



DIALOGUING FOR PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE AMONG MIGRANTS AND HOST COMMUNITIES IN ARTISANAL AND SMALL-SCALE MINING IN GHANA

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study examined the structures and strategies for managing and resolving conflicts that promote peaceful coexistence among migrants and host communities in Ghana's artisanal and small-scale mining sector.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The study uses primary and secondary sources of data, relying on extensive document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions. Three communities in the Birim North District, Akoase, Noyem, and Nyafoman, were selected for this study. The snowball sampling technique was employed to select eighty young miners, comprising 50 migrants and 30 from each host community. The data were transcribed, coded, and sorted into themes using computer-based software (NVivo) to aid the overall data analysis.

Research Implication: The study was limited by its inability to constitute a representative sample through random sampling procedures, which greatly affected the generalisability of the findings.

Findings: The results revealed that conflicts and tensions have not led to the disintegration of relationships and communities despite their frequency. The formation of mining committees, recognition of the reciprocal benefits of collaboration, and belief in the abilities and influence of the supernatural that bestow are a few of the structures and methods for resolving disputes that promote peace.

Practical Implication: The practical implications centre on the appropriateness of including migrants on mining committees as liaisons between migrants and communities. This tends to promote inclusivity, agency, and involvement in decision-making.

Social Implication: The influx of migrants to gold-rich communities is often accompanied by conflicts, frequently initiated by indigenes who perceive that migrants are being granted the same rights to their lands. Despite its prevalence, this does not lead to the disintegration of relations or the communities involved. This is because the actors institute measures to resolve conflicts promptly.

Originality/Value: The uniqueness of this paper aligns with the ongoing debate about the illegal mining menace in Ghana, which has led to the destruction of major water bodies and ecosystems.

Keywords *Artisanal. conflict. migrants. mining. resolution*

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INTRODUCTION

The literature on conflict and peace, which links the exploitation of natural resources to conflict, has indirectly looked at the role of migration in the nexus and builds on the grievance hypothesis' conceptualisation of group conflict (Cote, 2021). For instance, a study by the Centre for African Elections Media Monitoring Index (CAEMMI) found that conflicts were prevalent when people from distinct cultural backgrounds and with different goals shared space and resources, noting a strong correlation between conflict and artisanal mining.

Academics have presented conflict resolution strategies in response to the prevalence of natural resource conflicts in regions with abundant mineral resources. The "greed" thesis, proposed by Collier (2000), and the "grievance" hypothesis, introduced by Stewart (2008), are two broad theories that have emerged in the literature surrounding the debate over natural resource conflicts. The core idea of the "greed" thesis is that conflict arises from economic incentives and opportunities. In contrast, grievance theorists have posited that socioeconomic, political, and cultural imbalances between diverse groups are the root causes of conflict.

Several studies have focused on the frequency of conflict concerning internal migration. For example, Mildner, Lauster, and Wodni (2011) and Cote (2015) argue that natural resource disputes are frequent because internal migration results in the presence of distinct groups, which exacerbates tensions and ignites conflict. Two intergroup conflict theories are pertinent for analysing the linkages between internal migration and disputes over natural resources. The relevant premise of the 'Instrumental Model of Group Conflict' (IMGC) and Acculturation Theory is their insightful conclusions about the causes and solutions of intergroup disputes. Bornstein (2009) claimed that despite their arguments coming from distinct perspectives, both are compatible with the favourable or unfavourable attitudes that immigrants experience in the context of rivalry, collaboration, and interaction within and between groups.

Even though literature suggests several causative elements in the connection between conflicts and natural resources, Maphosa (2012) contended that each conflict is distinct, despite theories of conflict assuming a more general origin of conflict. Schellens and Salim (2020) expanded on this point by stating that the exploration and exploitation of natural resources have given rise to contentious issues between opposing parties regarding the division of rights and a growing awareness of the detrimental environmental impacts of resource exploitation on the communities where the activity takes place. This has been supported by the claim that rather than fostering economic growth and improving well-being, exploitation has become a "curse" and burden for



communities in countries with abundant natural resources (Brunnschweiler, 2008), particularly in cases where they have lagged behind resource-poor nations (Mwesiga, et al., 203; Collier & Hoeffler, 2002).

Paradoxically, artisanal mining activities have proliferated in many resource-rich sub-Saharan African countries despite their links to conflicts, particularly the frequency of conflicts involving indigenes and migrants. While it is often assumed that the influx of migrants, especially young people, will lead to violence, it is also believed that the interactions between host mining communities and artisanal miners are generally peaceful (Enu-Kwesi et al., 2023; Nyame & Blocher, 2010). According to Nyame and Blocher (2010), friendly relationships between artisanal miners and host communities can develop due to mutual benefits arising from collaboration and land arrangements that circumvent a country's mineral licensing and tenure framework.

Even though conflict is unavoidable in human-group interactions, it can be managed constructively to create adaptation, transformation, and development, as well as to unite society (Shantz, 1987; USAID, 2012). Lawal, Orunbon, Ibikunle, and Faduyile (2020) argued that effective conflict resolution involves a multifaceted approach that incorporates the contributions of all stakeholders. Deutsch, Coleman, and Marcus (2006) also advocated for the creation of structures, strategies, and arrangements that reduce incompatibilities and de-escalate tensions between parties. Fisher (2021) acknowledged that despite the parties agreeing to resolve their current state of conflict, future incompatibilities can arise, which will require the adoption of different mechanisms for resolution. Thus, according to Brock-Utne (2001), the strategies used in conflict resolution, which are exclusive to the context and time of occurrence, should aim for comprehensiveness and participation.

