timeframe for resolving grievances, status of grievances submitted, outcomes including remedy provided, feedback from rightsholders on grievances, and evaluation of effectiveness and accessibility. If issues are identified, encourage those companies to engage with faith networks in line with this guidance note.
- For companies and investors, continuously review the performance and accessibility of your own grievance mechanism and due diligence processes, including through dialogue with community-based organisations and faith networks. Ensure you have specific human rights expertise within your staff to understand limitations of easily accessible information.

- Enforce Zero Tolerance Policies for violence against human rights and environmental defenders and communities on all companies within your value chain.
- Require supply chain transparency of companies within your value chain and financially contribute so that costs of compliance are not exclusively on companies down the supply chain. In relation to artisanal mining, focus on smelters and refiners through independent verification, moving away from over-reliance on auditing and certification schemes.<sup>55</sup>
- Conduct heightened due diligence to ensure extractives companies are adhering to standards of Free, Prior and Informed Consent. Review related policies and operations of extractives companies, require transparency and seek independent verification on whether consent was obtained, withheld or contested.

***For value chain actors who have contributed to impacts:***  
*(e.g. investors in mining companies, mining equipment providers, refiners and smelters)*

- When individual leverage is insufficient, seek out, create and participate in Multi Stakeholder Initiatives, or multi-company, investor or procurer initiatives, to increase leverage. Engage faith networks to participate in governance and oversight of those mechanisms. Ensure they are well resourced over long time-frames, and request information from the initiative on protocols and training of staff to assess internal competence to evaluate grievances.
- Contribute to independently governed funds which support worker and community organising and awareness raising efforts, impartial investigations including environmental testing and community-driven monitoring, and legal aid.
- When harms are identified use leverage to ensure impacted communities have influence over forms of remedy, escalate pressure in cases of limited action (e.g. for investors through public statements, voting actions, shareholder resolutions), track outcomes in collaboration with faith networks, and evaluate responsible divestment or discontinuation of a contracting partnership in cases of continued harms.
- Use leverage and embed requirements within investor policies and supplier codes of conduct, to ensure that mining companies in your value chain have concrete, community informed plans for closure, post closure and perpetual impacts of mines. Contribute to legacy funds in cases where harms have been identified.
- Use leverage on service providers including auditors and ESG data providers to strengthen methods to assess risk and evaluate harms in line with recommendations in this guidance note. Where there is no change in service provider methods, complement use of these service providers with independent due diligence, including in collaboration with faith based and civil society networks.

## *II. State actors regulating responsible business conduct*

- Enforce standards for effective meaningful stakeholder engagement and grievance mechanisms within mandatory due diligence laws. Include language for diffuse representation of the community and include faith actors within relevant stakeholders in addition to civil society, indigenous leaders and trade unions.
- Enable effective scrutiny of the procedures and performance of operational grievance mechanisms by requiring transparent reporting. This requirement should be targeted and specific, with the UNGPs Effectiveness criteria a foundational starting point.
- Enable meaningful access to justice through judicial mechanisms, including for more vulnerable community members by removing barriers to their use of the courts. This can include reversing burdens of proof, generous statutes of limitations, and providing resources to ensure financial accessibility of legal processes. This is both a duty of the State and increases the likelihood that operational grievance mechanisms will function well.
- Fully resource State mediation and arbitration bodies, including OECD NCPs and National Human Rights Institutions, to ensure their knowledge, capacity and resources are fit for purpose to evaluate the effectiveness and rights compatibility of OGMs.

## *III. Civil society actors supporting impacted communities*

- Design all engagement strategies in partnership with community-based actors, including faith actors. Multiple points of representation should be sought, with particular emphasis on more marginalised groups. Develop meaningful engagement strategies to ensure community voices are centred.
- Collaborate with faith networks when conducting human rights and environmental impact assessments and engaging companies around harms. Engage them in the planning phase.
- Support community members, including faith leaders, to engage in dialogue with duty-bearers including at local, national and international fora.

## Endnotes

- 1 The Great Lakes and Horn of Africa are constituted of: Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda.
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The Guidelines emphasize meaningful engagement for land and water intensive industries.
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- 8 The Securing Indigenous Peoples' Rights in the Green Economy (SIRGE) Coalition, has developed a full breakdown of requirements for FPIC processes. *Securing Indigenous Peoples' Rights in the Green Economy (SIRGE) Coalition (2024). Securing Indigenous Peoples' Right to Self-Determination: A Guide on Free, Prior and Informed Consent*. Available at: <https://www.sirgecoalition.org/fpic-guide>.
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