

Reply of Fastenopfer on behalf of Business & Human Rights on the companies' reaction to the report "Profit more important than human rights?"

April 2016, Lucerne, Switzerland

We would like to reply to the reactions of the companies (IAMGOLD, Nordgold, Amaramining and Metalor) following the release of our study.

Fastenopfer has been working in Burkina Faso since 1971 and is actively involved in improving food security of the population. Fastenopfer cooperates with grass-roots communities and via local partner organisations. To that extent we are thus especially familiar with the local social and cultural situation. Over the past years various partner organisations have drawn our attention to the serious problems which the increasing industrial gold mining industry in Burkina Faso causes to the local population. In our projects we saw how important development steps are being endangered or even destroyed. We investigated these cases and noticed that the connections reach as far as Switzerland.

90% of the gold from Burkina Faso is refined in Switzerland. This fact means that the Swiss refineries take over part of the responsibility for the situation there, just as the Swiss Government, which determines the general regulations for these companies.

Our report reveals that it is more difficult for the relocated population, in particular for women, to make a living. The relocation without taking the cultural and social needs into angemessene account, the loss of land and the even more drastically restricted earning situation are only three problems the population faces. The report focuses on the issue of human rights violations associated with industrial gold mining.

We acknowledge the efforts of the mining companies in Burkina Faso addressing the consequences of relocating the population, the agricultural problems and the question of access to water, and would like to point out that we welcome their projects launched in favour of the population in concern. Our study, however, clearly underlines that said projects are not sufficient and that the efforts are not based on the needs and traditional way of life of the population affected. We therefore attempted to establish contact with the mining companies in Burkina Faso in summer 2015. Unfortunately we only received feedback from Amara Mining and then visited the Kalsaka Mine in the following. IAMGOLD and Nordgold failed to react to our contact letters.

With regard to engaging with IAMGOLD we would like to underline that other institutions have been in contact with the civil population and the mining company in Essakane for a long time, and therefore it does not seem useful to start also negotiations with IAMGOLD.

As an aid agency it is our duty to address the concerns of the civil population in the area, to give them a voice and to search for solutions with them. However, it is not our duty to monitor the projects of the mining companies.

Our report has reflected clearly that there are several problems which need to be solved urgently. We regret deeply that the companies do not seem to acknowledge the existence of these problems, and that the local population has to continuously suffer under the pollution and burden caused or aggravated by the mining activities.

Nevertheless, we do hope that the situation will improve for the population living in Burkina Faso.

Best wishes

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Patrick Renz