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ABOUT THE INTERLAKEN GROUP

The Interlaken Group is an informal network of individual leaders from influential companies, civil society organizations (CSOs), investors, governments, international organizations, and rightsholder networks. The purpose of the Group is to expand and leverage private sector action to secure community land rights. Participants develop, adopt, and disseminate new tools; advance “pre-competitive” mechanisms to accelerate private sector learning on responsible land rights practices; and convene in-country deliberations to facilitate and strengthen security of collective land tenure.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE MEETING

The Interlaken Group met on September 8, 2022, at the Goldsmiths Center in London, UK. Participants attended virtually and in person. The purpose of the meeting was **to review progress on Interlaken Group activities and agree on a process to finalize the new flagship guidance on community-based monitoring (CBM)**. The desired outcomes for this meeting were to 1) agree on a process to finalize, endorse, and leverage new flagship corporate and investor guidance on CBM; 2) identify emerging challenges and opportunities to mobilize private sector support for community land tenure; and 3) outline priority areas for engagement in 2023. The London event was the first in-person meeting of the Interlaken Group since 2019. The meeting was co-chaired by Solange Bandiaky-Badji (Rights and Resources Group) and Robin Barr (Earthworm Foundation).

MEETING SUMMARY

Welcome and Overview of Agenda

The co-chairs opened the meeting by reminding participants of the history and accomplishments of the Group, summarizing the strategic context for the meeting, and outlining the purpose, objectives, and agenda for the day. The co-chairs also noted the importance of it being the first in-person gathering of the Interlaken Group since 2019 and the first dialogue to be chaired by new leadership. The co-chairs recognized the contributions

and leadership of Andy White and Mark Constantine, the founders of the Interlaken Group, and welcomed new participants in the Group.

Presentation of Community-based Monitoring Document

The authors of the new Interlaken Group global guidance on CBM, tentatively titled, *Realizing the potential of community data and information for human rights and environmental due diligence in land-based sectors*, presented the current draft of the document to participants. The purpose of the session was for the Interlaken Group to agree on a process to finalize the document and endorse proposed edits. After the presentation, participants reflected on the following questions:

- Do you have any reactions to the structure, content, and overall presentation of the guidance?
- Is there anything in the guidance that should be resolved or clarified before finalizing it?
- Is there anything in the guidance or endorsement language that would prevent you from endorsing it?

The following main ideas emerged from the discussion:

Participants agreed on the need to clarify the distinction between the concepts of community-based and community-supported monitoring and suggested using CSM terminology in the document.

- The community monitoring guidance exclusively used the term *community-based* monitoring, yet participants suggested that *community-supported* monitoring would be more relevant and applicable to the Interlaken Group at this stage.
- CBM initiatives are closely linked to communities' right of self-determination. The authors and participants described CBM as a grassroots initiative where communities design and implement their own monitoring frameworks to collect the data needed to advocate for their rights. In contrast, CSM is a company-community partnership that helps firms achieve compliance with their corporate policies and standards. Overall, participants recognized that CSM may be more relevant and accessible to companies, considering current goals and capacity, though a CSM process may emerge from an ongoing CBM initiative.
- There was general agreement to update the guidance using CSM terminology, as well as to add a section clarifying the distinction between CSM and CBM. In response to questions regarding when to use CSM v. CBM, the feedback was that the design and implementation of the monitoring will greatly depend on the community. That said, it is only through consultations with the community that these questions can be adequately addressed.

Participants recommended reframing the community monitoring document from a *guidance* to a set of *principles*.

