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Leveraging national and global links for local rights advocacy: WACAM's challenge to the power of transnational gold mining in Ghana

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ABSTRACT This article explores local–global interconnections in the context of local rights-based struggles against the adverse impact of gold mining by transnational corporations in Ghana. It examines how a small community-based organisation, WACAM, approached a situation of huge power asymmetry by both mobilising local resistance and developing national and international linkages. In explaining WACAM's relative success in challenging corporate and state powers behind gold mining activities, we focus on its ability to maximise the benefits of alliances with selected organisations, while minimising the risks of doing so through staying locally grounded. This we attribute to WACAM's political orientation to rights advocacy, based in a democratic left political tradition.

RÉSUMÉ Les relations entre le local et le mondial dans le contexte des luttes pour les droits de la personne contre les impacts de l'exploitation aurifère par les sociétés transnationales au Ghana sont au coeur de cet article. Il s'intéresse à la manière dont une petite organisation communautaire, WACAM, a répondu à l'immense asymétrie qui caractérise, dans ce cas, les relations de pouvoir en mobilisant la résistance locale et en développant des liens avec des organisations nationales et internationales. Le succès relatif de WACAM dans sa contestation des pouvoirs corporatifs et étatiques qui soutiennent l'activité aurifère s'explique par sa capacité à tirer profit d'alliances avec certaines organisations tout en minimisant les risques de cette stratégie en restant bien ancrée dans le contexte local. Cette stratégie découle de l'orientation politique de WACAM qui est axée sur la défense des droits de la personne, elle-même fondée sur une tradition démocratique de gauche.

Keywords: rights-based approaches; transnational mining; power relations; NGO networks; Ghana

Introduction

This article aims to explain the resilience of a small community-based organisation in challenging powerful actors and interests, despite the huge power imbalance between itself and the nexus of corporate and state power. Initiated in 1992 and formally established as a non-governmental organisation (NGO) in 1998, WACAM¹ is based in the commercial gold mining area in Ghana and advocates for the rights of local mining communities in the context of alleged economic, social, and civil rights abuses by transnational gold mining corporations. The article investigates how WACAM has approached this situation of power asymmetry. While acknowledging that the resource extraction model of development remains intact and that state policies towards mining

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have not fundamentally altered, WACAM's contribution to changes in policies and practices in the industry are highlighted, including increased compensation for loss of farm land to mining and, importantly, the shift in public awareness about the adverse impact of commercial gold mining on local communities. The article accounts for this relative success in challenging both corporate and state power in terms of WACAM's ability to build alliances with like-minded national and international organisations while remaining locally committed. This account highlights the limits of local rights advocacy in situations where global forces exert their power to protect their interests, and draws attention to the importance of building countervailing power through the formation of national and international links as a way to partially transcend such limitations. This is to say, the article does not reject the local as an important context of struggle, but does emphasise the importance of scaling up from local to national and global levels to form relationships with other rights-promoting organisations based on solidarity.

The concept of solidarity (see Kössler 2012) is important in understanding why WACAM has derived benefits from its partnerships while minimising the risk of entering into new sets of potentially unequal relations. We argue that the answer lies with the organisation's *political* orientation towards rights advocacy, one based in a democratic left tradition. This political awareness leads WACAM to be discriminating in its national and international alliance-building, while maintaining a commitment to those local communities whose struggles it was originally set up to support. This sets WACAM apart from the majority of NGOs in Ghana which are predominantly technocratic in orientation, dependent on external donor funding, and have limited ability (or will) to challenge powerful actors (Darkwah, Amponsah, and Gyampoh 2006; Tsikata 2009; Anyidoho 2011). Thus, the article concludes with an emphasis on the importance of an overtly political approach to rights advocacy.

Local rights advocacy and power asymmetries

Development theorising and practice has seen an increasing emphasis on the local as the context from which the process of change should originate through the participation of local actors in such processes (Leal 2010).² The valorising of the power of ordinary people in local contexts is reflected in the ubiquity of concepts such as participation, empowerment, sustainability, community development and, recently, the rights-based approach to development³ which links development with activism. The rights-based approach posits that local people should be the agents of their own development by building their capacity to make right claims of duty-bearers, notably of state institutions (Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi 2004). The rights-based approach also gives impetus to participation and other approaches that encourage local involvement in the processes and benefits of development by making these a matter of rights backed by international law (Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi 2004). The rights-based approach has been championed by influential, development NGOs, such as ActionAid and Oxfam, who re-oriented their strategies in the early 2000s to facilitating rights claims by local people (see Aberese Ako, Anyidoho, and Crawford 2013), but has also become integrated into mainstream development discourse. Nonetheless, a single-minded focus on the local risks underemphasising the influence of national and international forces on local actors (Mohan and Stokke 2000), and consequently overlooking the inherent power asymmetries in interactions between the local, national, and global. A clear-eyed view of the situations in which the rights-based approach is often advocated as both necessary and potentially transformative – that of social and economic oppression in poor locales – indicates that the underlying causes of rights violations often lie in processes and institutions situated outside of these spaces. In particular, national and international agencies create economic and political environments (for example, through the policies of states and global governance institutions,

or through the actions of large corporations) that may lead to human rights abuses within local contexts (Interview with Yao Graham, December 28, 2008).

Extractive industries strikingly illustrate the impact of the global on local situations. Obi (2009, 467) argues that the global space is where the “logic of oil capital” is most strongly expressed. This analysis is pertinent to the gold mining industry as well. Transnational mining companies are global entities that generally originate in developed countries and operate in developing countries. At a more conceptual level, the mining industry is firmly situated within the global capitalist system that allows a company from one country to enter another country to extract, as cheaply as possible, raw materials that then go through processing, production, retailing, and consumption with a global value chain. Nonetheless, the extractive industry has little global governance; its activities are largely left to the market and agreement between countries (Carbonnier 2011). In this situation, the interests of industrialised countries guide the operations of transnational companies and the development of such limited regulations as may exist (Carbonnier 2011). This is because rich nations are able to lend their political and economic power to these companies, and to create global economic and political structures (both through bilateral agreements and the workings of global institutions such as the World Trade Organisation, the IMF and the World Bank) that expand markets and profits for transnational companies (Guttal 2010).

Globalisation provides an important context for understanding dynamics between local, national, and global actors. A rights-based approach to development is essentially about the relationships between citizens, states, and corporations (Uvin 2010). Globalisation fundamentally affects these relationships. Apart from being an economic system, Guttal (2010, 71) notes that globalisation has a political dimension, as it is “shaped by complex negotiations and interactions between institutions of transnational capital (such as corporations), nation states, and international institutions charged with bringing coherence and order in an increasingly interdependent world”. The very nature of globalisation, which “entail[s] the integration of all economic activity (local, national, and regional) into a ‘global’ market place”, results in national economic and political boundaries growing fainter and, conversely, in international institutions acquiring greater influence (Guttal 2010, 70).

Development itself is a product of globalisation, whose practices are heavily influenced by the international actors who lead this “global project” (Gaynor 2011); these actors – including developed countries, the World Bank and IMF, regional development banks – shape development discourse, practice and funding (Guttal 2010). In Ghana and other resource-rich developing countries, the mining industry is supported by an advocacy of the extractive model of development articulated by powerful international institutions and embraced or accepted by national governments (Bush 2009). Thus, when a local organisation contests mining, it is challenging a global development project and engaging the powerful global coalitions behind it.

Global forces loom large in this era of development, but the national level cannot be ignored. Globalisation requires the intervention of states to be entrenched at the national and local levels; states create the economic, legal and policy frameworks that global actors operate in and benefit from (Obi 1997). As Otero (2004, 325) points out:

the nation-state continues to be a critical sphere for the imposition of ruling capitalist interests. Likewise, any substantial modification in the economic, political and cultural conditions of subordinate groups, communities and classes will have to be fought and won at this level.

Herein lies the dilemma of the rights-based approach as practised at the local level. On the one hand, the national government is locked in a tight embrace with a globalised capitalist system that is largely controlled by more economically developed countries and the international financial institutions that they run, and within which privatisation and deregulation are extolled as the

way to develop. In this system, the government cedes the distribution of resources to the market, and largely withdraws from social provisioning, redistribution and protection. On the other hand, in the language of rights-based approaches, the state is identified as the main duty bearer on which citizens make claims for political, social and economic rights, ones that may be threatened by the process of global capitalist expansion.

The understanding that development problems manifesting at the local level have external sources and influences, and are undergirded by asymmetrical relations of power between local, national and global actors, suggests the potential importance of national and international networks to local mobilisation and resistance. A number of researchers have looked at how global social movements advocating human rights, women's rights, international development, sustainable development, and climate change enter into local spaces, primarily through the initiative of international NGOs, and are "localised"⁴ through the partnership of these international actors with local organisations (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Hemment 2004; Merry and Stern 2005). There is much less research, however, on the ways that local organisations advocate local causes by entering into and operating in a global or transnational political space (for exceptions, see Obi 1997 and Rothman and Oliver 1999).

Our research contributes to filling that gap. We pose the question: how and with what success can local organisations leverage national and international connections to promote the rights of local communities in the face of powerful global forces and economic interests? To address this question, we examine the case of WACAM, a small, community-based organisation that opposes the adverse impact of gold mining in Ghana, including the dispossession of land and livelihoods, environmental degradation, intimidation, and other abuses of economic, social, and civil rights. We investigate the interactions between WACAM and its national and international allies, and examine both the opportunities and risks in building such alliances. Overall we find that WACAM has exploited the opportunities and minimised the risks: it has strengthened its position in relation to powerful adversaries through becoming part of national and international networks, while maintaining its commitment to local people. We attribute such success partly to the *quality* of relationships that WACAM has cultivated with selected organisations, which in turn is explained by WACAM's overtly political approach to rights advocacy and its selection of partner organisations based on political solidarity.

WACAM's strategies are only meaningful when understood in the economic and political environment that necessitates its actions. The next sections therefore provide contextual information on transnational gold mining in Ghana and the emergence of WACAM.

The rise of transnational gold mining

Ghana has substantial mineral resources, including gold, diamonds, bauxite, manganese and, more recently, oil. Gold dominates the extractive industry, and Ghana is currently the second-biggest gold producer in Africa. Although gold has been mined in Ghana for centuries, three "gold rushes" have been experienced, with the first occurring in the late nineteenth century and the second immediately after World War II. The third gold rush occurred from the early-mid 1980s, when the government opened up the mining sector for foreign direct investment under the World Bank/IMF-directed Economic Recovery Program (ERP) (1983–1986). At that point large-scale gold mining in the Western Region was mainly underground mining controlled by the State Gold Mining Corporation. However, under the ERP, the World Bank argued for the liberalisation and privatisation of the mining sector; this became a central pillar of Ghana's economic reform program (Akabzaa and Darimani 2001; Hilson 2004; Owusu-Koranteng 2008; Bush 2009). Privatisation occurred with the government selling its gold mines, which had been nationalised after independence, to private companies (Tsuma 2010, 18). To attract and facilitate

foreign investment, the Minerals Commission was established as a mining investment centre in 1986, and a legislative framework specific to mining was created for the first time with the Minerals and Mining Law of 1986 (PNDCL 153) (Akabzaa 2009, 32). This mining code was developed with “technical assistance” from the World Bank and in line with the Bank’s strategy for mining that it promulgated continent-wide (World Bank 1992, cited in Akabzaa 2009, 32). Very generous terms to private mining companies were contained in the legislative and policy framework, including low taxes and royalty payments, low import duties on equipment, high retention of revenue, and repatriation of profits (Akabzaa and Darimani 2001; Aryee 2001; Tsikata 1997). In addition, as all minerals “in their natural state” are the property of the government, as reaffirmed in the 1992 Constitution, the government had the power to award concessions of land for mining purposes to foreign investors. The result was that transnational mining companies headquartered in South Africa, the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom, amongst other countries, flocked into Ghana from the mid-1980s onwards and gained sizable concessions of land for large-scale gold mining.

The 1986 law was revised and replaced by the Minerals and Mining Act (Act 703) of 2006, again with substantial “financial and technical assistance” from the World Bank in its drafting (Akabzaa 2009, 34). Although a tougher fiscal regime was advocated by the National Coalition on Mining, a coalition of civil society groups including WACAM, the fiscal provisions of the 2006 Act were generally more favourable to the mining companies, and included a reduction in corporate income tax from 35 to 25 per cent, and royalties pegged at a reduced scale of 3 to 6 per cent (from 3 to 12%), with the additional profit tax of 25 per cent abolished (see Akabzaa 2009, 40).⁵

Transnational gold production in Ghana has increased dramatically over the past quarter of a century and generated immense profits for the transnational mining companies, especially with the mineral price boom since 2008. Large-scale gold mining has also been a significant source of revenue for the Government of Ghana, although with tax revenue at just under 6 per cent of total value of gold production (Akabzaa 2009, 44), there is a strong argument that the Ghanaian share of the value of its natural resource remains very low. It is also argued that such “relatively minor pickings” left over by the transnational corporations in the mining industry in Africa have been monopolised by African governments and national elites (Obeng 2013, 11). This is largely confirmed in the case of Ghana by Akabzaa who notes that the benefits from large-scale gold mining have been “disproportionately appropriated by mining companies and a limited local elite” (2009, 29), and concludes that the contribution of the sector to national development and poverty reduction has been “very far from optimal” (2009, 61). Further, transnational gold mining in Ghana has largely remained an enclave industry with few backward and forward linkages to other sectors of the economy, and thus mining has not been utilised as a catalyst for industrialisation and structural transformation of the economy from its current dependence on primary commodity exports (Obeng 2013).