In Ghana, the Artisanal and Small-scale Mining (ASM) sector has experienced its fastest growth since the 1990s (McQuilken & Hilson, 2016). According to Banchirigah and Hilson (2010), this growth has been primarily driven by the unattractiveness of livelihoods based on agriculture, the inability of the public sector to absorb job seekers, and the community's awareness of their rich mineral deposits. ASM, known locally as “galamsey”, has become attractive to many people, particularly rural smallholder farming families looking to diversify their livelihoods. As a result, many of them, especially the youth, have left home to pursue livelihoods in the sector, which offers very low ‘start-up capital’ requirements and no entry or exit barriers.



Artisanal and Small-scale Mining (ASM) in Ghana involves migrants and hosts working collectively. However, the literature suggests that migrants frequently outnumber hosts and are disproportionately young men, which causes significant demographic shifts (Gough et al., 2019; Nyame et al., 2009). Relations with the host population must often be negotiated by migrants moving to a new location, and they can vary from structured migrant obligations based on shared interests to open confrontation (Robson, 2019; Armah, 2012). Nevertheless, in the majority of instances where different cultural and ethnic groups have coexisted, intergroup conflicts have arisen as a consequence of a lack of resources or competition for land and access to resources, a disregard for host-guest relations norms, and the emergence of new customs and practices (Menda et al., 2022; Awedoba, 2009; Gratz, 2009). Also, the majority of the time, where mining operations are located within or close to communities, the resulting influx of migrants has altered complex dynamics and changed the local demography, leading to some issues related to the society, culture, and politics (Enu-Kwesi et al., 2023; McQuilken & Hilson, 2016; Hruschka & Echavarría, 2011).

Ghana has not been immune to host-migrant conflict, even though systematically violent behaviour between migrants and hosts has not been widespread due to hospitable social customs and practices regarding the acceptance of newcomers and migration on a seasonal basis, which have been regulated over many decades (Grant et al., 2016). The prevalence of disputes, violence, and conflicts in ASM camps has been reported in many Ghanaian media outlets. Similarly, Mitchell (2012) discovered numerous publications on inter-communal disputes, the majority of which involved host-migrant land disputes revolving around ownership rights, control, and the enforcement of rental agreements between host land vendors and migrant landholders. With several examples in the Eastern Region of Ghana, the CAEMMI witnessed a surge in the frequency of conflicts when persons from diverse cultural backgrounds and with opposing interests share space and resources.

The Birim North District presents an interesting case for studying not only the disagreements between indigenous community members and migrant artisanal miners but also how they resolve these conflicts jointly. In line with the government's commitment to successfully implement its decentralisation measures and advance the district's development, LI 1442 detached it from the Birim District Council in 1987 to form the Birim North District. Since the recent discovery of considerable gold deposits, particularly in the 'Ajenjua Bepo' and 'Atewa Range Forest Reserves', and with the establishment of several new Large and Small-Scale Mining companies in the district, the Birim North District and the Eastern Region, in general, have evolved into an epicentre of artisanal and small-scale mining activities (Ntiri et al., 2023). The nearby communities had seen



an unprecedented influx of illegal miners, especially after the Newmont Gold Mining Company in New Abirem was granted a mining concession. The majority of these originated from within Ghana, although some also came from nearby West African nations, China and Spain. According to Banchirigah et al. (2010), the district has experienced a surge of migrant artisanal miners, mostly in communities such as Nyafoman and Noyem, numbering more than 30,000 individuals. Yakovleva (2006) observed that most of these migrants were from various localities and regions within the country. The unexpected inflow of migrants caused agitation, resentment, and violence, the following loss of land for farming for “galamsey”, and the contention between migrants and indigenes over the best locations for gold mining.

Though not a recent phenomenon, conflicts within the gold industry have become more common in the past couple of decades and, most notably, within the artisanal mining sector. The Eastern Region, and especially the Birim North District, have emerged as crucial to the reputation of artisanal and small-scale mining activities, causing undue disagreements, conflicts, and unacceptable social behaviours Okoh and Hilson (2012). While the migration-conflict nexus had received minimal coverage, the prevailing circumstances in the Birim North District and generally in the Eastern Region had been covered in numerous publications in the country (Grant et al., 2016, p. 29). An assessment in Nyafoman and Noyem by the African Queen Mines, a mining concern in the district, observed the persistent tension between the host communities and artisanal miners. Despite evidence of persistent conflicts, artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) activities, rather than waning, have continued with intensity. This study highlights that conflict exists in the mining spaces and focuses on the structures and strategies for managing and resolving conflicts for peaceful coexistence among migrants and host communities in artisanal and small-scale mining in Ghana. Aside from the introduction, the next section is devoted to related literature on intergroup relationships. The methodology of the study, the results, and the discussion follow this. The final section deals with the conclusion and policy implications.