- Participants discussed the purpose and expectations for the document, as well as how it translates to the broader mission of the Interlaken Group. Given the context-specific nature of community monitoring, the guidance is not a prescriptive, turn-key solution that firms can use as a step-by-step guide to implement. Rather, it introduces the concept of community monitoring to corporate and development finance audiences, providing high-level principles, considerations, and insights from the field to socialize this tool with key stakeholders.
- The instigators of the report reminded participants that this exploration of grassroots monitoring by the Interlaken Group is an innovation. There were very few available resources with which to construct a guidance. Reorientation towards outlining principles the private sector can use in monitoring engagements with communities represents a viable first step and "hook" for future guidance tools.
- Participants discussed how gaining broader private sector support for the document could be a challenge without detailing the implications/expectations from endorsement (e.g., adopting specific practices and policies). This is also important to outline for communities, so they are aware of what is expected from a company that endorses CSM. Several ideas emerged:

- The role of a global document on community monitoring could be to create a shared understanding of the concept, its core principles, and how it could be integrated into a due diligence and monitoring processes. This global tool could then support the co-creation of context specific CSM frameworks that address community priorities and reporting needs.
- The first step in determining the feasibility and structure of CSM is a transparent discussion between companies and communities (as well as other stakeholders like government and civil society) regarding the lived experiences and realities on the ground; and this document could provide high-level principles for these engagements.
- Overall, participants agreed it would be best to reorient the document as a set of principles, particularly for integrating CSM into existing reporting platforms and processes that companies are currently using.

The community monitoring document should provide more details regarding the role and capacity risks of key stakeholders in CSM, such as governments, communities, and women.

- Participants acknowledged that government is a key stakeholder in community monitoring, given their role in concession agreements, recognizing land tenure rights, and enforcing safeguards and grievance mechanisms. Yet the document lacked specific guidance on how companies should navigate or engage government in the community monitoring process.
 - The guidance on government engagement was intentionally broad to emphasize the need for a context-specific approach. For instance, the capacity and cooperativeness of government may vary at the local, provincial, or national levels, as well as the community's relationship and trust with the government.
- From the company side, a perceived risk to CSM may be the capacity of the partner community to collect the required data. Participants mentioned the importance of parallel guidance/support to set expectations with community members and provide them the information and tools needed to advocate for themselves and implement CSM on the ground.
- The exclusion of Indigenous, local, and Afro-descendant women in CSM, as well as other marginalized groups, was another risk highlighted. Participants agreed the document should provide considerations for ensuring women are equitably engaged in, and benefitting from, the monitoring process.

More thought needs to be given to how community monitoring can be implemented at scale.

- There was wide agreement that scalability will be a barrier for CSM. Companies and investors are, in some cases, seeking to manage complex global supply chains and/or portfolios with thousands of suppliers. From the community side, there are capacity and awareness barriers that must be overcome for communities to lead this work on their own. Furthermore, external support (e.g., locally trusted CSOs, consultants) may be needed for both companies and communities to address capacity barriers.
- Another barrier for companies will be identifying the conditions for CSM to work at the community level. For instance, communities with the capacity, interest, and leadership to implement CSM locally, as well as stakeholders like government and CSOs who are interested and/or able to support.
- Regarding promotion, participants recognized that the presentation of CSM to firms is important, and messaging about managing risk and the business case only goes so far: the message should also be about impact, and this will resonate most if the impact can be measured within current reporting processes. That said, a focus should be ensuring that CSM data is comparable or applicable to a firm's reporting platform so that it can be easily integrated, reducing barriers to private sector adoption.
- Identifying and clarifying indicators for CSM was highlighted as a need; particularly, what metrics are being used and how all parties involved will agree on a shared definition (e.g., "engaged and empowered communities"). Also, participants were curious if CSM could be adapted to monitor the holistic impact of carbon-related projects and agreed it would be interesting to explore whether these indicators could be transferable or adapted to other sectors.

Elaboration of Process to Finalize and Leverage the Community Monitoring Document

Following the group discussion, participants discussed and endorsed a set of edits and next steps to finalize and launch the community monitoring document. The following main ideas emerged:

Participants agreed on next steps to position the document as an elaboration of principles and emerging best practice, rather than a guidance.

- Revisions were proposed to refine the scope and expectations for the document (outlined in the below box), in addition to a thorough edit to sharpen and trim the text.
- Future work might include quantifying costs associated with CSM, developing targeted guidance, developing detailed case studies of current CSM practice, elaboration of CSM indicators and linkages to reporting frameworks, and exploring practical challenges and solutions to scale CSM, among others.
- Participants clarified that “endorsement” of the community monitoring document meant approval of the core principles outlined in the document and support for its eventual integration in processes to monitor global supply chains and investment (after another round of edits and approvals).