Our focus in this article is on those communities closest to gold mining activities who have not only *not* experienced benefits, but they have been the most adversely affected. For instance, as a result of the reforms to mining policy and legislation, 70 per cent of the land surface in the (former) Wassa West District in the Western Region, an area of 2,354 square kilometres, had come under gold mining activity by the early 1990s in concessions granted to eight transnational mining companies. Another significant change occurred with the arrival of transnational companies: the shift in large-scale mining practices from underground mining to open pit surface mining as a more profitable option. This had major implications for local communities. First, land resources came under significant pressure, given the large-scale demands for land by surface mining in comparison with underground mining. Second, surface mining entailed the use of cyanide for gold extraction, with associated environmental problems due to cyanide spillages.

Third, whereas underground mining was more labour-intensive, surface mining was based on capital-intensive technologies and equipment, which required less unskilled and more skilled labour, resulting in redundancy for local unskilled miners and in-migration of skilled labour (Tsuma 2010, 18).

The economic and social upheavals in proximate communities caused by large-scale mining have also led, somewhat paradoxically, to an increase in small-scale mining, as local people have sought to diversify their livelihoods in response to the disruption to farming as an income source. In many large-scale mining areas, small-scale mining, which has a long history in Ghana, has become the main means of employment for erstwhile agrarian rural populations who are attracted to the financial prospects of artisanal mining (Hilson and Garforth 2013). Small-scale mining can be both legal⁶ and illegal, and currently employs over one million people (Hilson and Garforth 2013). The sector is dominated by unregistered operators known as *galamsey*, who often work on concessions granted to mining companies, leading to sometimes violent conflict with the security personnel of the state and mining corporations (see Hilson and Potter 2005; Hilson and Yakovleva 2007; Aubynn 2009).

In sum, local communities within or on the periphery of the concessions suffer a range of problems, including conflicts, loss of land and livelihoods, water and air pollution, environmental degradation and mining-related health problems (WACAM 2013; CHRAJ 2008). Local people are also subject to intimidation and physical assault by both company and state security personnel when seen to be trespassing on mining lands or in other ways obstructing the work of the mining companies (CHRAJ 2008; Interviews with Daniel Owusu-Koranteng, December 16, 2008, and Hannah Owusu-Koranteng, December 9, 2009). Tensions also stem from the differing perspectives of mining communities and companies about the degree of environmental, social and economic risks, as well as their sources; mining communities place both high expectations and blame on the companies, while the latter tend to displace the blame for the negative impacts of mining to communities themselves, government policies or global economic forces (Hilson and Yakovleva 2007; Garvin et al. 2009).

The emergence of WACAM

WACAM was established in the early 1990s in this context of the hardship experienced by poor rural communities in areas affected by large-scale surface gold mining in Ghana. In the early 1990s, Hannah and Daniel Owusu-Koranteng, the eventual founders of WACAM, were both employees of the Ministry of Agriculture posted to the Western Region when, in the course of their work, their attention was seized by the privations of communities living in the shadow of commercial gold mining, some of whom were making efforts to change their situation, for instance by attempting to take the mining companies to court. The couple were already engaged in political advocacy work in local and national arenas. Importantly, they were part of the New Democratic Movement, a left-wing political group that was formed in the early 1980s and that had opposed the privatisation of the government-owned Tarkwa Gold Fields on the basis that the property was undervalued (which would mean a loss to the state) and that the sale would lead to the lay-off of many miners. In the course of waging this ultimately unsuccessful battle, Daniel worked to organise the miners to have a “voice” in the decision to sell the mine (Interview with Daniel Owusu-Koranteng, December 16, 2008). So the decision of the Owusu-Korantengs to get involved in the struggles of local mining communities was in keeping with this political orientation. They began community mobilisation in the (former) Wassa West District around 1992 as a means to seek local and national attention to the problems of the mining communities, and were initially involved in mobilisation around the pollution of water sources by cyanide and the destruction of farmland and farmers’ livelihoods, as well as issues of

compensation and the resettlement of about 30,000 people by Goldfields Ghana Limited from their original settlements within the concession to near Tarkwa (WACAM 2013). The mobilisation of communities created a core of activists from which WACAM was able to expand its activities. At this time, Hannah and Daniel Owusu-Koranteng both resigned from their public sector positions because of a perceived conflict of interest between their activism in contesting state policy around surface mining and their employment as public servants. WACAM had no funds in these early years. It reports that an amount of 63,000 cedis (which is less than 7 Ghana cedis or 4 US dollars today) was raised at a Christmas party in 1996, which was the first external funds to support WACAM's activities in the early period of community mobilisation and organisational work (WACAM 2013).

On 5 September 1998, WACAM was formally launched as an organisation at the Fiase Cinema Hall in Tarkwa, the district capital (WACAM 2013), with support from Third World Network Africa (TWN). In 1998, WACAM was working with 17 communities in the Wassa area in the Western region. Subsequently WACAM has expanded to work in over 100 mining communities in four regions: Ashanti, Brong Ahafo, Western and Eastern regions, and is currently undertaking activities in the three regions of Northern Ghana. The organisation remains very small, with only four part-time staff plus approximately one hundred volunteer activists. The main focus of its activities has been opposition to perceived violations of local communities' rights by transnational mining companies, but WACAM has also supported small-scale miners when they are subject to company violence (Interview with Daniel Owusu-Koranteng, October 28, 2013).

Although WACAM's work has always been based in its local community activities, it quickly recognised the importance of influencing national policies and laws in order to protect mining communities and to offer them greater benefits from mining. WACAM undertakes this policy advocacy mainly in conjunction with Third World Network and the National Coalition on Mining (NCOM), as we discuss below (Interview with Daniel and Hannah Owusu-Koranteng, September 28, 2008). Such alliance building was also necessary given the realisation that the mining lobby was a powerful one (WACAM 2013). Indeed the power imbalance is striking between wealthy transnational corporations, supported by the Ghanaian state, and a small community-based organisation with very limited funding. We now turn to this question.

WACAM and asymmetrical power

To gain a fuller awareness of the significant power constraints faced by WACAM, we utilise Lukes's (2005) three dimensions of power – visible, hidden and invisible power – as an analytical framework.

Visible power

According to Lukes (2005, 16), visible power applies to situations where there is an actual conflict of interest, inclusive of social class interests. Such visible power is often exerted by state agencies and by powerful actors, such as large companies, that are close to the state and able to count on its support. WACAM has certainly experienced the sharp end of corporate power supported by state power, most obviously in the use of the military and police to protect mining companies in the context of community demonstrations against human rights violations by the companies.⁷ Our research turned up a number of documented examples where peaceful protests by community members had been violently broken up by the police and military, resulting in serious injuries to the protestors.⁸ As Hannah Owusu-Koranteng noted, although the government's primary obligation should be to protect its citizens, the government "has removed its sovereign cap and is now

wearing a corporate cap” (Interview with Hannah Owusu-Koranteng, December 9, 2009). The visible power of the companies is also manifest in their enormous wealth in comparison with poor communities and in their access to and influence on high-level state officials. The situation was summed up by a staff member of WACAM as follows: “WACAM is up against powerful, politically motivated, rich multinational companies who are able to pull political strength, financial strength to frustrate WACAM’s work” (Interview with WACAM staff, July 15, 2009). The visible power of the state is also evident in its ownership of all minerals “in their natural state” and its ability to provide large concessions of land to transnational mining corporations with little or no accountability to local communities and land users, who are effectively dispossessed.

Hidden power

Hidden power extends the scope of power to control over decision-making agendas; that is, the power to determine which issues can be discussed and which are excluded as detrimental to the interests of the powerful (Lukes 2005, 22). WACAM’s activities have consistently been opposed and undermined through the mining companies’ use of hidden power. In interviews, members of WACAM alleged that mining companies have used their substantial financial resources in covert and at times legally questionable ways to influence local power structures such as the local district assemblies and traditional authorities, especially through the award of business contracts (Interview with AB, November 9, 2009; Interview with JN, November 13, 2009; Interview with Madam AS, November 9, 2009; see also Bush 2009). It was suggested that this extended to community level through the targeting of community leaders, who were rewarded with employment and outsourcing work, to the extent that members of these communities then experienced “different realities” of mining companies and their activities (Interview with Hannah Owusu-Koranteng, July 7, 2009). WACAM also suspects that the mining companies have used their ample funds to establish local groups to directly counter WACAM’s activities (Interview with Hannah Owusu-Koranteng, December 9, 2009).

Hidden power is also used by the mining companies’ public relations departments to lobby the government, other state agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), local chiefs and other community leaders. For instance, the Ghana Chamber of Mines is wholly funded by its member companies, mainly foreign-owned mining companies, with the self-stated objectives “to promote and protect the interests and the image of the mining industry”, thus operating as an arm of the companies’ PR machinery while presenting itself as a Ghanaian organisation.⁹ The hidden power of large corporations is evident also in their ability, through use of their considerable financial resources, to gain access to the media and to shape the content of public discussions about mining.

The hidden power of the mining companies extends to influencing Parliament. For example, the Select Committee on Environment, Science and Technology expressed its satisfaction with the environmental stewardship of AngloGold Ashanti, to the considerable disappointment of communities affected by the company’s operations. Yet, AngloGold Ashanti officials themselves confirmed that Select Committee members had not actually visited the affected communities, but that the company itself had arranged for the Committee to meet handpicked “opinion leaders” as community representatives (*Public Agenda*, September 12, 2008, 2 S 1 and 9).

Invisible power

Lukes’s third dimension of power is invisible or internalised power. This entails an understanding that power can operate to shape people’s desires and beliefs even in ways contrary to their interests, for instance, “through the control of information, through the mass media and through

processes of socialisation” (Lukes 2005, 27). The force of invisible power also manifested itself in relation to WACAM’s activities. Traditional authorities occupy the apex of local social hierarchies, and if the chief is well disposed towards the mining company, then it becomes difficult for community members to be overtly oppositional and thus to challenge the authority of the chief. We have already noted that companies were perceived as covertly using their power to gain the support of local chiefs. Additionally, chiefs could hide behind traditional beliefs and practices to justify their actions in support of mining companies. For example, a young man who was part of a resettlement negotiation process as a community representative was accused of insulting a chief when in one meeting he voiced an opposing view to that of the chief. After being arrested and facing a court case instituted by the chief, the man was compelled to apologise to the chief in the traditional fashion in order to secure his release – by carrying a sheep over his neck in the hot sun for several hours while being insulted by members of the chief’s retinue (Interview with AB, WACAM member, July 4, 2009; Daniel Owusu-Koranteng, personal communication, July 11, 2013). Moreover, if local people internalise a social hierarchy and feelings of powerlessness relative to perceived superiors, then WACAM is faced with a daunting task to convince local citizens to challenge the combined financial and political power of the mining companies, the government and the chieftaincy institutions.

WACAM’s achievements in the face of power

From these brief examples, the power inequalities between WACAM and combined corporate and state power, supplemented by traditional authority at the local level, are clear. And yet WACAM’s efforts as a small organisation with few staff and meagre financial resources are remarkable. In particular, WACAM has tried to raise awareness of the human rights issues in mining communities through its human rights education program. As well as “reach[ing] out to thousands of community people”, WACAM’s conservative estimate is of training “more than 2,000 activists including community activists, NGOs, students, Trade Unionists, Faith-based organisations among others” (WACAM 2013). The coordinator of the Third World Network-Africa, which hosts the National Coalition on Mining of which WACAM is a member, has pointed to more awareness of the adverse impacts of gold mining was the case previously. He states that “mining companies have to defend themselves in ways that they did not ten years ago” and are less able to undermine local livelihoods and violate rights with impunity, while the government is no longer able to simply ignore criticisms, but instead have been compelled to admit more civil society organisations to the policy table. He concludes that this is an indication of a perceptible change in the configuration of power (Interview with Yao Graham, September 6, 2011). While attribution is difficult and other organisations are also responsible for such changes, WACAM has undoubtedly contributed to this shift in awareness and power dynamics. This shift was clearly signalled by the publication in March 2008 of the report by the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), an independent body established by the Constitution, on “The State of Human Rights in Mining Communities in Ghana”. Undertaking an investigation into allegations of human rights violations in 42 communities in four regions, the Commission’s overall findings were that “[t]here [was] evidence of widespread violations of human rights of individual members of communities and communities’ collective rights” (CHRAJ 2008, 18). As noted by a senior official at the Commission, without WACAM’s persistence over a 10-year period in bringing complaints about the adverse impacts of mining on communities and in documenting instances of rights abuse, it is unlikely that CHRAJ would have undertaken this investigation and issued a public report that highlighted human rights violations by the powerful mining industry (Interview with CHRAJ official, November 13, 2010).¹⁰ Further, WACAM has consistently advocated, as part of NCOM, for legislation that would offer better

protection of and compensation to mining communities, for which the Minerals and Mining Act of 2006 partially provides.¹¹

Challenging power through national and international alliances

How can we explain WACAM's ability to affect local- and national-level changes, given the power inequalities it faces? Here, we examine its strategy of building national and international alliances. We argue that such connections, and the movement from local to global levels of engagement that they imply, have both enhanced WACAM's impact and provided some protection against possible reprisals from the powerful interests that they challenge. We further argue that it is not simply national and international linkages per se that are important, but the nature and quality of those links.

National linkages

From its local origins and local advocacy work, WACAM began to link up with other like-minded organisations from around 2000 in order to challenge mining companies and mining policy at a national level. In the first few years of its existence, WACAM was supported financially by Third World Network-Africa, whose work in mining was one of the catalysts for the creation of WACAM. TWN also facilitated WACAM's partnership with the Centre for Public Interest Law (CEPIL), a non-governmental legal aid organisation which provided free legal support and enabled WACAM to take court action. This began with the case of the Atuabo and Akontase communities in 2000, when the communities rejected the paltry resettlement package offered by Gold Fields Ghana Limited and resorted to legal action. The company eventually sought an out-of-court settlement in which the compensation package was significantly increased and an agreement was also reached to provide important community amenities, namely boreholes and a health clinic (WACAM 2008, 22–23). Such an outcome would not have been possible without collaboration with CEPIL and the pressure exerted on the company through legal means. Alongside such court cases, WACAM has sought national publicity in a sympathetic national newspaper *Public Agenda* through a “naming and shaming” campaign, in which it exploits companies' sensitivity to reputational damage (Interview with Daniel and Hannah Owusu-Koranteng, December 16, 2008).

Probably the most important development at the national level was the formation of NCOM in November 2001, of which WACAM was one of four founding members. NCOM aimed at addressing nationally similar environmental and social problems to those highlighted by WACAM in its work in local communities.¹² The impact of NCOM has been significant. First, it has been quite effective in national policy advocacy, in particular in the campaign to introduce significant amendments to the Minerals and Mining Bill in respect of compensation to communities in mining areas. Second, NCOM has raised the profile of human rights violations in mining areas in a variety of ways: through the media; through the filing of complaints to the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice; and through meetings with government officials in relevant ministries.¹³ Such campaigning provided the impetus for the investigation by CHRAJ and its 2008 report on “The State of Human Rights in Mining Communities in Ghana”. A related outcome was successful pressure on government to reduce the use of military personnel by mining companies to protect their concessions. WACAM's participation in NCOM is important in providing evidence of local rights violations, while NCOM as a national body is more effective in exerting pressure on government and policy. NCOM's impact is probably best indicated by what the organisation describes as “its recognition [by the Government of Ghana] as a parallel body to the Ghana Chamber of Mines that has to be consulted in mining affairs”.¹⁴ This

is a significant change from when the Chamber of Mines was acknowledged as the only non-state actor in partnership with the state to make mining policies. In the words of NCOM, this “monopoly has been broken through years of collaborative mobilization and organisation”.¹⁵

WACAM has also formed a close association with environmental NGOs in Ghana, notably Forest Watch Ghana, given the shared concerns regarding the loss of forest land to mining companies. Forest Watch was initially formed in 2002 by seven local NGOs concerned about forestry issues, and has subsequently grown to a national network of over 30 member organisations, and has become influential in national discourses about forestry governance issues. One example of a common action involving WACAM was a joint press statement by Forest Watch and NCOM in April 2009 to protest against the destruction of local farmers’ crops and the dispossession of livelihood resources in the community of Grumesa by Golden Star Resources, a US–Canadian gold mining company. WACAM has also been active in regional networks of NGOs in commercial mining areas, including the Western Regional Network of NGOs and the Brong Ahafo Network of NGOs.

International linkages

WACAM has reached out to a number of international organisations and received funding from some. However, the cooperation goes beyond a funding relationship to one based on collective action. Information sharing has been an important element, with international organisations drawing on WACAM’s local-level evidence in global advocacy campaigns.

WACAM has had a long association with Food First International Action Network (FIAN), an international human rights organisation based in Germany that advocates for the right to food as an economic right. FIAN and WACAM have a shared concern in the loss of land and livelihoods in mining areas which, among other things, acts adversely on local people’s ability to feed themselves. The relationship began in 2001, when WACAM and FIAN jointly launched a campaign for the reform of mining legislation in Ghana, drawing attention to the human rights violations that had occurred as a result of the shift from underground to large-scale surface mining. Over the next decade, WACAM utilised the resources of FIAN to strengthen its local campaigns against various instances of human rights violations by mining companies. One example from 2005 was WACAM’s support for the campaign by residents of the town of Prestea in the Western Region against the operations of Bogoso Gold Limited, a subsidiary of Golden Star Resources Limited, a Canadian gold mining company. Residents’ protests about the company’s pollution of water supplies and the property damage and environmental degradation caused by blasting were met with a violent response from the Ghanaian military, who shot and injured seven demonstrators in June 2005. FIAN was drawn into the campaign, bringing their international weight to bear by compiling a list of local demands and placing these before the Ghanaian government. Such pressure compelled the Environmental Protection Agency to suspend the operations of the company in September 2005 for two months, which in turn forced the company to address some of the concerns of the affected communities (WACAM 2008).

WACAM has also worked with FIAN’s support to challenge another powerful global actor, the World Bank’s International Finance Corporation (IFC), and its loans to transnational mining companies. In November 2005, FIAN submitted a report to the IFC’s board of directors to oppose a proposed loan of US\$125 million to the US-based mining giant Newmont Mining Corporation, documenting violations of the rights to food and water by the company. Additionally, a national and international campaign was undertaken by FIAN and WACAM, along with the US-based NGO Earthworks, against World Bank financing of Newmont’s gold mining activities and its adverse social and ecological impact.

Supported by FIAN's international know-how and expertise, WACAM's voice has also been heard in UN circles. A joint submission was made by FIAN and WACAM in January 2008 to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on human rights violations in the context of large-scale mining in Ghana, and in particular the increasing militarisation in these areas. One outcome was a significant focus on this subject during the periodic review of Ghana at the UN Human Rights Council in May 2008, with the Ghanaian Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Mr Joe Ghartey, pressured into announcing the intent to discontinue military protection of mining companies.

WACAM also has a longstanding link with Oxfam America. On the funding side, Oxfam America has provided WACAM with an annual core grant since 2003, facilitating many of its activities (Interview with Daniel Owusu-Koranteng, January 11, 2010).¹⁶ Oxfam America and WACAM have also campaigned together, with mutual benefit: WACAM's voice is heard internationally, while Oxfam America is provided with the detailed evidence vital for its own campaigns. For example, the "No Dirty Gold" consumer campaign, originally launched in 2004 by Earthworks and Oxfam America,¹⁷ has been strengthened by examples from WACAM.¹⁸

The link with Oxfam America also led to WACAM's successful shareholder campaign where it gained a voice at a Newmont shareholders' meeting. Through Oxfam America, WACAM invited Newmont shareholders to participate in a dialogue about the communities' concerns, leading to one shareholder granting WACAM the right of proxy to attend the shareholders' meeting. This resulted in a resolution being passed that Newmont should take measures to improve its relationship with mining communities.¹⁹

The partnership with Oxfam America also facilitated the formation of a regional network of NGOs within West Africa. WACAM realised that many of the problems associated with large-scale mining are similar across the region, and therefore worked with the West Africa office of Oxfam America to establish a network of NGOs working on mining issues in Mali, Senegal, and Burkina Faso (Interview with Hannah Owusu-Koranteng, December 9, 2009).

WACAM has worked with other international NGOs, including OECD Watch, with whom WACAM has collaborated to expose ways in which the OECD Guidelines on Multinational Enterprises were being flouted by multinational mining companies. One campaign gained considerable media attention internationally, and especially in Sweden. Based on the OECD guidelines, WACAM's campaign to hold AngloGold Ashanti accountable was extended to cover the Swedish companies Atlas Copco and Sandvik, as suppliers of equipment to the mining company (Interview with Daniel Owusu-Koranteng, January 11, 2010). Consequently, a documentary on environmental degradation and the alleged human rights abuses of AngloGold Ashanti and other mining companies was shown on Swedish national television in 2003. The involvement of these long-established and respected Swedish industrial companies became a significant issue in Sweden, and led to further contact between WACAM and Swedish journalists and trade unions, again enhancing the international stature of this small, local organisation.

WACAM's international linkages have not only been at the non-governmental level. Its international profile led to an invitation in 2008 from the regional inter-governmental body the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to participate in the task force that drew up a "Directive on Harmonization of Guiding Principles and Policies on Mining". This directive was then adopted by the ECOWAS Council of Ministers in Abuja in 2009, and subsequently by the Government of Ghana. The Directive includes the principle of "Free Prior and Informed Consent" in relation to the acquisition of farmland, as advocated by WACAM; this should ensure that farmers are consulted and consent obtained before mining take place on their lands.

In sum, in its opposition to powerful global corporations, WACAM has scaled up its fight to the national and international levels. The political solidarity expressed through its collaboration

with other advocacy organisations has allowed WACAM to challenge powerful actors more effectively and with less fear of possible reprisals.

WACAM's alliances: leveraging opportunities and managing risks

In principle, networking between NGOs in the global North and South should not be a one-way relationship, but two-way flows of influence and information in which “local facts became internationalised and global norms localized” (Arts 2004, 506). In such processes, international organisations need local groups just as much as local groups need them (Rothman and Oliver 1999), and we have seen evidence of that, for example, in WACAM's relationship with both FIAN and Oxfam America. Nonetheless, these collaborations reflect the geopolitical relationships between the countries of origins of these organisations and are therefore steeped in a history of unequal power (Mohan and Stokke 2000) and have the potential to replicate inequalities in information, resources and stature (Doyle and Patel 2008; Pommerolle 2010).

Thus, scaling-up from local to global, as WACAM has done, entails risks. We identify two risks that relate to dynamics of power. First, the power inequalities between organisations include the potential for co-optation of the local organisation's agenda, as ostensible collaboration can mask attempts by international NGOs to control the work and discourses of local organisations (Michael 2004). Such a risk is intensified when the local NGO depends financially on the international one, in which case the local NGO may feel obliged to adopt the funder's agenda in order to increase its prospects for sustaining the flow of funds. And we should note here that WACAM “depends 100 per cent on external funders for financial resources” (Interview with WACAM staff member, August 17, 2009). Second, there is the associated risk that a local organisation will lose touch with its local base as its leaders participate increasingly in national and international forums, or will lose legitimacy with local members and constituents if the organisation is perceived as becoming an appendage or mouthpiece of an international actor.

However, based on our study, it appears that WACAM has been largely able to avoid these pitfalls and has remained relatively independent and true to its original aims. We suggest that this is accounted for by WACAM's discrimination in alliance-building and its ability to remain locally grounded. We further propose that both these stances are underpinned by a third factor – political awareness.

The political consciousness of WACAM's members can be traced back to the organisation's origins. As we have noted, WACAM's founders, Hannah and Daniel Owusu-Koranteng, were involved with the New Democratic Movement (NDM), a radical left political group formed in the early 1980s, and which advocated for economic nationalist policies and a more pluralist democracy for Ghana, inclusive of greater respect for citizens' “self-expression” and “voice” (Interview with Daniel Owusu-Koranteng, December 16, 2008).²⁰ Subsequently, in the late 1980s, as transnational mining companies were granted concessions in the Wassa West District, Daniel and Hannah came to see their work as opposing the capitalist transformation of the economy and corporate ownership of national resources. With help from the NDM, Hannah and Daniel started to work with local communities in organising and campaigning, and used their network within the NDM to draw the media's attention to the situation in the Wassa West District.

Thus, from the outset the work of WACAM was imbued by its founders with political awareness and commitment, and these attributes have continued to permeate the character of the organisation and its current membership. The explicit adoption of a rights-based discourse came later and could be interpreted as an extension of this political approach. As Hannah states:

We became sensitised, that what we were doing was actually ... the protection of rights ... not just the political rights but economic, cultural, social, environmental rights. (Interview with Hannah Owusu-Koranteng, December 9, 2009).

WACAM's embrace of a rights-based approach perhaps also reflected the pragmatic goal of linking WACAM more closely to the global human rights movement. The rights-based approach was adopted from the late 1990s onwards by many international NGOs involved in human rights and developmental work, given that it brings the power of international human rights treaties onto the side of ordinary people in their struggles against more powerful forces (Aberese Ako, Anyidoho, and Crawford 2013).