THEORIES UNDERPINNING THE STUDY

Conflict has been a significant discipline of study in the social sciences, where it has been viewed as dysfunctional, disassociating, and disruptive (Coser, 1956). Based on this perception, an immense body of literature connecting natural resource extraction to conflict has focused on its detrimental effects. The leading theories have centred the narrative on greed and grievance and their negative externalities (Keen, 2012). However, according to Marx's theory, class conflict is the fundamental component of society, and proponents consider conflict to be the focal centre of social activity. According to this perspective, conflict is a constantly evolving and progressive type



of interaction and form of social life that promotes change (Wieviorka, 2013). Marxists contend that conflict is unavoidable in human interactions and necessary for development, adaptation, and change (Shantz, 1987). Conversely, conflict is seen as crucial to keeping society together rather than tearing it apart (Allan, 2007).

In societies comprising multiple groups, there is a greater likelihood of conflict emerging, which is inevitable due to participating individuals having different perspectives in the same circumstances (Nathan, 2001). However, the primary cause of group conflicts, as advocated by social constructivists, is that they are centred on the formation of groups based on identity, where individuals perceive one another differently and constitute groups centred on distinctions such as geography, physical characteristics and social background (Stewart, 2008). There is no doubt that the concepts of "us" and "them" may serve as the foundation for conflict. However, several studies have shown that disputes extend beyond identities to important concerns like how power is divided and used, whether it be political, economic, or a combination of the two (Eicher, 2010). Therefore, according to Allport (1954), the repercussions of cohabitation rather than the act of cohabitation itself are what matter.

Not only have the theory and nature of conflict been extensively studied, but its destructive effects, management, resolution, and post-conflict peacebuilding have a substantial body of literature. Although greater emphasis has been placed on conflict, conflict theorists have overlooked that most interactions between parties are non-conflictual and that negotiations among groups have averted conflict from erupting. Ratner, Meinen-Dick, May, and Haglund (2013) have argued about the benefits of cooperation in the natural resource debate. In their study on natural resource conflict, Ratner et al. (2013) were interested in identifying trends of conflict as well as collaboration and competition centred around natural resources, establishing a conceptual foundation that illustrates the decision-making process of actors in resource competition between conflict and cooperation, as captured by the Instrumental Model of Group Conflict (IMGC) and Acculturation theories. The nuance of these theories lies in their exposition of the causes of intergroup conflicts and how resolution can be achieved between parties (Tajfel et al., 1971).

IMGC argues from a conflict perspective and posits that "a combination of resources stress and the salience of a potentially competitive out-group leads to perceived group competition for resources... leads to an attempt to remove the source of competition, using a variety of strategies" (Esses et al., 1998, p. 702). The strategies espoused by Esses et al. (1998) involve the in-group adopting hostile behaviour and ascriptions, reducing group contact, or increasing their



competitiveness. While these strategies entrench the conflictual positions of the parties involved, the model acknowledges that the pursuit of superordinate aims and objectives that inspire 'in-group' members to re-examine their convictions about the 'out-group' and perceive them more favourably can ultimately mediate or minimise conflicts between the parties. Achieving superordinate goals requires the collaboration of both parties as it converts an erstwhile conflictual relationship to friendly interactions to achieve an overall goal which is mutually satisfactory to the parties and surpasses the attainment of their personal or group goal. To attain superordinate goals, Ryan (2007) states that parties should evolve strategies that allow them to transform an erstwhile conflict situation into a state where they will collaborate to accomplish mutually beneficial goals. Liu (2012) found that superordinate goals impact the relationship between the parties. However, Thakore (2013) asserts that to remove hostilities, the parties must also increase interdependence and interactions through unifying workflow, developing a better understanding of how each other operates, and uncovering common interests and priorities.

The importance of Acculturation Theory emphasises the acculturation aims and objectives sought in a society made up of majority and minority groups. Even though the theory is unidimensional, expecting that migrants will discard their cultural values and adopt those of the host, it seeks to fundamentally promote cooperation, although inherently embedded and fundamental are the conflictual relations between the parties, Sam and Berry (2010). The core idea of the theory is that societies are culturally diverse, often due to immigration, which brings together distinct groups as in-groups and out-groups Zagefka and Brown (2002). The acculturation process is triggered by the compatibility or otherwise of customs, beliefs, values, and traits because out-groups introduce their cultural and psychological characteristics to the host community Sam and Berry (2010). Zagefka and Brown (2002) opine that when such a group interface arises, they can develop a consensus and live harmoniously or coexist with intergroup tension and conflict. The outcome depends on whether the acculturation process was voluntary, whether the group migrated and if the process is permanent Berry (1997). Four acculturation strategies are generated, and according to Fox et al. (2013), in order to live harmoniously, the groups must adopt integration or assimilation. According to Appleton (2011), integration can increase a community's willingness to welcome migrants by allowing them to participate in its socioeconomic institutions. Adjei (2007) opined that this is a type of cooperation where the host and migrant take the time to comprehend one another's experiences. It is, therefore, evident that the claim suggesting a migrant's success is a loss to an indigene ought to be addressed for integration to take place Adjei (2007). Appropriately situated contact and interactions between majority and minority groups result in acculturation rather than primarily being the out-group's responsibility Berry (1997); Bourhis et al. (1997).



When the host accepts migrants and both parties pursue superordinate goals, conflict is significantly reduced (Oucho & Williams, 2019). While these models are idealised, resolutions may not necessarily follow a linear path but involve recognising the dynamics to appreciate which strategies will be accepted by the parties Brahm (2003). Thus, to resolve degenerated intergroup relationships, the parties should, apart from cooperative interactions and exchanges, adopt constructive mechanisms in handling conflicts that meet their approval and have the potential for creativeness and a harmonious society. According to Fisher (2011), conflict resolution involves a dual-dimensional process where conflicting parties collaborate to achieve shared solutions to their problems. This entails setting up procedures and mechanisms that deal with contradictory situations assertively and cooperatively. The literature on conflict resolution advocates the creation of structures and mechanisms that promote cultural diversity and support the achievement of holistic goals for all parties involved (Fisher, 2011).