Participants clarified expectations for firms on how and when to integrate or implement CSM on the ground.

- Regarding the timeline for firms to adopt and implement CSM, participants discussed the importance of clear expectations while also not rushing to scale. A firm’s obligation to human rights is a continual process and ongoing conversation, and CSM is one tool to support that obligation, but more understanding is needed to effectively scale it.
- To develop an adequate understanding of CSM and how firms could implement, it will be important to build the evidence base, such as case studies that span across sectors and regions. Participants mentioned that there are already tools and case studies that incorporate community-based practices/principles (since communities have long been doing this work), so there is opportunity to curate and draw insights from existing research as opposed to relying solely on new pilots.
- As for CSM pilots, sourcing landscapes were identified as an important opportunity area.

Participants made recommendations on the role of the Interlaken Group as it relates to socializing and scaling community monitoring.

- Participants discussed the Interlaken Group’s strategy to incentivize private sector adoption of CSM. The opportunities and needs identified included aligning CSM with existing standards/commitments/frameworks, helping companies and communities build the capacity to implement, and demonstrating CSM’s impact on monitoring and due diligence processes. A recurring suggestion was to integrate CSM into existing reporting platforms and forums, as this seemed most likely to catalyze adoption.
- The discussion also suggested that the role of the Interlaken Group is to 1) develop and/or socialize new tools and practices (e.g., CSM principles), 2) provide guidance to support implementation, 3) advocate for public endorsements/commitments, and 4) leverage the Group and its networks to connect private sector practitioners in dialogues/partnerships with local rightsholders.

Summary of Agreed Edits/Additions to the Community Monitoring Document

1. **Scope:** Though the goal at the beginning was to produce a guidance tool, a foundational need to develop core principles and promote a shared understanding emerged. To keep the purpose of this document concise, clear, and actionable, this guidance will be drilled down into principles and clearly explain how companies should be operationalizing it.
2. **Clarity:** There is consensus that *community-supported monitoring* (CSM) is a more accurate term for what is being generally referred to as *community-based monitoring* (CBM) in the guidance document.
 - a. CBM is community-generated and linked to the right of self-determination. CSM is a mutually beneficial company-community partnership that fulfills corporate reporting needs.

3. **Practicality:** It will be important to outline how companies can implement these CSM principles in practical and impactful ways on the ground, such as via sector- and country-specific follow-up guidance.
4. **Scalability:** More thought is needed to outline the highest impact paths to mainstreaming CSM, which will most likely be by integrating it into established standards, forums, laws, and reporting frameworks.
5. **Gender:** CSM principles and any further guidance will need to address gender dynamics to ensure equity in the participation, power distribution, and benefit sharing of community monitoring.
6. **Audience:** It will be important to design and promote CSM with multinational companies and development finance institutions in mind. This means understanding the key incentives or enablers for companies to adopt and implement CSM, such as by integrating it with popular frameworks/standards.
7. **Role of Government:** While government participation will vary by context, there's a need to highlight potential roles. For instance, CSM can be used to bypass government bottlenecks/barriers or government can be engaged as "referees" to monitor the community-company partnership.

Lessons from the Field: Leveraging CBM in the palm oil sector in Liberia and Indonesia

Based on CBM pilots conducted in Indonesia and planned in Liberia,¹ participants were presented with concrete examples of how companies, investors, and governments are leveraging community monitoring to partner with IPs, LCs, and ADPs to implement sustainability commitments. The following ideas emerged:

It will be important to define which role each potential stakeholder can/should play in CSM, as well as how to implement even without their support.

- Participants discussed the role and importance of government in CSM (e.g., formally recognizing land rights, approving concession agreements, etc.), and asked how CSM can be successful without the government's participation. Given the Indonesian CBM pilot was implemented without government involvement, it was explained how community monitoring can be used to bypass ineffective or corrupt legal systems, alleviating dependency on government actors for the realization of benefits.
- In instances when government is involved in community monitoring (such as with the 2023 Liberia pilot), participants were interested in how to appropriately balance power/responsibility between the community and government. In Liberia, it was explained that the government would serve as a mediator between the companies and the communities, resolving any discrepancies in reporting and enforcing the concession agreements. The government also benefits from the communities' involvement since they don't have the capacity to monitor effectively on the ground, and the community-level reporting is more accurate and cost-effective than hiring outside monitors.
- CSOs were also noted as an important stakeholder. While CSM needs to be an engagement with communities and companies and/or investors, CSOs can be essential mediators to bridge the two parties, translate needs, and support capacity building of all parties. CSOs can also add another layer of accountability, supporting communities in publicizing monitoring results and advocating for redress.

Community Land Tenure, Grassroots Monitoring, and the EU Corporate Sustainability Directive

Participants were updated on current efforts, opportunities, and challenges for companies to comply with the EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive and advance community tenure rights. The following ideas emerged from the discussion:

The EU Directive presents an opportunity to position CSM as a tool for monitoring and reporting on newly mandated social and environmental impacts throughout a company's supply chain.

- After learning more details regarding the EU Directive (in effect Jan 5, 2023), participants discussed the implications/opportunities for CSM, such as pinning CSM to the Human Rights framework countries

¹ For more details and context on the CBM pilot in Indonesia, please refer to this [video](#) and [blog post](#). For more information on the forthcoming CBM pilot in Liberia, please refer to this [blog post](#).

have already agreed to and then providing companies with the concrete guidance and tools to realize these rights in practice.

- Participants also detailed how conforming the localized principles of CSM to global/Western reporting standards may prevent adaptations to the context-specific realities and needs of communities (e.g., strict rules, like gender quotas, that can have negative consequences in practice).
- Additionally, there is a tension between companies that need to report on mandated social and environmental indicators, and the priorities and preferences of communities. In efforts to integrate CSM into existing reporting frameworks, it will be important to respect the indicators and reporting styles that best serve each community, and then collaborate on ways to translate this data to reporting frameworks like the Directive (e.g., through trusted intermediaries).
- A general question raised was how a company should assess and monitor the impacts throughout its supply chains. For instance, whether the corporation should take responsibility for monitoring or delegate this to the subsidiaries/partners in its supply chain. Participants acknowledged there isn't a blueprint and monitoring strategies may vary by corporation and sector.

NEW DIRECTIONS FOR THE INTERLAKEN GROUP

The following ideas and themes emerged from the discussions, representing pathways and potential new priorities for Interlaken Group engagement. Participants emphasized that the Group should consider how the current suite of tools and interventions underway (i.e., CSM and related efforts) might be leveraged to engage in new spaces. These included:

- **Gender:** A key priority for the Group is ensuring equity in the participation, power distribution, and benefit sharing of CSM and other tools or analysis.
- **Carbon:** Carbon and the voluntary markets are top of mind for many firms, and a priority will be centering the importance of community land rights in these initiatives. There is also interest in applying CSM principles to carbon projects.
- **Livelihoods Positive:** Important to explore and measure how CSM and other guidance/standards on human rights, due diligence, etc. can support local livelihoods, such as via improved food security.
- **Direct Support to Rightsholders:** In light of the [CoP26 Pledge](#) and the Forest Positive commitments of companies, participants discussed how the private sector could channel more support – via the appropriate mechanisms – directly to IPs, LCs, and ADPs to strengthen their land rights, and ensure communities are positioned to contribute to 2030 climate and biodiversity targets.

NEXT STEPS

The co-chairs led a discussion on next steps and then closed the meeting. The agreed next steps included:

Finalize Community Monitoring Document

- Complete agreed upon edits to the community monitoring document.
- Finalize endorsement pledge language.
- Develop and communicate launch and dissemination plan.

Continue Support of Community Monitoring Pilots

- Continue to develop CBM framework and implementation plan in Liberia.
- Identify/pursue opportunities to expand CBM pilots in Indonesia.

Develop Interlaken Group Workplan for 2023

- Debrief before end of year 2022 to reflect on key takeaways and build a workplan for 2023.
- Collaborate with participants to organize and/or support dialogues and activities on carbon markets and the EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive.