

Human Rights Impact Assessment of harvesting operations at Green Resources Uchindile Forest: The health impact assessment framework repurposed

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Last Edited 16/07/2013	Condition category Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual participant data <input type="checkbox"/> Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims

Although human rights have historically been under the scope of governments, it is now widely recognized that multinational corporations impact human rights through their operations, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. The United Nations (UN) has issued widely adopted guidance to corporations recommending that they predict, lessen and monitor human rights impacts. However, to date no commonly agreed upon methodologies for such investigations have been established.

This study aimed to test a methodology for human rights impact assessment and monitoring on a forestry project in southern Tanzania. This methodology was developed not from the environmental or social impact assessment frameworks, but from the health impact assessment framework. Health impact assessment (HIA) provides a valuable balance of transdisciplinary perspective (the study of a relevant issue or problem that integrates the views of multiple disciplines in order to connect new knowledge and deeper understanding to real life experiences) and awareness of human rights measures of sufficiency (i.e. accessibility, affordability, appropriateness and adequacy of care), which can be expanded to the full suite of human rights.

Findings from this study provide new evidence on the effectiveness of human rights impact assessments for predicting and mitigating (reduce) human rights impacts of corporate developments while also examining the relationship between health and human rights as bi-directional.

Who can participate?

All project area inhabitants who are potentially affected either positively or negatively by the project can participate. Key informants include project managers (in environmental, human resources and operations departments), educators, health practitioners and local leaders and authorities. Community members (referred to as rightsholders) engaged in discussions of human

rights-related topics include employees, former employees, first and second wives, the elderly, the young (including school-aged children), single-mothers, union members and non-unionized workers, and the ill.

What does the study involve?

Study participation is voluntary in semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions pertaining to daily life and perceptions. Consent is acquired orally, owing to low literacy rates (<50%). Interview questions focus on topics of labour, local politics, economics, health, education, empowerment (make someone stronger and more confident, especially in controlling their life and claiming their rights), discrimination and culture. Focus groups aim to identify topics of shared concern related to livelihood and empowerment.

Responses will be coded for relevance to human rights listed in the International Bill of Rights (UN, 1948, 1967a, 1976b).

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

Participants will provide qualitative data to supplement quantitative data acquired from clinicians, educators and local leaders on human rights conditions. Identified negative human rights impacts will be analysed to develop plans, which will be monitored.

Often human rights-related topics are sensitive and personal. Interviewers are trained in the cultural-epidemiological method (known as EMIC) interviewing to accommodate the emotional challenges associated with certain health, social and stigma-related questions (pertaining to, for example, HIV status, relationships between first- and second wives, and mistreatment at the workplace). Because sensitive topics are discussed anonymity is respected for all interviewees.

Where is the study run from?

The study is conducted in Uchindile and Kitete villages in rural Iringa District, Tanzania.

Interviews are conducted at the clinic, school and streamside, as well as in residences and public spaces such as restaurants.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?

The study started in December 2008 and ran until December 2010. A final monitoring visit is scheduled for mid-2013.

Who is funding the study?

The study is funded by NomoGaia, a US-based think tank dedicated to clarifying the role of business in human rights worldwide.

Who is the main contact?

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Contact information

Type(s)

Scientific

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Additional identifiers

Protocol serial number

N/A

Study information

Scientific Title

Human Rights Impact Assessment of harvesting operations at Green Resources Uchindile Forest: The health impact assessment framework repurposed: a mixed-method analysis study

Acronym

HRIA-Uchindile

Study objectives

The Green Resources Uchindile Forest project in Tanzania has human rights impacts and these can be predicted, analysed and mitigated. The methods employed in assessment of health impacts can be expanded to achieve this.

Ethics approval required

Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)

The initial assessment was conducted not as scientific research but as quasi-journalistic investigation. The team was invited by the company in question to examine human rights impacts. As such, work fell under the umbrella of corporate study, rather than scientific study. There are currently no protocols for seeking ethical approval for corporate social responsibility (CSR) studies. Ethical approval will be sought for all follow-up work at this site, as investigation will include personal interviews and consideration of health records.

Study design

Mixed-method analysis incorporating qualitative and quantitative data coded by human rights implications

Primary study design

Observational

Study type(s)

Quality of life

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied

Human rights impacts of corporate projects

Interventions

Participants contributed inputs into an analytical framework for assessing human rights impacts. Impacts deemed negative in an established scoring process were earmarked for mitigation. Mitigation measures address negative impacts on the rights to food, water, favourable working conditions, unionization, standard of living, housing, health, non-discrimination and education.

Follow-up monitoring involving interviews with rightsholders, analysis of environmental monitoring data, and corporate policy review is used to quantify changes in impacts (i.e. improvements in impacts from negative to positive, or exacerbation of negative impacts).

Intervention Type

Other

Phase

Not Applicable

Primary outcome(s)

Changes in human rights conditions

Key secondary outcome(s)

1. Changes in corporate policies and practices
2. Changes in local understandings of equity and human rights

Completion date

30/06/2013

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria

1. Project area inhabitant, all ages, male or female
2. Oral informed consent by participants (parents/guardians of minors)

Participant type(s)

Patient

Healthy volunteers allowed

No

Age group

Adult

Sex

All

Key exclusion criteria

No consent

Date of first enrolment

01/12/2008

Date of final enrolment

30/06/2013

Locations

Countries of recruitment

Switzerland

Tanzania

Study participating centre

57 Socinstrasse

Basel

Switzerland

4051

Sponsor information

Organisation

Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute (Switzerland)

ROR

<https://ror.org/03adhka07>

Funder(s)

Funder type

Research organisation

Funder Name

NomoGaia, Denver (USA)

Funder Name

NewFields, Colorado (USA)

Funder Name

Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute, Basel (Switzerland).

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

IPD sharing plan summary

Not provided at time of registration

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Study website	Study website	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes