



Security and Human Rights Toolkit



CASE STUDY

Security Governance in Tanzania's Gas Sector:

Lessons from Mtwara, Tanzania

Author and Disclaimer

Author: Genevieve Sekumbo, PhD.

Editing: DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance

The contents of this publication may be freely used and copied for educational and other non-commercial purposes, provided that any such reproduction is accompanied by an acknowledgement of Genevieve Sekumbo, PhD and DCAF as the source.

The good practices included in this case study are not meant to be prescriptive. It is up to the user to evaluate whether they could be feasible, useful and appropriate to the local context in a specific situation on the ground. The authors and editors shall not be liable for any kind of loss or damage whatsoever to the user of this case study or a third party arising from reliance on the information contained in this document.

Photo credits

- cover page: Gas installation in Mtwara, 2022. Photo by the author Genevieve Sekumbo.
- page 5: “[Mtwara-3](#)” by John Mnamba is licensed under [CC BY-SA 3.0](#).
- page 7: “[Gas pipeline](#)” by [World Bank Photo Collection](#) is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#).
- page 12: “[Songo Songo Gas Plant](#)” by [Iain Cameron](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#).
- page 15: A security guard stands at the entrance to a shopping mall in Moshi, Kilimanjaro, Tanzania, 10 June 2015. Photo: Alexander Gafarro / Shutterstock
- page 16: Gas installation in Mtwara, 2022. Photo by the author Genevieve Sekumbo.
- page 19: A road sign in Palma, Mozambique indicates the directions for the Namoto border post to Tanzania. Mtwara is only an hour drive from the Mozambique border. Source: VOAportugues.com, Author: VOA
- back cover: “[Birds eye view of Mtonya Ward, Mikindani](#)” by [Halidtz](#) is licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](#).

About this case study

This Case Study is an accompaniment to **Security and Human Rights Toolkit – a practical handbook** that brings together all relevant resources and good practices related to human rights compliant security practices, as well as tools and case studies that help translate the good practices to a particular operational context.

The Toolkit makes the management of security and human rights-related risks easier and helps companies address increasing expectations with respect to sustainability as well as business and human rights.

To access the full Toolkit, please visit: www.securityhumanrightshub.org/toolkit/

About DCAF

DCAF – the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance works globally to promote good security sector governance through security sector reform. DCAF's Business and Security Division works with companies, governments and communities to promote security, sustainable development and respect for human rights.

Since 2012, DCAF has been engaged in partnership with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to promote responsible business conduct in complex and conflict-affected environments. In these contexts, businesses face heightened risks of involvement in serious human rights abuses and international humanitarian law violations. The DCAF-ICRC partnership raises awareness of these risks and promotes strategies to mitigate them. It provides a comprehensive range of resources and tools on responsible security management and human rights due diligence – a process wherein companies identify and address their adverse impacts on the rights and dignity of local populations. Visit our Knowledge Hub: www.securityhumanrightshub.org

Executive Summary

In May 2013, protests erupted in Mtwara, southern Tanzania, over the country's natural gas discoveries. The unrest turned violent, resulting in deaths, arrests, and significant property damage. In an effort to restore order, the government deployed specialised security units. The underlying conditions, however, were not addressed.

This case study examines what happened, why it happened, and what it means for the governance of Tanzania's LNG project and extractive sector development in a global context where natural resource extraction is putting pressure on governments, where development and peacebuilding assistance is contracting, and where the focus on trade, investment, and supply chain resilience is dominating governmental priorities.

The case study shares a key lesson-learned for policy makers, multilateral institutions, and the private sector: security governance and conflict prevention is essential and underpins economic development. It is intended as a practical resource for companies, governments, investors, state-owned and private enterprises, and civil society organisations working on or affected by large-scale extractive development.

Drawing on desktop research covering 2010 to 2015 and ethnographic fieldwork conducted between 2019 and 2022, the case study identifies three interconnected governance failures that drove the 2013 protests and shaped their aftermath. First, public communication on the gas developments consistently conflated two distinct projects: the long-term offshore gas discoveries that would take decades to produce, and the existing smaller-scale onshore production already under way. This led communities to expect immediate, locally anchored benefits that the sector could not deliver. Second, overlapping institutional roles between the Tanzania Petroleum Development Corporation (TPDC), district authorities, and security actors left communities without clear channels for information, grievance, or recourse. Third, the security response that followed the protests, while effective in the short term, deepened community distrust, disrupted livelihoods, and created conditions of fear and uncertainty that persisted for years.

These failures are not unique to Tanzania. They reflect patterns that recur wherever large-scale extractive development outpaces the governance arrangements designed to manage it. Tanzania's LNG project remains in development in a region where communities have carried unmet expectations for more than a decade, and where the security environment has been further shaped by instability along the Tanzania-Mozambique border following the Cabo Delgado insurgency from 2017 onwards. Conflict-sensitive governance from the outset is essential to the project's sustainability.

Tanzania has taken steps to address these structural gaps. The National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights, under development since 2023, includes priorities that map directly onto the failures documented here: mandatory community participation, accessible grievance mechanisms, revenue transparency, and guidelines for security operations at extraction sites.



These steps are necessary, but the plan is not yet finalised and the governance conditions that produced the 2013 events have not been fundamentally restructured.

Lessons Learned

The Mtwara case shows that inadequate community consultation and conflict-insensitive security governance create conditions for unrest, even in regions with no prior history of violence. The costs, borne by communities, companies, and governments alike, undermine project sustainability and are difficult to reverse.¹

A. Security Arrangements

Where security arrangements are designed for order restoration rather than conflict prevention, they risk deepening the conditions that generated unrest in the first place.

What are the conditions necessary for prevention-based security arrangements?