Despite the increasing dominance of formal processes for resolving conflict within the African setting, traditional approaches still exist, especially in rural communities (Lawal et al., 2020). Fisher (2011) notes that these traditional processes in most rural societies are appropriately structured and dominated by traditional institutions headed by the chiefs. According to Kpae (2016), apart from the holistic approach, which emphasises the community rather than individuals, the traditional conflict resolution process is preferred because it is inexpensive and encourages parties to rebuild their relationship, ensuring social harmony and a healing process for all parties. Zartman (2000) notes that actors in conflict prefer to resolve it at the lowest level of whichever hierarchical arrangements are in place, often with the chief at the highest tier Zartman (2000).

The literature also proposes the engagement of mediators to resolve intergroup conflicts. The mediator, who should be independent and impartial and have no formal authority, helps the parties reach an acceptable resolution to all Fisher (2011). Their roles often include enforcing relevant rules and norms and making recommendations to remedy the situation. Ajayi and Buhari (2014) state that the mediators should be members of the community. The success of the mediation process, however, is dependent on the level of trust of the parties and should not be prescriptive Deutsch et al. (2006). Adaptation is one of the strategies for preventing and resolving conflict that is often neglected by literature. Bronkhorst (2014) argues that adaptations involve adjustments that limit possible harm to the party, often the out-group actor. Thomas and Kilman (2008) also state that the party involved in the conflict adopts a cooperative and unassertive manner, neglecting his or her concerns to satisfy the needs of the other conflicting party. This takes the form of, but is not



limited to, taking up duties out of generosity, obedience to the other's order and accepting the viewpoints of others, all in a bid to deflect possible hostilities.

Conceptual framework

As a universal principle, peaceful coexistence has also been recognised as a fundamental principle of international relations. Peaceful coexistence has been conceptualised as the sustained ability of diverse social groups to live together in an environment characterised by mutual respect, tolerance, and non-violence despite differences in identity or ideology (Bar-Tal, 2008; Kriesberg, 1998). The foundations for achieving peaceful coexistence include the principles of social justice, inclusivity and equity, respect for diversity, effective communication, and the establishment of reliable conflict resolution mechanisms (Cantel, 2018). This offers an organised method for comprehending and resolving conflicts, focusing on pinpointing the underlying causes of disagreements, understanding the needs and interests of everyone involved, and creating solutions that benefit all parties. This framework highlights the importance of effective communication, collaboration, and addressing both the core issues and the emotional dimensions at play.

The relationship between these structural variables and peaceful coexistence is mediated by critical social processes such as trust-building, dialogue, mediation, and community participation. Trust functions as a fundamental enabler of social cohesion, fostering willingness among groups to collaborate despite past grievances (Fukuyama, 2018). Dialogue and mediation processes create spaces where conflicting parties can safely share perspectives, renegotiate relationships, and humanise adversaries, essential steps toward durable peace (Aden & Wilhelm, 2023). Furthermore, inclusive community participation ensures that peace initiatives reflect the needs and aspirations of all groups, thereby enhancing the legitimacy and sustainability of coexistence efforts. Collectively, when trust is built, dialogue is institutionalised, and communities are engaged inclusively, peaceful coexistence transcends tolerance, evolving into active collaboration across societal divides.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study's analysis draws on primary and secondary sources, utilising extensive document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions (FGDS). From a constructivist paradigm, the study acknowledges that "no objective truth is waiting for us to discover... but rather truth, or meaning, comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world" (Crotty, 1998, p. 8). The key idea is that we structured the research with subjects acting as active participants. In this regard, the realities of youth miners are contextualised by the strategies and experiences they use to resolve conflicts, make a living, and survive in such an inhospitable environment.



Three communities in the Birim North District, namely Akoase, Noyem, and Nyafoman, which were primarily agricultural before the discovery of gold and produced products, including cassava, palm oil, and cocoa, were selected for this study. The target population was the youth, made up of 50 migrants and 30 indigenes from the three communities. The choice of participants for the study was purposive, after key person consultations and a prior visit to the study location. Then, a discriminative snowball sampling was adopted. Semi-structured interview guides were used to collect data. Further in-depth interviews with members of the mining committee, youth group leaders, community residents, and opinion leaders were conducted. Aside from 20 opinion leaders and notable members of the three communities, interviews were conducted with the mining committee leaders in Noyem and Nyafoman. Speaking directly with the leaders helped contextualise local-level approaches to conflict resolution. In each community, two FGDs were held, one each for migrants and the host. One FGD was held explicitly for migrant women in Akoase. NVivo was used to transcribe, code, and group the data into themes. The analysis aimed to achieve a deeper understanding of the connections and nuances of the emergent themes to assist in constructing perspectives, perceptions, and experiences that facilitate dialogue for peaceful coexistence among migrant artisanal gold miners and host communities (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section comprises three parts. The first part presents a discussion of the background characteristics of the study's respondents. The second part examines the structured roles performed by various actors, including state and non-state actors, in resolving conflicts within the mining camps in the study area. The third critically analyses strategies that foster and safeguard peaceful coexistence between host and migrant miners.

Table 1: Demographic information of Respondents

Attribute	Frequency	Percent
Age Groups		
21-29	44	55.0
30-35	36	45.0
Marital Status		
Single	20	25.0
Married	60	75.0
Educational Level		
No formal schooling	19	23.8
Primary	14	17.4



Junior Secondary School	31	38.8
Senior Secondary School	16	20.0
Years in Galamey		
1-5	47	58.8
6-10	27	33.8
11 and over	6	7.4

N=80

Source: Source: Field data, 2020

The background characteristics of respondents that were examined are age groups, marital status, educational level, and years of experience in artisanal and small-scale mining activities. Concerning age groups, the sample was almost evenly distributed across the 21-29 (55%) and the 30-35 (45%) age groups. The age distribution aligns with the measures put in place by the traditional and mining committee to prevent people below the age of twenty, especially school children, from engaging in artisanal and small-scale mining activities. Our observation is consistent with the findings of Cromartie (2000) and Guest (2006), espousing the dominance of the 20 to 29 age group in migration trends in mineral-rich communities. Regarding marital status, the majority of the participants (74.5%) were married. The educational level of the participants varied from no formal education (23.8%) to Senior Secondary education, with more (38.8%) of them having Junior Secondary education. While Hilson and Garforth (2012) identified professionals and tertiary students involved in artisanal and small-scale mining activities and noted that it was not unusual for people with no formal education alongside tertiary graduates, this study did not encounter any individuals with tertiary education. Most of the participants (58.9%) had approximately 1-5 years of experience in artisanal and small-scale mining activities.

Structures for managing conflicts

In modern times, the formal system, such as the police and the courts in Ghana, are generally required to settle issues of crime and misdemeanours. However, because ASM operations have been banned and offenders risk prosecution, the operators instead opted for traditional processes to seek redress as these were embedded in the customs and practices of the host areas and generally aimed at eliminating disputes and restoring balance. The opinion of the mining committee and artisanal miners was that these procedures were not merely informal but less threatening because they took place in a congenial environment. A study by Zartman (2000) reiterated that the formal dispute resolution systems were only symbolic, deferring actual settlements to indigenous processes that concentrated not on punishing the perpetrators but on resolving the underlying



dispute. The mining committees worked with the different ghetto owners and gang leaders to settle most mining-related disputes. The chief was rarely asked to arbitrate, and the police were seldom engaged unless a severe physical injury occurred. The mining committees, however, had frequently been required to notify the police of extremely severe infractions, including life-threatening injuries, even though the miners would typically not ask for outside help. Gang leaders addressed arguments and verbal differences, but the most severe conflicts were directed to members of the committee members, according to the principle that conflict resolution should be proportionate to the intensity of the problem. Table 2 shows the type of dispute, the perpetrators and who could resolve it. For instance, in the case of perimeter or boundary conflicts, which usually occur among the miners, the resolutions were spearheaded by the mining committees, together with the ghetto owners and leaders of the affected gangs.

Table 2: Dispute Types, Perpetrators, and Mediators

Type of Conflict	Perpetrators	Mediators
Border or perimeter disputes	Artisanal miners	Ghetto Owners, Gang Leaders, Members of the Mining Committee
Encroachment disputes (to farmlands, communal and individual lands)	Artisanal miners	Traditional and Community Leaders
Conflicts related to the distribution of money or proceeds between members of a gang	Artisanal miners	Ghetto Owners, Various Gang Leaders
Disagreements and arguments between gangs	Artisanal miners	Ghetto Owners, Gang Leaders, Members of the Mining Committee
Disputes about load distribution between ghetto owners and gangs	Ghetto Owners, Artisanal miners	Members of the Mining Committee
Conflicts involving stolen tools and loads	Various	Ghetto Owners, Members of the Mining Committee
Conflicts over prolonged duration in pits (exploitation time)	Artisanal miners	Ghetto Owners
Disputes about the load distribution between the committee and various gangs	Members of the committee, Artisanal miners	All
Conflicts (of many kinds) that result in serious physical injury	Various	Members of the Mining Committee, Traditional Leaders, District Police
Private property theft	Various	Traditional leaders, District Police
Conflicts regarding who is responsible for accrued funds from artisanal and small-scale mining activities	Youth	Traditional and Community Leaders

Source: Field data, 2020

Concerning the channels of communication and mediation, as presented in Figure 1, most conflicts occurred in the presence of gang leaders, who were the first to intervene, primarily when disputes

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took place in the pits out of sight of the committee and ghetto owners. The ghetto owners, stationed at the entrance to the pits, were next in line, followed by members of the task force, who were the foot soldiers of the committee and often interacted with the miners, occasionally intervening in conflicts. The committee was next in line; if they were unsuccessful, they sought the counsel of the chiefs and elders. In the case of serious injury, the district police became involved. This tiered structure of conflict resolution reflects the traditional conflict resolution structures found in most settings in sub-Saharan Africa (Brock-Utne, 2001). Though these processes are less formal, they form part of the cultural tradition of the local people and are thus flexible, dynamic, and less intimidating.

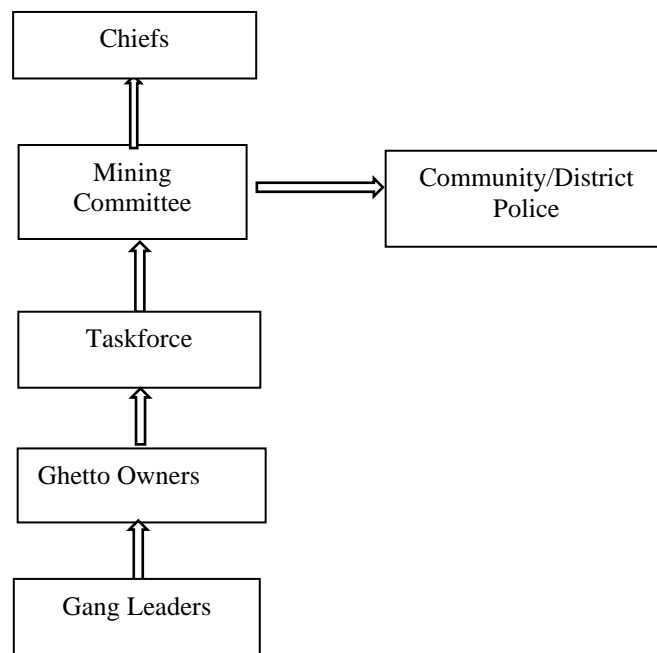


Figure 1: Conflict Mediators' Pictorial Hierarchical Representation

Source: Field data, 2020

The Committee's role in resolving conflicts

The mining committees were established in the district to regulate artisanal and small-scale mining activities and collect the community's share for development projects. Despite disagreements among the actors on the originator of the idea, the pseudo-styled mining committee in the district was modelled after the small-scale mining and district assembly unit committees set up under Act 703 of the Minerals and Mining Act, 2006, Section 92.



According to the head of one of the mining committees, even though Act 703 of the Minerals and Mining Act, 2006, Section 92 mandates District Assemblies to form mining committees, the mining committees in the district were set up on each mining site as a result of the joint efforts of the host and migrant miners in order to guarantee the smooth operation of artisanal and small-scale mining activities and to safeguard order, security, and harmony. They had two primary responsibilities: intervening to settle disputes and enforcing laws and regulations to stop problems from worsening and spreading to the community.

Given the competitive environment in which both migrant and host artisanal miners operate and the perception that some members of the host community viewed migrant miners as resource parasites, opinion leaders all agreed that confrontations were essentially inescapable. Aside from the mining committee's primary responsibility of ensuring that disputes at the mining sites did not spill into the communities, they, although not officially, filled a void created by the state's absence.

The district's principal concern with artisanal and small-scale mining activities had somehow been resolved by the mining committees, who also appeared to have some authority. Due to the ASM's chaotic, disruptive, and hostile nature, there have been several calls from host community members requesting that the government restrict its activities. Although artisanal and small-scale mining activities had proven generally beneficial not only to the artisanal miners but also to the communities, it was learned from the leaders of the mining committee that in order to maintain its existence and the safety of the communities, the conflicts it had sparked needed to be reduced. In order to dispel the myth that the artisanal and small-scale mining activities terrain was an unruly place, create a friendly connection between migrant and host miners, and protect indigenous people from its risks, led to the formation of the mining committees. Their creation included adopting policies, guidelines, and processes for their implementation, which served as the cornerstones for developing harmony and collaboration.

The mining committees had considerably reduced the raging and violent disputes by employing strategies ranging from negotiation and conciliatory discussions to penalties, site and pit closures, and outright expulsion from the mining sites, as well as from the community, depending on the gravity of the offence. According to the artisanal miners, the mining committees maintain a civil and friendly atmosphere. They noted that disputes would be regular and extremely violent without them, creating an unmanageable and dangerous workplace.



Prior to the formation of the mining committees, disagreements were pervasive and often led to highly detrimental consequences, according to a member of the mining committees. The mining committees frequently utilised reasoning and dialogue to resolve conflicts between opposing groups, and in most cases, these techniques were productive. This same view is held by Brahm (2003), who states that effective resolution of conflicts requires a thorough understanding of the dynamics to appreciate the strategies that the conflicting parties will accept. A mining committee member further intimated that the police were rarely called, except to deal with issues involving grievous bodily harm and the theft of machines and tools.

While the arguments for the establishment of mining committees were justified, as they, in the interim, offered sanity and peace, the migrant miners indicated that their incapacities plagued the former. Among the many allegations was that aside from the fact that the members of the mining committee were comprised entirely of indigenes, they were substantially restricted in their ability to dispense justice since they frequently disregarded infractions committed by indigene miners. The partiality factor generated dissatisfaction among migrant miners due to the increased indiscipline exhibited by indigene miners. In addition, they claimed that the mining committee members were avaricious, only looking out for themselves and unconcerned with the miners' wellbeing. The artisanal miners regularly disputed with the mining committees because they believed that the overbearing committee members abused their power, seeking to benefit from the miners' labour and focusing their energies on the quantity of "load" they could accumulate. During the FGD with the migrant miners, the participants asserted that "galamsey" is unlawful in and of itself. Therefore, any committee or association created as a result of it is also unlawful, and the committees cannot assert their authority over the activity. The function of traditional leaders in resolving conflicts

Apart from the mining committees, the chiefs in these mining communities, similar to chiefs in Ghana at large, play a key role in conflict resolution. The head of the mining committees indicated that when confrontations and disputes in the communities grew more intense as a result of the large inflow of migrant miners and with each side refusing to seek recourse through the judiciary or police, the chiefs were frequently called upon to mediate disagreements. The chiefs or any of their appointed representatives played an instrumental role in resolving such conflicts. The chiefs were not only acknowledged to be more powerful than the state in these rural communities but their voice was deemed as the law, which made parties readily agree to their rulings.



As mentioned by the miners and mining committees, the chiefs also intervened in the interests of the artisanal gold miners by securing bail for them whenever the police detained them for a variety of violations. Evidence from the mining committees indicated how the chiefs convinced the police to release defendants implicated in more minor infractions in exchange for settlements outside the courts because of their considerable authority and control over those they govern. In addition to limiting further inquiries that might reveal the extent of the communities and the leadership's involvement in “galamsey”, the chiefs took this action to show the crucial role that establishing peace plays in the development process of the communities, in which dispute resolution and arbitration were indispensable.

Waindim's (2019) observation was reiterated by opinion leaders and the heads of the mining committees, who noted that the chief's responsibilities extended beyond simple dispute resolution; he was also required to foresee potential problems and devise creative solutions to prevent them through various programs and culturally ingrained techniques. All the respondents agreed that the formation of the mining committees was one such strategic approach, and this had proven crucial in averting intensification and, in particular, the spillover of disputes into the communities. The respondents stated that despite the mandate of the mining committees, the chiefs were still considered the final arbiters, as they were consulted on the rare instances when the committees could not settle disagreements peacefully. While it was assumed that the chiefs would maintain their objectivity throughout negotiations, migrant miners asserted that they were occasionally more sympathetic to the opinions of their people. Nevertheless, not many people publicly contested the chiefs' decision, regardless of how they disagreed. This was due to the chief's historical immunity from criticism.

Strategies for promoting peace and cooperation

Aside from the structured roles performed by various actors in resolving conflicts in the ASM sector within communities, the respondents, primarily miners and members of the mining committee, noted that there were fundamental strategies instrumental in fostering and safeguarding peaceful coexistence between host and migrant miners, which were common in all the study communities. These included but were not limited to, adaptations, shared goals, intermarriages, and associations.

In an environment that, to a large extent, is hostile to young migrant artisanal miners, adaption is often the best strategy when they are involved in a conflict situation with the host. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with migrant miners revealed that they frequently acquiesced to the sporadic



hostilities and, in addition, took several steps to lessen possible injury. Participants acknowledged the host's customary entitlement to the land and chose to yield in most circumstances due to the futility of resisting them. The migrant miners avoided a possible clash and ensured their continuous presence in the villages by granting host miners' access. A study by Gratz (2009) in artisanal mining camps in Northern Benin found that migrant miners either relocated to the next pit or waited for their turn when confronted by the host. It was evident that the migrant miners, in order to protect their economic interests and avert possible conflicts, established alliances with inhabitants in the host communities. Along with thwarting potential threats, this alliance also gained the host's trust and protected their financial gains.

Furthermore, by contributing to the communities in various ways, migrant miners had established a case for their prolonged presence and right to exploitation. Even though attendance at community labour was required and frequently resulted in a fine, it was not unusual to find migrant miners ready to do menial labour for the host, particularly the elderly and community leaders. According to the responders, this interaction fosters a friendly environment between indigenes and migrants. Notably, this kind of endeavour was a strategy used by migrant miners to ensure recognition as well as demand a fair reward when the situation called for it. Bronkhorst (2014) and Muia, Maina, and Mwangi (2013) added that migrants performing such tasks involve adjustments that limit possible harm and are specified and preserved in the culture and norms of most African societies. Additionally, migrant miners made financial contributions to community improvement initiatives and projects and, when necessary, made monetary contributions to ceremonies like festivals and funerals. The migrant miners frequently relied upon these initiatives to defend their stay and ongoing extraction of gold in the communities; this invariably minimised estrangement from the host and ensured they were safeguarded from threats and harm.

The respondents generally averred the necessity of working together to achieve common objectives. They understood that their success in working together was more important than their differences, which provided a reliable income, a sustainable way of life, and the freedom to conduct their activities without interference. Prior to acknowledging their origins or identities, the respondents asserted that they initially thought of themselves as artisanal and small-scale mining operators. In order to fulfil the more significant objective shared by everyone involved, this realisation produced a sense of belonging that transcended immediate group affiliation, pursuit and want. The members of the mining committees asserted that their overarching goal was to ensure cooperation among the miners by developing strategies and procedures with the overall effect of minimising animosity and disputes. They did this by acknowledging the ever-present danger of



site shutdowns by the state and, consequently, a forfeiture of anticipated earnings, with its consequent detrimental effect on their lives, dependents, and communities. As both parties saw that cooperation was a tiny concession in comparison to the life of misery, impoverishment, and destitution they would have to endure if the activity was halted, the synergy of operations helped significantly lower tensions between migrant and host miners. This supports the views expressed by Ryan (2007) and IMGC that the realisation of superordinate goals creates conditions for the parties to develop strategies that allow for cooperation and improvement in intergroup relations. However, unless the underlying objectives are sought cooperatively by all parties, the identification of superordinate goals is unlikely to lessen conflict and promote intergroup relations Bornstein (2009). As a result, the persistence of conflict implied that certain people and groups continued to pursue their aims at the expense of everyone else, regardless of overarching goals.

When pressed for their views during the FGDs on the potential of intermarriages, associations, and affiliations in resolving conflicts, the discussants suggested that given that it would be hard to oppose one's in-laws, intermarriages were seen to have the potential to lessen migrant and host disputes. The participants were mostly in agreement that intimate relationships were not a cure for conflicts, even though there were apparent advantages for individuals, particularly for migrants and the larger community. Furthermore, they clarified that the anticipated connection might only affect the immediate family members and would not significantly affect anybody else, not even acquaintances. The notion that two people are married to one another may not prevent them or their associated groups from disagreeing. On the other hand, alliances and associations have a greater opportunity to foster cohesiveness, making them more successful at minimising conflict. Communities frequently had associations that revolved around the backgrounds of their founding members or the projects they were engaged in. Aside from the benefit of the miners having a forum that enhances participation, the improvement of communication skills on a personal and interpersonal level and a venue where participants could obtain information and training on safe practises were some of the advantages of being a member of an association. Even while they lauded associations and their resultant benefits, they admitted that attempts to create associations mainly had failed due to the dynamic nature of artisanal and small-scale mining activities. They also warned that affiliations may be harmful, predominantly if the offenders were affiliated with rival organisations. They also admitted that the aggressors' positions and the causes of the dispute would significantly impact whether or not conflict could be lessened.

The core idea of acculturation theory is that conflict can be decreased by the adjustments and strategies that people and groups make to fit into the dominant group's culture (Bourhis et al.,



1997). Both hosts and migrants who participated in the research believed that knowing the host's language and embracing their culture would increase their chances of being accepted as members of the community. It became clear that adhering to the host's customs and traditions was essential to maintaining order. In general, it helped them integrate properly into the community and promoted a "we-feeling" and sense of belonging.

In general, migrant miners felt confident assimilating some facets of their host customs and practices, including their belief system and language, while retaining other facets of their cultural identity, such as their music, dress, cuisine, and way of life. The host community's language and beliefs were regarded as of utmost importance, and observing or adopting them might ease communication and integration. This aligns with Berry's (2005) assertion that proper acculturation typically involves learning languages, altering food preferences, adapting to health and sexual norms, and modifying dress codes. However, the respondents were clear that certain traditions that had been ingrained for the majority of their lives, such as dietary preferences and musical tastes, were challenging to give up.

The host communities were generally enthusiastic about the eagerness of the migrant miners to acculturate into their community, even though others were reluctant. While migrants were not required to assimilate every facet of the host's customs and practices, it was unquestionably necessary if they did not want to become ostracised or alienated. In addition, the host generally agreed that migrants could retain specific components of their customs and practices, particularly educational ones, but warned against engaging in intrusive and immoral practices, as the younger generations were more likely to be susceptible to them. The community mainly disapproved of the popular culture of "galamsey", including their fashion sense, recreational use of drugs and alcohol, and overall impolite behaviour. According to Zagefka and Brown (2002), this approach is arguably the most effective strategy for acculturation, as it allows migrants to share common traits and norms with the host while also establishing their own unique identities.

In general, the migrant miners' entire migration experience, including the opportunity mechanisms and the host community's receptivity, had alleviated any initial concerns, rendering it more straightforward to adjust. However, they said that compliance meant acquiescing to several ingrained behaviours and norms. For example, in Nyafoman and Noyem, respecting "breaking days" meant labour was barred on Tuesdays and Fridays, costing workers a day's pay each week. Nevertheless, it was evident that the older and more seasoned miners helped their fellow miners



adapt and encouraged them to fully participate in the host's customs, such as observing "taboo days" and participating when the call was made for labour earmarked for community development.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

While conflict in ASM is inevitable due to working within a heterogeneous context and despite the inherent differences, indigenes and migrant artisanal miners have largely coexisted, mainly due to home-grown processes that they have developed. These include structured roles and strategies that have been fundamental in reducing conflicts. Although these procedures have not wholly eradicated tensions and disputes, they have significantly lessened the tumultuous atmosphere with which "galamsey" was formerly associated.

Respondents had typically benefited from integration because they had made greater profits compared to what they would have in a chaotic setting. This meant that the migrating miners could make more money than they ever had in their hometowns. The story that emerged is one of happy experiences, including enjoyment of new foods, activities, and lifestyles shared by hosts and migrants, in addition to independence, practicality, and financial liberty. Within the artisanal and small-scale mining sector, conflict is prevalent and rife due to its migratory nature, which pits migrant miners against members of the host communities. We discovered that the inflow of migrants brought on many conflicts and was often initiated by indigenes, who perceived that migrants were given the same rights to their lands. The study, however, found out that despite its pervasiveness, it has not led to a disintegration of relations and the communities involved. This was because the actors instituted measures to resolve conflicts promptly. While these established roles have helped to resolve disagreements, they have also been strengthened by procedures that have helped to prevent conflicts from escalating and keep the peace. The establishment of the mining committees and the recognition of the reciprocal benefits of collaboration were two initiatives, both of which had been crucial in lowering hostilities. Even though the mining committee's efforts had been marred by inefficiency and self-interest, they were respected and acknowledged as a law enforcement agency. Finally, to maintain a peaceful relationship, migrants and hosts had to adapt to one other's customs, norms and practices.

According to the study's findings, the committee's role might be reinforced if the state acknowledged them and gave them authority to perform functions on behalf of the state. It would also be appropriate for migrants to be included on the committees as they would speak on behalf of migrants as well as convey their grievances and opinions to the mining committees and other stakeholders. This would encourage inclusivity, ensure they have a voice, and give them a sense



of involvement in all decision-making. Since migrants on the committees would not tolerate favouritism against their colleagues, such judgements would be considered fair and just.

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