The trip was led by the Chairman of the Parliamentary Oversight Committee on Mines and Minerals, which included members of the opposition, Hon. Chernor Bah, with the NACE Coordinator, Cecilia Mattia also in attendance. The team, during this trip, held interactive meetings with local civil society groups and residents, especially those directly affected by the activities of these mining companies. Representatives of each of these groups gave their impressions on the activities of the mining companies and also expressed satisfaction that parliament has developed interest, which to them was an assurance that the mining companies would in the future adhere to the legal and regulatory frameworks on mining and extractives in their communities.

This field investigation recorded a major success which is: it enhanced partnership and trust-building between three main oversight bodies, namely, parliament, civil society and the media, with parliament asserting itself as a state oversight body. The message of the team for the companies was that they should be cautious in their operations and must observe the laws and state policies of the mining and extractive sector.
THE DEVASTATING EFFECT OF MINING ACTIVITIES ON THE ENVIRONMENT IS ONE MAJOR CONCERN OF THE PARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE ON MINES AND MINERALS:

This is one major outcome from the series of training workshops where Parliamentarians were made aware of the necessity for the use of their oversight powers to save the environment.

Communities such as this devastated by reckless mining with no regard for legal or policy framework demanding reclaim of dug out lands is having huge negative consequences on communities where mining activities are taking place.

With the improved partnership now existing between parliamentarians, civil society and the media, there is every indication that environmental protection and preservation would now be seriously considered by mining companies as part of their corporate social responsibilities.

MINING COMMUNITIES IN SIERRA LEONE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF MINING ACTIVITIES ON THEIR WELLBEING AND ON THEIR PERSONAL SAFETY
NACE activities over the year have enhanced Parliamentary Oversight activities, ensured more transparency in the disbursement and utilization of mineral resources, capacitated Parliament on the legal and regulatory frameworks on mining and extractives and established a perfect working partnership between Parliamentarians, civil society and the media for the good of the people and country to actually benefit from mining activities and mining resources...

In the course of exercising their oversight responsibilities as a Committee with oversight responsibility on mining and mineral resources, Parliamentarians have now been capacitated to ask questions that will ensure that the country and its people receive maximum benefits in terms of revenue generation for the minerals extracted by various mining companies operating in the country.

Many Members of Sierra Leone’s current Parliament and more especially those of the Parliamentary Oversight Committee on Mining and Minerals now sit in regular consultative fora to reflect on issues bordering on mining and extractives. This has emanated from the extensive training they have acquired on the Extractives Initiative Transparency International (EITI) from the National Advocacy Coalition on Extractives (NACE) during the one year under review.

Their knowledge and understanding have been deepened and therefore are very much involved in the EITI process in Sierra Leone. They are now familiarized with the contents of the Consolidated Mines and Minerals Acts and are now sharpened in their analytical skills and ability to understand the contents and technicalities of mining contracts and to debate these issues in parliament on behalf of their people.

My contact and relationship with the National Advocacy Coalition on Extractives (NACE) is very beneficial. It has made me thorough in my look at contracts especially those dealing with mining and extractives,” Hon. Chernor Bah, Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Mining and Mineral Resources.

Photo descriptions (From Left to Right) Parliamentarians, civil society & media inspect a blasting process during an investigation trip to a mining site in Kono District; Chairman of the Parliamentary Oversight Committee on Mining and Minerals, Hon. Chernor Bah making a presentation to a beneficiary in Kono; NACE Coordinator, Cecilia Mattia and Hon. Phillip Tondoneh of the Parliamentary Oversight Committee on Mining and Minerals at a high table during a briefing session at the Fachima Hall in Koidu City, Kono District, Eastern Sierra Leone immediately after the investigation trip with Parliamentarians civil society activists and journalists in attendance.

Honourables Edward Soloku and Sam May M’carthy getting explanation from the Operations Manager of Koidu Holdings in Kono
Chair of Parliamentary Oversight
Notices Gaps Between Companies and Communities

Chairman Parliamentary Oversight Committee on Mines and Mineral Resources, Hon. Chernor Bah is a major benefactor of the NACE trainings on the EITI. He is a Lawyer by profession, a Commercial Lawyer to be precise. He says the NACE exercises have given him “thorough insight” into the EITI process by helping him develop critical eyes to look at mining contracts, to assess and evaluate the management of mineral resources from the perspectives of mining companies and mining communities.

That is why during their investigation trips to mining sites around the country, they were able to notice certain gaps that exist between the mining companies and the communities in which they operate.

He explains that they identified gaps such as inadequate and discrepant financial reporting by both companies and communities as well as the unfulfilled high expectations of the people when it comes to the issue of compliance of companies’ to their corporate social responsibilities.

“Competence in our oversight role has been greatly enhanced by NACE,” the Oversight Committee Chair on Mines and Mineral Resources noted and added, “Because of these trainings and exposures to international experts on mining and extractives, we are more than prepared now to take the EITI process in a quick-march manner.” Hon. Bah asserted.

He notes that they noticed discrepancies in the actual funds paid by companies to community authorities in the form of Surface Rents. Whereas a company reports a certain amount, the community authorities will report a different amount. “We noticed this as a serious gap that should be addressed to enhance good governance and transparent utilization of mineral resources,” Hon. Bah stated.

Regarding the unfulfilled promises, he notes that inasmuch as the companies are operating in the different communities with the aim of making profit, they should as well be responsible enough to ensure that they “give some back” to these communities by way of providing.

NACE IMPRESSES ON MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

“NACE are the first group of people to make us really understand about the EITI process through workshops and field trips. Also through NACE we’ve understood the reporting systems of both mining companies and authorities especially with regards to surface rents and all other benefits that are supposed to go to beneficiary communities. For us have insight into all of these and well be able to diagnose shortfalls; be it on the part of mining companies, government or local authorities were made possible by NACE,” Hon. Soloku of the Parliamentary Committee on Mining & Mining Resources.

In the process of strengthening Parliamentary, Civil Society & Media oversights on Oil, Gas & Mining Resources in Sierra Leone, NACE has succeeded in mending the fluid relationship that existed between these three stakeholders by building a partnership that seeks to ensure probity for good governance in the mining sector and the proper utilization of its resources in Sierra Leone.

Parliamentarians, Civil Society Activists Journalists in a photo souvenir in Kono

“Competence in our oversight role has been greatly enhanced by NACE.”

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