- Governments and state-owned enterprises should ensure that security actors operate with clearly distinct and publicly understood roles, with defined limits on the use of force and clarity between enforcement and administrative functions.
- Public and private security should have the necessary training and limits on use of force when it comes to security of extractive sites – as distinct from general law enforcement roles.
- Governments should ensure joined up approaches and regular communication and coordination between agencies.
- Companies should assess how public security forces are deployed in relation to their operations and actively support accessible, community-facing grievance mechanisms. The Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VPs) provide a practical framework for operationalising these distinctions. The [Security and Human Rights Toolkit](#) and the [Conflict Prevention Tool](#) offer further practical guidance for governments, state-owned enterprises, and companies seeking to apply conflict-sensitive security management in extractive contexts (DCAF, ICRC, and GCBHR 2020; DCAF, ICRC, AngloGold Ashanti and Queen's University 2022).

¹ The lessons below are grounded in the evidence presented in this case study and draw on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs 2011), the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VPs 2000), and OECD guidance on stakeholder engagement in the extractive sector (OECD 2017).

B. Securitisation and Governance Gaps

Large-scale extractive projects generate expectations that governance arrangements must be designed to manage from the outset.

- Governments should ensure that community consultation is meaningful and precedes key decisions, not a process designed to satisfy regulatory requirements after decisions have been taken.
- State-owned enterprises operating as both commercial operators and state representatives should be explicit about which institutional role they are performing at any given moment and which channels are available for different kinds of community concerns.
- Civil society organisations play a critical independent monitoring role: early and sustained documentation of governance gaps can surface grievances before they reach crisis point.

C. Livelihood Impacts

Security measures in extractive contexts carry socio-economic costs that accumulate quietly and are borne disproportionately by the most economically marginalised communities.

Companies should integrate livelihood impact assessment into pre-project planning and ongoing monitoring, with proactive engagement with fishing communities, informal traders, casual workers, and youth. The OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement in the Extractive Sector provides a practical framework for this work (OECD 2017).

For governments and state-owned enterprises, the lesson from Mtwara is that the communities of Mtwara and Lindi who will live alongside the next phase of Tanzania's LNG development carry the accumulated weight of everything that has happened since 2013. Conflict-sensitive governance of the next phase means taking that history seriously as an active factor shaping how communities receive, interpret, and respond to the institutions and processes involved.



Recommendations

Governments

- Establish meaningful community consultation requirements before key extractive project decisions are taken.
- Ensure clear separation between security, administrative, and development functions.
- Engage with the VPs, engage with companies and civil society in multi-stakeholder working groups that promote security and human rights.
- Communicate project timelines accurately and update communities promptly when timelines change, recognising that communities, particularly youth, make livelihood decisions premised on anticipated development cycles.
- Ensure NAP development reflects experiences such as those documented in this case study.

State-owned enterprises

- Define and communicate which institutional role governs each type of community-facing interaction, distinguishing between commercial, administrative, and state authority functions.
- Identify specific, accessible channels for community-facing engagement and grievance-related concerns that are clearly distinct from administrative and enforcement functions.
- Train community-facing staff to make these distinctions visible and legible at the community level.
- Engage with the VPs, engage with governments and civil society in multi-stakeholder working groups that promote security and human rights.

Companies

- Conduct human rights due diligence on public security deployments linked to operations.
- Support accessible, community-facing grievance mechanisms.
- Integrate livelihood impact assessment into project planning and monitoring, with specific attention to fishing communities, informal traders, and youth.
- Communicate project timelines and employment prospects accurately and through accessible channels, recognising that inaccurate or poorly communicated timelines generate livelihood costs that are difficult to reverse.
- Engage with the VPs and with governments and civil society in multi-stakeholder working groups that promote security and human rights.
- Use the [Security and Human Rights Toolkit](#) and [Conflict Prevention Tool](#) to guide responsible security management.

Civil Society

- Maintain independent monitoring of governance gaps in extractive contexts.
- Document livelihood impacts systematically.
- Advocate for meaningful community participation in NAP development and extractive sector policy processes.
- Initiate engagement in the VPs, by reaching out to the Initiative's Secretariat and Civil society Pillar and by exploring the tools and resources freely available such as:
 - [Guidance for Companies on Respecting the Rights of Human Rights Defenders.](#)
 - [Guidance for Companies Protecting and Respecting the Unique Needs and Rights of Women and Other Disadvantaged Groups;](#) and
 - [Report on Understanding the Unique Situation of Human Rights Defenders in Africa](#)

1. Introduction and Objectives

In the early 2010s, Tanzania emerged as one of East Africa's most promising natural gas producers, with offshore discoveries in the southern coastal regions of Lindi and Mtwara generating significant national and international interest. The prospect of developing liquefied natural gas, or LNG, at scale raised expectations at every level: nationally, for industrialisation, energy security, and economic transformation, and locally, among communities in Lindi and Mtwara who had long been marginalised from national development and who anticipated that proximity to the gas would translate into tangible benefits for their regions. Those expectations are yet to be met. The governance arrangements surrounding the sector proved inadequate to manage the gap between national narratives and local realities, and the result was a breakdown in trust between communities and institutions that culminated in the 2013 protests in Mtwara.

This case study¹ is intended as a practical resource for the actors who shape how extractive projects engage with communities: companies operating in or entering extractive contexts, government institutions and state-owned enterprises responsible for security and development, and civil society organisations involved in monitoring, advocacy, and community dialogue. Its purpose is to identify what went wrong in Mtwara, draw out the governance lessons, and provide guidance on what different actors can do to prevent similar dynamics in future LNG and extractive sector developments.

Between 2010 and 2015, a critical gap opened between how Tanzania's gas sector was publicly framed and what it could realistically deliver to communities in Mtwara and Lindi. Public communication during this period did not clearly distinguish between two gas developments that were fundamentally different in nature. The first was existing onshore and near-shore gas production at Mnazi Bay and Songo Songo, already operational and supplying domestic power plants, with a pipeline from Mtwara to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania's commercial hub, planned for construction to expand that domestic supply. The second was the new set of offshore deep-water discoveries, located in technically complex and geographically remote waters, requiring entirely different infrastructure, investment timelines, and governance arrangements, with commercial production still years away. These two developments were framed together in public discourse as though they formed a single gas boom. Communities in Mtwara and Lindi, seeing construction activity around them and hearing national announcements about transformative reserves, reasonably concluded that large-scale development and its associated benefits were imminent. When development did not arrive as expected, the gap between public narratives and lived experience deepened existing frustrations, compounded by decades of structural neglect. Benefit-sharing arrangements were unclear, institutional roles unevenly defined, and opportunities for meaningful community consultation limited throughout.

In May 2013, these tensions surfaced in violent protests in Mtwara during which lives were lost, property was destroyed, and the government deployed specialised police units to restore order. Although the security response contained the immediate unrest, it did not address the conditions that had generated it, and its effects on community trust and engagement lasted well beyond the protests themselves.

¹ This case study draws on desktop research covering the 2010 to 2015 period and ethnographic fieldwork conducted between 2019 and 2022, including interviews and observations with community members, local officials, civil society actors, and representatives of state and private gas companies in Mtwara and Lindi.

These dynamics have direct bearing on Tanzania's current trajectory. The country is currently advancing negotiations on a major liquefied natural gas processing and export terminal, planned for construction in Lindi, north of Mtwara. The governance challenges documented in this case study are directly relevant to that project and to extractive sector developments across the region.

The following sections examine the institutional context, regional history, the gas development lifecycle and what it means for communities, protests, and their aftermath, before drawing out lessons for the actors involved in the next phase of that development.



2. Governance of Tanzania's Gas Sector

Tanzania's gas sector holds estimated recoverable reserves of approximately 57 trillion cubic feet, valued at approximately US\$55 billion at prevailing market valuations at the time.

The industry is governed through a layered institutional structure that divides responsibilities across multiple actors (The Citizen 2012; Daily News 2012; The Citizen 2022). Understanding how that structure was designed helps explain why the governance gaps described in the previous section emerged, and how they persisted across a critical period of development.

The Ministry of Energy holds overall policy direction. The Tanzania Petroleum Development Corporation, or TPDC, the state-owned enterprise responsible for upstream participation, acts as the state's commercial representative, signing production sharing agreements with international oil companies and holding participation interests in upstream projects. The Petroleum Upstream Regulatory Authority oversees licensing and compliance, and the Energy and Water Utilities Regulatory Authority regulates pipeline transmission and marketing (TPDC 2016).

Each institution has a defined technical or commercial function, but across this division of responsibilities, public communication and community engagement did not sit clearly within any single institutional mandate during the critical period of development. Security governance did not feature explicitly within this institutional framework. While the Ministry of Home Affairs holds responsibility for the Tanzania Police Force and the Field Force Unit,



Songo Songo Gas Plant

no publicly documented coordination mechanism between the energy sector governance institutions and security ministries has been identified for this period. The implications of this gap became visible in 2013, as examined in *Section 5*.

Within this governance structure, the two gas developments, existing onshore production at Mnazi Bay and Songo Songo and the new offshore deep-water discoveries, were managed by different actors operating under different arrangements. The offshore blocks were operated by international oil companies including BG Group, Ophir Energy, Statoil, and ExxonMobil through production sharing agreements with TPDC, while the onshore production at Mnazi Bay and Songo Songo and the construction of the Mtwara to Dar es Salaam pipeline involved TPDC directly as both operator and state representative. In both cases, community-facing interactions were largely channelled through TPDC.

This made TPDC's dual role particularly consequential. As both a commercial operator and a state entity, simultaneously acting as investor, promoter, and government representative, TPDC occupied an inherently ambiguous position that is common among state-owned enterprises in extractive sectors globally. In the Tanzanian context, where state authority carries significant weight in community settings, TPDC's presence was experienced less as corporate engagement and more as a state directive. Communities in Mtwara had no established basis through which to distinguish between its commercial functions relating to the offshore project and its state functions relating to the onshore infrastructure, shaping how they received information and understood their ability to raise concerns (Oxfam 2015; Poncian 2019; CMI 2016; DIIS 2016).

Civil society organisations documented the practical consequences of these gaps. For example, compensation processes related to land acquisition for the Mtwara to Dar es Salaam pipeline were inconsistently communicated, grievance mechanisms for affected households were poorly explained, and residents were left uncertain about their rights and entitlements during resettlement and displacement processes (Oxfam 2015).

These information gaps extended beyond land processes. Very few citizens could identify which institutions were responsible for managing gas revenues, regulating companies, or making key decisions (Gaddis et al. 2015). When TPDC representatives appeared in relation to land acquisition, compensation, or public consultations, residents interpreted them as extensions of central government.

This created a gap in both directions: communities were uncertain who to approach for information, and no institution had been clearly assigned responsibility for providing it, including explaining the difference between an operational onshore project and a long-term offshore prospect. That structural gap meant that when community tensions around benefit-sharing and the direction of gas development came to a head in 2013, there were unclear institutional mechanisms in place to absorb or respond to them constructively.

The institutional structure described above was layered onto a regional context with its own distinct history, one that shaped how communities in Mtwara and Lindi understood and received the sector's arrival.

3. Regional Context: A History of Peripheral Development in Southern Tanzania

Mtwara and Lindi, located in Tanzania's southern coastal zone near the Mozambican border, have long experienced limited public investment and persistent economic marginalisation. Despite their strategic position and resource potential, these regions have historically remained disconnected from the country's main centres of political and economic power. This marginalisation dates back to the colonial period, when southern Tanzania was treated as a hinterland for extraction rather than as a site for sustained investment, both by German and British administrations (Seppälä, Koda and Hyden 1998).

After independence, national development strategies continued to prioritise the central and northern regions, especially the Dar es Salaam to Arusha corridor, where major industrial, transport, and educational investments were concentrated. Southern Tanzania, by contrast, experienced slower growth and persistent underinvestment in transport networks, electrification, and social services. These patterns reinforced long-standing perceptions that the south was overlooked in national planning and that its communities bore the costs of national development without sharing proportionately in its benefits (Hyden 1980; Lal 2010).

By the 1990s, Mtwara's economy still relied heavily on smallholder agriculture, cashew farming, and coastal trade. Poor road and port infrastructure limited access to larger markets, while inadequate schooling and health services reinforced the region's reputation as a "Cinderella region", recognised for its potential but consistently passed over in national development initiatives (Lal 2015; Kamat 2017).

The Mtwara Development Corridor initiative, launched in the early 2000s with regional partners, sought to address these disparities, but its implementation remained uneven and its impact limited. In this context, the gas boom was not simply an economic event. For communities carrying decades of accumulated grievances and unmet expectations, it represented both an opportunity and a moment in which they would assess whether the patterns of the past would be reproduced. The following section examines how those accumulated conditions interacted with the specific phases of the gas development lifecycle as it unfolded in Mtwara and Lindi.



4. Mtwara and the Gas Development Lifecycle

Understanding how those tensions unfolded also requires looking at how Tanzania's gas sector developed in practice, and what each phase of that development meant for communities in the respective regions.

The lifecycle of a gas project typically consists of four stages: exploration, development, production, and decommissioning. Each stage has distinct characteristics, timelines, and implications for communities living near extractive sites (Darko 2015). Security governance considerations arise at every phase, though they are rarely built into project planning from the outset.

Exploration involves geological surveys, seismic assessments, and drilling of exploration wells to identify and evaluate hydrocarbon deposits. This phase can last five to ten years and is characterised by high uncertainty and significant capital expenditure, with no guarantee of commercially viable discoveries.

Development follows a successful exploration phase and involves the design and construction of production facilities, pipelines, and associated infrastructure. This is typically the most visible phase for surrounding communities, bringing an influx of workers, equipment, and economic activity. Development can take five to ten years and requires close coordination between operators, governments, and affected communities, particularly around land acquisition, compensation, and local content.

Production is the phase in which hydrocarbons are extracted and processed for sale or domestic use. For large offshore gas fields, production can last fifteen to thirty years or more. This phase is often less visible at the local level than development, as operations become more technical and concentrated, but it is the phase in which revenues are generated and benefit-sharing arrangements become most consequential.

Decommissioning marks the end of a field's productive life. When production is no longer economically viable, facilities are removed, wells are plugged, and sites are restored. This phase requires careful planning, clear institutional responsibilities, and sustained community engagement to manage the transition effectively.





Reflections by a Security Manager with direct experience in international oil and gas operations, illustrating what conflict sensitive security governance looks like in practice at each stage of the lifecycle:

EXPLORATION: early stage risk mapping

The priorities in this stage are understanding conflict dynamics and legacy issues.

Early engagement and trust-building with the government and civil society/community members is critical. This is the starting phase of a potentially 30–40 year project — and getting it right from the start is key

Companies need to ensure that all relevant government ministries are ‘brought along’. For instance, ministries of women or human rights should be adequately involved as much as the ministry of natural resources. Companies can use leverage and contractual discussions as well as empower civil society to advocate for inclusive government engagement.

DEVELOPMENT: managing peak footprint as workforce and infrastructure activity peaks

The development phase is the most robust in terms of industrial activity. Companies should be working with experts to map the security challenges and needs, as well as capacities of security institutions and coordinating on this with the government.

Very often, the security needs of the project are actually dependent on the threat environment and not necessarily the phase of the project. In fragile and high-risk areas, companies need to do continuous conflict analysis because wider peace and conflict dynamics can shift quickly.

PRODUCTION: sustaining engagement and trust as operations stabilise.

Everything slows down in this phase: budget, margins and industrial activity. Community members might see a massive footprint in terms of the infrastructure or the site but the actual inputs in terms of employment are small, technical and maintenance-oriented. This might mean a smaller need for local staff, which can touch off social tensions.

By the time a project enters a production phase, there might be elections or a change of government, or other political shifts. Companies need to plan for this and ensure continuous government engagement on security and human rights.

DECOMMISSIONING: holding governance in place as institutional focus and resources wind down.

One of the most significant challenges here is corporate culture — by the time of decommissioning, there is much less corporate interest, budget and attention. The company needs to plan to ensure responsible engagement all the way to the end.

Each of these phases looks and is experienced differently by communities on the ground. The gap between what is visible during development and what is realised during production is one of the most consistent sources of misunderstanding in extractive sector governance globally. In Mtwara and Lindi, that gap was insufficiently explained, with consequences that the following section examines.

What This Meant for Mtwara and Lindi

When gas discoveries were announced in the early 2010s, communities in Mtwara and Lindi were surrounded by visible evidence of what appeared to be a single, accelerating development effort. The 532-kilometre Mtwara to Dar es Salaam pipeline, built primarily to transport existing onshore gas but designed with capacity for future offshore volumes, was under construction, bringing a significant influx of workers and economic activity to the region. Significant port upgrades were under way in Mtwara to support logistics for the exploration phase. From 2014 onwards, land was being acquired in Lindi for a proposed LNG terminal that had not yet reached a final investment decision, with approximately 450 families compensated as part of that process (TanzaniaInvest 2016; Tanzanian Affairs 2026). Meanwhile, offshore exploration was continuing in deep-water blocks many years away from production. Each activity served a different purpose on a different timeline, some linked to existing onshore production at Mnazi Bay and Songo Songo, while others were preparatory steps for the offshore LNG project, which was still decades away. Without clear public communication distinguishing between these activities, communities reasonably understood them as parts of a single development effort, one that signalled imminent and locally anchored benefits. Those expectations would prove difficult to recalibrate as the sector moved into quieter, less visible phases.

The political framing of Tanzania's gas potential reinforced these expectations further. Gas wealth became central to national development narratives, with the promise of transformative economic benefits presented without clear reference to the long timeframes that large-scale gas development actually requires.

The framing reflected the shorter timelines of political objectives rather than the longer realities of offshore gas development, which meant that public narratives were not anchored in the actual technical phases that large-scale gas projects require (Must and Rustad 2019). The expectations those narratives generated outlasted both the political cycles that shaped them and the visible phases of activity in the region.

Tanzania's offshore gas sector has not yet reached the production phase. In 2014 the government formally announced its intention to develop an LNG processing and export terminal, but more than a decade of negotiations, interruptions, and revised timelines followed.

Talks were suspended in 2019 to review production sharing agreements under President John Magufuli, before resuming in 2021 under President Samia Suluhu Hassan following President Magufuli's death in office.

Tanzania's extractive profile extends beyond gas. The country holds significant deposits of graphite, nickel, and rare earth elements, resources attracting increasing international interest in the context of the global energy transition and demand for critical raw materials.

The governance challenges documented in the gas sector have direct relevance to how those mineral developments are approached, as the communities, institutions, and patterns of engagement involved are often the same.

The lessons from Mtwara apply across extractive contexts, not only to LNG.

A framework agreement was signed with Shell and Equinor in June 2022, with officials stating a Final Investment Decision was expected by 2025 (TanzaniaInvest 2022; Tanzanian Affairs 2026). That target has since been revised.

At the time of writing in 2026, a realistic Final Investment Decision is not expected before 2028 to 2029. Front End Engineering Design, the detailed technical and commercial planning process required before construction can begin, will then require a further two to three years, followed by four to five years of construction of the processing plant. First LNG cargoes are not expected before the early 2030s at the earliest (Energy Capital and Power 2026; Tanzanian Affairs 2026).

From the first offshore discoveries in the early 2010s to first LNG production in the early 2030s is a development journey of approximately twenty years, one that spans multiple presidential terms and does not lend itself to the short-term political horizons within which gas development was publicly framed (Barlow 2024). Communities in Mtwara and Lindi have been living alongside this process throughout, with the expectations raised during the earlier phases still unresolved.

Tanzania's experience is also part of a broader regional picture. Across East Africa, several countries are at different stages of gas development, each navigating similar governance challenges around community engagement, benefit-sharing, and institutional coordination.

Kenya has identified offshore gas potential along its southern coast, and regional energy planning increasingly treats East Africa as an emerging gas province.

Of these regional contexts, Mozambique is the most directly relevant, both because it shares a border with the Mtwara region and because the governance dynamics surrounding its LNG development offer a direct parallel to the case documented here. Cabo Delgado in northern Mozambique hosts one of the largest LNG developments on the continent, led by Total and a consortium of international operators. In April 2021, Total declared *force majeure* and suspended operations following a major insurgent attack on Palma, in a context shaped by longstanding community grievances around marginalisation and the governance of gas revenues (BBC 2021; The East African 2021). The Mozambique case is examined further in the context of Mtwara's aftermath in *Section 7*.



A road sign in Palma, Mozambique indicates the directions for the Namoto border post to Tanzania. Mtwara is only an hour drive from the Mozambique border.

5. The Mtwara Gas Protests: Security Response and Community Impacts

The security governance landscape in Mtwara in the period leading up to the protests reflected the same institutional gaps documented in Section 2. The Tanzania Police Force, operating under the Ministry of Home Affairs and responsible for the preservation of peace, maintenance of law and order, and prevention of crime, was the primary security institution with a presence in the region. The Field Force Unit, a specialised division of the Tanzania Police Force trained for public order restoration, crowd control, and the management of civil unrest, was deployable on request from Dar es Salaam. Neither institution had a formally defined role within the extractive sector governance framework, and no coordination mechanism between security institutions and the Ministry of Energy or TPDC has been identified in the available literature for this period (CMI 2016; DIIS 2016). Civil society organisations and local media were active in raising questions about gas governance, and local radio stations in Mtwara had designed programmes to stimulate public debate about the sector and government decisions, but faced significant constraints in doing so. In the period leading up to the protests, the regional government moved to suppress some of those voices, branding certain coverage as seditious and arresting radio presenters and programme hosts (Media Council of Tanzania 2013). No formal channel existed through which community concerns about the gas sector could be raised with the institutions responsible for it. When tensions came to a head in May 2013, the only institutional response available was a security one.

In May 2013, the accumulated tensions described in the preceding sections came to a head. The immediate trigger was a parliamentary announcement confirming that, despite expressions of opposition from community leaders and residents, the Mtwara to Dar es Salaam pipeline would proceed as planned, transporting gas northward for national electricity generation. For communities who had anticipated that gas development would bring local processing facilities, an electricity plant, and sustained employment to the region, the announcement signalled that those prospects would not materialise.

A parliamentary statement revealed that only 0.3 per cent of revenues from offshore gas reserves would remain in the host regions of Mtwara and Lindi (The Citizen 2013; Policy Forum 2013). This figure had been poorly communicated throughout the preceding years and when it became public, it deepened existing frustrations. National newspapers had been documenting rising uncertainty in the region in the months prior (The Citizen 2012; Mwananchi 2012). Local leaders and community members raised concerns through public forums, but no institutional mechanism existed to provide a meaningful response.

Demonstrations broke out in Mtwara town and the neighbouring town of Mikindani and turned violent. The protests carried demands that extended well beyond the pipeline, encompassing local gas processing, electricity access, local governance reforms, and political accountability. The breadth of those demands reflected the absence of any dedicated institutional channel through which community concerns about the gas sector could be raised. In a context where TPDC functioned simultaneously as commercial operator and state representative, the state became the primary interlocutor for all grievances. The targets of the violence were consistent with this dynamic: government offices, party buildings, and the homes of government employees were attacked rather than company infrastructure. More than ten people were hospitalised, around 91 individuals were arrested, and estimated property losses reached over Tsh 1.5 billion, equivalent to approximately \$929,000 (Balile 2013; The East African 2013; AllAfrica 2013).



The government deployed the Tanzania Police Force, including the Field Force Unit from Dar es Salaam, using teargas and live ammunition to disperse crowds, secure administrative buildings, and restore movement along main roads. At least one death was officially confirmed, with local sources citing up to three fatalities. However, during fieldwork conducted between 2019 and 2022, multiple interlocutors independently described a significantly higher number of fatalities than those appearing in official accounts. Order was restored in the short term. However, the manner in which it was restored, through a heavily securitised response with no accompanying effort to address the underlying concerns, reinforced a fragile relationship between the state and the community defined by control rather than by development or dialogue.

The longer-term effects on community trust and engagement were equally significant. During fieldwork conducted between 2019 and 2022, some individuals disengaged immediately when the topic of gas was raised. Others described a reluctance to speak openly about their concerns, citing associations between vocal dissent and the risk of scrutiny or reprisal. Several interlocutors described unaccounted absences of individuals perceived to have been affiliated with or vocal about the protests in the period following the unrest. While these accounts could not be independently verified, their recurrence across different communities and interlocutors points to a broader pattern of fear and uncertainty that persisted long after the immediate unrest had subsided. The result was a significant deterioration in the conditions needed for constructive engagement between communities and the institutions responsible for the sector, with consequences that extended well into the period covered by this research (Sekumbo 2026).

What the Mtwara protests and their aftermath illustrate is that a security response which restores order without addressing underlying grievances does not resolve a conflict. It displaces it. The absence of dialogue initiatives, grievance mechanisms, or structured opportunities for community input meant that the conditions which had generated the unrest remained in place.

These conditions continued to shape the security environment in Mtwara in the years that followed, within a broader regional context that added further complexity to an already strained relationship between communities and state institutions.

6. The Aftermath: Institutional Uncertainty and Regional Security Dynamics

The institutional dynamics that had shaped community experiences during the protests did not resolve in their aftermath. Overlapping roles between TPDC, district authorities, and security actors continued to create uncertainty about where accountability lay and which channels communities could use to raise concerns. During fieldwork, interlocutors described a persistent sense of distance between communities and the institutions responsible for the sector, with gas-related issues remaining a sensitive subject in many conversations.

From 2017 onwards, the insurgency in Cabo Delgado in northern Mozambique added a further and compounding dimension to this picture. Mtwara and Cabo Delgado are deeply interconnected regions, linked through family ties, shared language, and longstanding trade networks. The escalation of the insurgency generated direct cross-border effects. In October 2020, fighters staged a confirmed attack in Mtwara Province, and Tanzanian security operations in the border area intensified in response (Daily News 2018; Mwananchi 2020; Policy Center 2022). The suspension of Total's operations in Palma in April 2021 further heightened regional awareness of the security risks associated with poorly governed extractive development. The parallels with Mtwara are direct: both regions are gas-rich, both carry long histories of peripheral development and unmet expectations, and both illustrate what can follow when the governance of extractive resources fails to account for the communities most directly affected.

The indirect costs of the security response extended well beyond the immediate events. In the months and years following the protests, communities described a sustained and heightened security presence in and around Mtwara, including ongoing deployments of the Field Force Unit, regular checkpoints, and increased monitoring of movement in and out of the town. These measures had concrete economic consequences in a region where farming, fishing, and cross-border trade were already the primary sources of livelihood for many households (Kamat et al. 2019; Nuhu 2023).

Fishing communities described restrictions on coastal movement that disrupted daily catch and market access. Traders operating across the Mozambican border reported checkpoint delays that made informal cross-border commerce increasingly difficult and, for some, no longer viable. Casual and seasonal workers, whose livelihoods depended on the flexibility of movement, found that flexibility curtailed. For many residents, the security apparatus that had been deployed to restore order became a persistent feature of life rather than a temporary measure, with costs that accumulated quietly over months and years. These patterns were further compounded by the regional instability that followed from 2017 onwards, examined in Section 7.

The governance implications are significant. The communities of Mtwara and Lindi that will be most directly affected by the next phase of Tanzania's LNG development have lived through more than a decade of accumulated tensions, limited institutional responsiveness, and a security environment shaped by both local protest and regional instability. These are the starting conditions for any future engagement. Conflict-sensitive governance of the LNG project will need to take that history into account from the outset as an active factor shaping how communities receive, interpret, and respond to the institutions and processes involved.

7. Mtwara and Tanzania's LNG Development: Update 2026

At the time of writing in 2026, Tanzania's offshore LNG project remains in its pre-investment phase, with a realistic Final Investment Decision not expected before 2028 to 2029. The communities of Mtwara and Lindi are now more than a decade into a development journey with expectations still unmet. The institutional conditions that contributed to the 2013 protests have not been fundamentally restructured, and land acquisition processes for the LNG terminal site in Lindi are ongoing (TanzaniaInvest 2016; Tanzanian Affairs 2026). The governance arrangements surrounding those processes will be an early test of whether the lessons documented in this case study have been absorbed.

However, the normative business and human rights landscape has continued to develop in parallel. In 2023, the Tanzanian government formally committed to developing a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights, building on a National Baseline Assessment published in 2017 that had documented significant gaps in the policy and institutional framework for implementing the UN Guiding Principles in the extractive sector (CHRAGG 2017; CHRAGG 2023; globalnaps.org 2024).

Notably, the governance gaps identified in that assessment are directly consistent with the dynamics documented in this case study, and the NAP's emerging priorities address precisely the conditions that shaped the 2013 events: mandatory community participation requirements before projects begin, accessible grievance mechanisms for extractive sector communities, revenue transparency and oversight, and explicit guidelines for security operations at extraction sites to prevent excessive use of force (CHRAGG 2023). At the time of writing, the plan is not yet finalised. The following section draws out the practical lessons for the actors now involved in that next phase.

8. Lessons Learned

The Mtwara case shows that inadequate community consultation and conflict-insensitive security governance create conditions for unrest, even in regions with no prior history of violence. The costs, borne by communities, companies, and governments alike, undermine project sustainability and are difficult to reverse. The lessons below are grounded in the evidence presented in this case study and draw on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs 2011), the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VPs 2000), and OECD guidance on stakeholder engagement in the extractive sector (OECD 2017).

A. Security Arrangements

Where security arrangements are designed for order restoration rather than conflict prevention, they risk deepening the conditions that generated unrest in the first place.

What are the conditions necessary for prevention-based security arrangements?

- Governments and state-owned enterprises should ensure that security actors operate with clearly distinct and publicly understood roles, with defined limits on the use of force and clarity between enforcement and administrative functions.
- Public and private security should have the necessary training and limits on use of force when it comes to security of extractive sites – as distinct from general law enforcement roles.
- Governments should ensure joined up approaches and regular communication and coordination between agencies.
- Companies should assess how public security forces are deployed in relation to their operations and actively support accessible, community-facing grievance mechanisms. The Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VPs) provide a practical framework for operationalising these distinctions. The [Security and Human Rights Toolkit](#) and the [Conflict Prevention Tool](#) offer further practical guidance for governments, state-owned enterprises, and companies seeking to apply conflict-sensitive security management in extractive contexts (DCAF, ICRC, and GCBHR 2020; DCAF, ICRC, AngloGold Ashanti and Queen's University 2022).

B. Securitisation and Governance Gaps

Large-scale extractive projects generate expectations that governance arrangements must be designed to manage from the outset.

- Governments should ensure that community consultation is meaningful and precedes key decisions, not a process designed to satisfy regulatory requirements after decisions have been taken.
- State-owned enterprises operating as both commercial operators and state representatives should be explicit about which institutional role they are performing at any given moment and which channels are available for different kinds of community concerns.

- Civil society organisations play a critical independent monitoring role: early and sustained documentation of governance gaps can surface grievances before they reach crisis point.

C. Livelihood Impacts

Security measures in extractive contexts carry socio-economic costs that accumulate quietly and are borne disproportionately by the most economically marginalised communities.

Companies should integrate livelihood impact assessment into pre-project planning and ongoing monitoring, with proactive engagement with fishing communities, informal traders, casual workers, and youth. The OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement in the Extractive Sector provides a practical framework for this work (OECD 2017).

For governments and state-owned enterprises, the lesson from Mtwara is that the communities of Mtwara and Lindi who will live alongside the next phase of Tanzania's LNG development carry the accumulated weight of everything that has happened since 2013. Conflict-sensitive governance of the next phase means taking that history seriously as an active factor shaping how communities receive, interpret, and respond to the institutions and processes involved.

Summary of Recommendations by Actor

Governments

- Establish meaningful community consultation requirements before key extractive project decisions are taken.
- Ensure clarity on the differences between security, administrative, and development functions, while ensuring a coordinated and joined-up approach between government agencies.
- Engage with the VPs, engage with companies and civil society in multi-stakeholder working groups that promote security and human rights.
- Communicate project timelines accurately and update communities promptly when timelines change, recognising that communities, particularly youth, make livelihood decisions premised on anticipated development cycles.
- Ensure NAP development reflects experiences such as those documented in this case study.

State-owned enterprises

- Define and communicate which institutional role governs each type of community-facing interaction, distinguishing between commercial, administrative, and state authority functions.
- Identify specific, accessible channels for community-facing engagement and grievance-related concerns that are clearly distinct from administrative and enforcement functions.
- Train community-facing staff to make these distinctions visible and legible at the community level.
- Engage with the VPs, engage with governments and civil society in multi-stakeholder working groups that promote security and human rights.

Companies

- Conduct human rights due diligence on public security deployments linked to operations.
- Support accessible, community-facing grievance mechanisms.
- Integrate livelihood impact assessment into project planning and monitoring, with specific attention to fishing communities, informal traders, and youth.
- Communicate project timelines and employment prospects accurately and through accessible channels, recognising that inaccurate or poorly communicated timelines generate livelihood costs that are difficult to reverse.
- Engage with the VPs and with governments and civil society in multi-stakeholder working groups that promote security and human rights.
- Use the [Security and Human Rights Toolkit](#) and [Conflict Prevention Tool](#) to guide responsible security management.

Civil society

- Maintain independent monitoring of governance gaps in extractive contexts.
- Document livelihood impacts systematically.
- Advocate for meaningful community participation in NAP development and extractive sector policy processes.
- Initiate engagement in the VPs, by reaching out to the Initiative's Secretariat and Civil Society Pillar and by exploring the tools and resources freely available such as:
 - [Guidance for Companies on Respecting the Rights of Human Rights Defenders.](#)
 - [Guidance for Companies Protecting and Respecting the Unique Needs and Rights of Women and Other Disadvantaged Groups;](#) and
 - [Report on Understanding the Unique Situation of Human Rights Defenders in Africa](#)

The communities of Mtwara and Lindi have lived alongside more than a decade of unmet expectations, institutional gaps, and a security environment shaped by both local protest and regional instability. That history is the starting condition for the next phase of Tanzania's LNG development. Conflict-sensitive governance is not a procedural requirement to be satisfied at the outset of a project. It is an ongoing commitment that must be reflected in how institutions communicate, how security is managed, and how communities are engaged at every stage of the development lifecycle.

9. Bibliography

- Balile, D. 2013. "Protests over Gas Pipeline in Mtwara Turn Violent, Military Deployed." *Daily News*, May 20.
- Barlow, Aidan. 2023. "The Temporalities of Extractive Frontiers: The Promises of Booms and Going Bust in the Tanzanian Gas Sector." *Geoforum* 138: 103664.
- BBC. 2021. "Mozambique: Total Halts Cabo Delgado LNG Operations After Insurgent Attacks." *BBC News*, March 15.
- CHRAGG (Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance). 2017. *National Baseline Assessment on Business and Human Rights in Tanzania*. Dar es Salaam: CHRAGG.
- CHRAGG. 2023. *National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights: Commitment and Priority Areas*. Dar es Salaam: CHRAGG.
- CMI (Chr. Michelsen Institute). 2016. *Tanzania's Petroleum Sector: Institutional Structures and Accountability Challenges*. Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute.
- Daily News. 2012. "Tanzania Discovers Offshore Gas Reserves." *Daily News*, September 12.
- Daily News. 2018. "Attacks Reported in Border Villages." *Daily News*, September 8.
- Darko, Emily. 2015. *Short Guide Summarising the Oil and Gas Industry Lifecycle for a Non-Technical Audience*. EPS-PEAKS Helpdesk Report. London: ODI.
- DCAF and ICRC. 2020. *Security and Human Rights Toolkit*. Geneva: DCAF and ICRC.
- DCAF. 2022. *Conflict Prevention Tool*. Geneva: DCAF.
- DIIS (Danish Institute for International Studies). 2016. *Tanzania's Gas Sector: Institutional Challenges and the Politics of Accountability*. Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies.
- The East African. 2013. "President Kikwete Addresses Nation Following Mtwara Protests." *The East African*, May 24.
- The East African. 2021. "Cabo Delgado Instability Raises Concerns for Regional Extractives." *The East African*, June 6.
- Energy Capital and Power. 2026. "Tanzania's \$42B LNG Project Enters Decisive Year as Partners Eye Host Agreement." February 6. <https://energycapitalpower.com/tanzanias-42b-lng-project-enters-decisive-year-as-partners-eye-host-agreement/>
- Gaddis, Isis, et al. 2015. "Natural Gas in Tanzania: Knowledge, Perceptions, and Expectations." Policy Research Working Paper 7330. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- globalnaps.org. 2024. "Tanzania National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights." Accessed 2024. <https://globalnaps.org/country/tanzania/>
- Hyden, Goran. 1980. *Beyond Ujamaa in Tanzania*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kamat, Sangeeta. 2017. *Peripheral Development and the Politics of Discontent in Tanzania's South*. Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House.
- Kamat, Sangeeta, et al. 2019. "Natural Gas Extraction and Community Development in Tanzania: Documenting the Gaps between Rhetoric and Reality." *The Extractive Industries and Society* 6 (3): 968–976.

Lal, Priya. 2010. *African Socialism in Postcolonial Tanzania: Between the Village and the World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lal, Priya. 2015. "Southern Tanzania and the Politics of Peripheral Development." *African Studies Review* 58 (3): 45–67.

Media Council of Tanzania. 2013. *Press Freedom Violations in Mtwara: Probe Report*. Dar es Salaam: Media Council of Tanzania.

Melyoki, Lemayon L. 2017. "The Governance of the Petroleum Sector in Tanzania: Institutional Arrangements and the Role of the National Oil Company." *The Extractive Industries and Society* 4 (1): 197–207.

Must, Elise, and Siri Aas Rustad. 2019. "'Mtwara Will Be the New Dubai': Dashed Expectations, Grievances, and Civil Unrest in Tanzania." *International Interactions* 45 (3): 500–531.

Mwananchi. 2012. "Public Dissatisfaction Over Pipeline Announcement." *Mwananchi*, December 2.

Mwananchi. 2020. "Security Incidents Near Tanzania-Mozambique Border." *Mwananchi*, August 9.

Nuhu, Said. 2023. "Natural Gas Extraction Activities and Host Communities Concerns in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Reflection on the Historical Riots in Mtwara, Tanzania." *Resources Policy* 86 (A).

OECD. 2017. *OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement in the Extractive Sector*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

Oxfam. 2015. *Human Rights Impact Assessment: Tanzanian Oil and Gas Sector*. London: Oxfam.

Policy Center for the New South. 2022. *Security Dynamics in the Tanzania-Mozambique Border Region*. Rabat: Policy Center for the New South.

Policy Forum. 2013. *Analysis of the Revenue Sharing Formula for Gas Discoveries in Tanzania*. Dar es Salaam: Policy Forum.

Poncian, Japhace. 2019. "Local Content Implementation in Tanzania's Extractive Sector." *African Review* 46 (1): 44–67.

Sekumbo, Genevieve J. 2026. "Young Tanzanians Are Fed Up with Not Getting a Slice of the Economic Action: Research." *The Conversation*, February 18. <https://theconversation.com/young-tanzanians-are-fed-up-with-not-getting-a-slice-of-the-economic-action-research-273818>

Seppälä, Pertti, M. Koda, and G. Hyden. 1998. *The Making of a Periphery: The Changing Geopolitics of Tanzania's Southern Highlands*. Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute.

TanzaniaInvest. 2016. "Tanzania LNG Project: Land Acquisition and Community Compensation." Accessed 2016. <https://www.tanzaniainvest.com/gas>

Tanzanian Affairs. 2026. "Energy and Minerals." *Tanzanian Affairs*, February 2026. <https://www.tzaffairs.org/2026/02/energy-minerals-36/>

The Citizen. 2012. "Estimated Gas Reserves Quadruple." *The Citizen*, September 14.

The Citizen. 2013. "Only 0.3 Per Cent of Gas Revenues to Remain in Host Regions." *The Citizen*, May 2013.

The Citizen. 2022. "Key Agreement on LNG Project in Sight." *The Citizen*, February 23.

TPDC (Tanzania Petroleum Development Corporation). 2016. *Annual Report on Operations and Infrastructure Planning 2015*. Dar es Salaam: TPDC.

United Nations. 2011. *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations Protect, Respect and Remedy Framework*. New York and Geneva: United Nations.

Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights. 2000. *The Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights*. London: Foreign and Commonwealth Office.



**DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security
Sector Governance**

Chemin Eugène-Rigot 2E CH-1202,
Geneva, Switzerland

www.dcaf.ch



Mtonya Ward, Mikindani, Tanzania