We argue that this political awareness, embedded in a rights-based approach, has informed WACAM's choice of partners at national and international levels. At a national level, WACAM's key alliances are with organisations that have a similarly critical perspective, notably CEPIL, NCOM, Third World Network-Africa and Forest Watch Ghana. At the international level, this would account in particular for the long-standing interaction with FIAN, perhaps not the most obvious of partners, given its focus on the right to food rather than on the extractive industries, but which is an organisation with a critical perspective on development issues such as land grabbing and access to natural resources, and which promotes the rights of marginalised peoples.

Political awareness is also partly responsible for the second factor in WACAM's apparent success in escaping the dangers associated with alliance-building: that is, the retention of its local focus, as evident both in WACAM's organisational form and governance structures and its sustained commitment to local communities. A common critique levelled against NGOs in the literature is that they are often more responsive to funders (including larger and international NGOs) and host governments than they are to their constituencies (Edwards and Hulme 1996). The issue of downward accountability is strongly related to the question of whether an NGO has a clear constituency (that is, a group of people that they have mobilised and whose interests they represent) and further whether they have a strong relationship with and support from that constituency (Slim 2002). In the case of WACAM, it clearly does have a constituency; it is a community-based movement in the sense that it supported the incipient struggles of communities against the activities of transnational mining companies. Membership of WACAM is open to anyone interested in the mission and vision of the organisation, with members predominantly from mining communities (Interview with WACAM staff, November 11, 2009). Not only does WACAM have an identifiable membership base, but also most activities are carried out by volunteer members from mining communities (Interview with WACAM staff, November 11, 2009). Steering the affairs of WACAM is the Executive Council, the majority of whose membership is made up of residents, both men and women, in WACAM's areas of operation. WACAM also has a technical team of volunteer supporters – lawyers, environmentalists, mining experts, researchers and journalists – but these act only as consultants to WACAM (WACAM 2008, Interview with WACAM staff, November 11, 2009).

Hudson observes that “the ways in which organisations balance and prioritise their relationships with other organisations reflect what their *real* (in contrast to *stated*) values are” (2001, 344, italics in original). WACAM's “real values” are indicated by its ongoing support for community members in its catchment area, especially women, and by the attention to the formation of community-based organisations. The commitment to local communities is illustrated by its emphasis on increasing the skills of community members, individually and collectively, to do advocacy work. For example, its “education for empowerment” program involves training on mining laws and constitutional rights, on gender and environmental issues, and on community organisation, and specifically targets the development of women as activists (Interview with WACAM

staff, November 11, 2009). One outcome has been the formation of networks of community-based organisations, such as the Concerned Farmers' Associations, youth groups such as Youth for Action, as well as a women's section of WACAM (Interview with JN, WACAM member, November 13, 2009). In addition, some WACAM members have acquired the skills to test water sources for chemical waste from mining activities and to document other rights violations (Interview with Hannah Owusu-Koranteng, December 9, 2009). It has also supported a number of community members to attain educational qualifications up to university degree level, another example of its commitment to local people while simultaneously enhancing leadership skills.

As WACAM became more involved in national and international networks, and its own profile rose, it risked a disconnection from its local roots. However, it would seem that WACAM has met this challenge by maintaining its focus on local priorities and through the careful choice of politically compatible organisations with whom it can enter into a partnership. The organisation's "real values" continue to be reflected in its practices and commitments at the local level.

Conclusion

At the outset we recognised that a focus on rights advocacy at the local level risks underemphasising the influence of national and global forces on local actors and situations. At the same time we did not want to dismiss the local as an important context for struggles for rights, because this is where people experience oppression and exploitation through the actions of national and international actors. This led us to pose the following question: how and with what success can local organisations leverage national and international connections to promote the rights of local communities in the face of powerful global forces and economic interests? Based on the experiences and accomplishments of WACAM, three main findings emerge.

First, the limits of a local focus are confirmed by the huge power differentials that exist in contexts where local groups challenge the interests of powerful national and transnational actors. We have highlighted the visible power of the collaboration between transnational mining corporations and the state, most saliently in the use of state security forces to protect mining companies, but also how these institutions exercise power in hidden and invisible ways against those who contest their activities.

Second, WACAM's response to such power inequalities underscores the importance of building up a degree of countervailing power through the formation of national and international alliances. If rights-based struggles are to have any prospects of success, then such relationships are necessary to support local oppositional forces, to provide a degree of protection against reprisals, and to contest powerful actors at the national and international levels where they operate. Therefore, through its national and international linkages, WACAM has partially transcended the limitations of local-level rights-based advocacy, and it is our contention that these alliances have enabled WACAM to punch above its weight in challenging the activities of the global mining giants and in questioning state policy in the extractive industries. Two further points can be made about these associations. The first relates to new power asymmetries operating within these networks such that a small organisation like WACAM risks being "swallowed up" by larger, wealthier organisations, especially those based in the global north. The other point is the significance of working with organisations that share a commitment to contesting the exploitative nature of capitalist relations. These relationships are characterised by shared values, and thus display steadfastness and reliability.²¹ These two points lead on to the final finding.

In seeking to explain why WACAM has been relatively successful in walking the local-national and local-global tightropes in ways that do not compromise its commitment to local communities, we focused on the significance of the organisation's political orientation. Despite

the Ghanaian political context being relatively favourable for activism in that civil and political rights are generally protected and civil society organisations are able to freely organise and mobilise (although a violent response is possible where its interests are threatened, as we see in the mining industry), most civil society organisations in Ghana have remained apolitical (Darkwah, Amponsah, and Gyampoh 2006; Tsikata 2009). Ghanaian civil society is thus dominated by organisations that are technocratic rather than political in their orientation, and that engage in short-term projects rather than long-term causes, with their ability to challenge power further undermined by the lack of identifiable constituencies and a dependence on external funds (Tsikata 2009). In contrast, WACAM's political orientation, based on a democratic left political tradition, has underpinned its persistence in challenging powerful interests.

Given the challenges that accompany the expansion of large-scale mining in Ghana that we have discussed, it is important to be circumspect about the impact of WACAM as a single organisation. Expectations of WACAM's reach and impact should also be tempered by the organisation's stated mandate: to advocate against "irresponsible mining; that is, mining that violates people's social, economic and environmental rights" (Interview with Daniel Owusu-Koranteng, October 28, 2013). Thus, WACAM does not radically challenge the resource extraction model of development (as Campbell 2010 does, for example), nor does it attempt to address broader socioeconomic implications of large-scale mining, such as the transformation of livelihoods in some mining areas from farming to small-scale mining. Hence, we do not intend exaggerate WACAM's reach or its achievements, and ultimately would agree with Obi in his statement that "there is a limit to how far transnational networks can support local social forces, or radically alter the inherently exploitative character of capitalist social relations" (Obi 2009, 479). Indeed, the state has given no indication of its withdrawal from the neoliberal model of development in which extractive industries are pivotal. Nonetheless, there is a "growing convergence of official (government) position and civil society demand" as Yao Graham, Coordinator of Third World Network-Africa and member of NCOM states. "Yesterday, the discussion was whether or not there were problems with mining activities; today, it is about the best ways to respond to these" (Yao Graham, 6 September 2011, personal communication). This evolution of discourse and policy is partly due to the work of organisations such as WACAM.

In explaining these limited but important achievements, our analysis shows that national and international linkages are a necessary, if at times insufficient, condition for providing a basis and support for local rights advocacy. Overall, the study emphasises the importance of an overtly political approach to rights advocacy, one which influences the choice of allies in this cause.

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Notes

1. WACAM was formerly an acronym for the Wassa Association of Communities Affected by Mining. However, in 2009, the organisation, through consultation with staff, volunteers and residents of mining communities, changed its name simply to WACAM to reflect the fact that its operation had expanded beyond the then Wassa District to mining communities in other parts of Ghana. In Akan, *wacam* means “I have been bitten” or “I have been disturbed” which, it was thought, reflected the experiences of mining communities (Daniel Owusu-Koranteng, personal communication, 11 July 2013).
2. In this article, we make reference to three levels of action and governance: local (that is, sub-national), national, and international or global. We use these as heuristics while recognising their limitations when used as mutually exclusive terms. Obi points out that while the primary site of struggle may be “local”, it involves transnational actors and processes and involves local actors operating physically and metaphorically in transnational spaces (Obi 2009).
3. In this article we use “rights-based approach” in the singular but with an awareness that there are a range of approaches that can be termed rights-based.
4. Merry and Stern (2005) explain “localisation” as the process through which the ideas of the social movement are translated into terms that are relevant and useful locally, while still retaining some of its global or universal features.
5. Corporate tax had initially been at 45 per cent in the 1986 Law, and then amended to 35 per cent, before reduced to 25 per cent in the 2006 Act. The additional profit tax had been included in the 1986 Law as a means to ensure that government benefits in any windfall profits generated by high mineral prices (Akabzaa 2009).
6. Artisanal mining is legal under a series of laws in the 1980s which requires registration, fees and other requirements for a license to work on a small concession of land of up to 25 acres in size for a tenure of at most five years (see Tsikata 1997).
7. A report by the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice on the state of human rights in mining communities notes that “mining companies, with the assistance of the Government ... deploy state security personnel (especially police and military) to protect their property/concessions” and further that “incidents of police and military excesses occur in mining communities”, particularly during operations to “flush out” illegal surface miners, known as *galamsey* operators (CHRAJ 2008, 21).
8. For example, on 17 January 2007, residents of mining communities organised a demonstration in Dumasi, near Tarkwa, in the course of which many people were beaten by the police and military (Interview with JN, community member, November 13, 2009). At the time of our research, one interviewee was involved with an incident at a community called Atta Ne Atta in the Huni Valley area. She reported that local people had written letters to the District Assembly and police, stating their intention to demonstrate on 8 December 2009 against the human rights abuses by Goldfields Ghana Ltd. At dawn on that day the military entered Atta Ne Atta and beat up activists. Three people were hospitalised (Interview with Hannah Owusu-Koranteng, December 9, 2009). A number of abuses by companies and security persons are recorded in CHRAJ’s (2008) report on the state of human rights in mining communities.
9. See Ghana Chamber of Mines website at <http://www.ghanachamberofmines.org/site/aboutus/index.php?id=10> (accessed April 15, 2013).
10. For example, in 2005, WACAM sent a petition to CHRAJ to investigate a number of incidents of abuse of rights: one was an incident where members of the security agencies were said to have fired into a crowd of demonstrators protesting the activities of Bogoso Gold Ltd in Prestea. Another was the case of a regional police commander allegedly threatening community members in Kenyasi in BrongAhafo who informed him of their plans to hold a peaceful demonstration against Newmont Ghana Gold Ltd. A third case was of the death of a Mr Clement Baffoh; he died in the detention of security at AngloGold Ashanti after being “arrested” for illegal surface mining activities in the company’s concession area (WACAM 2005, 1–3). The mining companies were unhappy with the CHRAJ report, and their representative body, the Ghana Chamber of Mines, issued a statement that expressed their “disappointment” with the report and that it “present[ed] an unbalanced view” (*Public Agenda*, October 27, 2008).
11. The bias of the law to mining interests – for example the lack of environmental protection – still remains a source of frustration and dissatisfaction for WACAM.

12. Accessed at <http://www.twn.org> on April 29, 2013.
13. Meetings have been held with officials from the Ministry of Lands, Forestry and Mines, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Defence and the Attorney General and Minister of Justice (NCOM webpage at <http://www.twn.org>, accessed April 29, 2013).
14. Accessed at <http://www.twn.org> on April 29, 2013.
15. Accessed at <http://www.twn.org> on April 29, 2013.
16. This is used for administrative work, salaries, allowances for zonal officers and volunteers, and for projects and events, such as workshops for educational purposes (Interview with finance officer, November 12, 2009).
17. See http://www.earthworksaction.org/media/detail/no_dirty_gold_campaign_launch (accessed April 15, 2013).
18. See http://www.nodirtygold.org/community_voices.cfm http://www.nodirtygold.org/sansu_ghana.cfm (accessed April 15, 2013).
19. Oxfam America approached Boston Commons (an investment firm in the US) on behalf of WACAM. Boston Commons was a shareholder in Newmont – an “ethical investor” – and it gave WACAM its proxy to attend the shareholders’ meeting (Interview with Daniel Owusu-Koranteng, November 12, 2010).
20. In a document to mark the 15th anniversary of the establishment of WACAM, the Owusu-Korantengs noted the significance of the NDM: “We were members of a nationalist organisation of intellectuals and workers who showed great interest in the mining advocacy. The mining issue was discussed at our meetings and we benefited greatly from the support of the group” (WACAM 2013). For more information about the NDM, see <http://pambazuka.org/en/category/features/83360> (accessed April 15, 2013).
21. Of course, the international setting in which such “outreach solidarity” occurs, as Kössler (2012) terms it, is also characterised by a spatial and social differentiation between participants. Such structural asymmetry also reproduces the power differentials discussed in the preceding point, and thus solidarity relationships are not free of such issues

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