

## STORIES FROM THE FIELD

# Language Adaption Brings Local Partners Together in Luena

DRC

**The preparatory meetings and adapted language show the importance of engaging directly with local stakeholders to improve traceability and due diligence.**

Engaging stakeholders at the local level can be a delicate balancing act, as the ITSCI programme seeks to build inclusive partnerships to improve traceability and due diligence on the ground in tangible ways. Trust is a crucial element that contributes to successful implementation of the Programme in complex environments like the DRC's Haut-Lomami province. In Haut-Lomami, ITSCI staff have fashioned a creative and flexible method to strengthen local partnerships while overcoming an unexpected hurdle: language.

In Bukama territory, the local multi-stakeholder committee (CLS) was challenged by partners' perceptions of the term 'incident.' The ITSCI incident reporting mechanism, based on OECD Annex II risks, includes verification of information crosschecked by ITSCI field teams. Once confirmed, incidents are recorded and communicated at CLS meeting for their mitigation.



*Luena CLS members holding a meeting*

“ The preparatory meetings are an opportunity to discuss frankly and find quick solutions ”

SAEMAPE representative Delphin Kansans

However, in Luena, the word 'incident' unintentionally created the perception that CLS meetings were a forum to point fingers, rather than create solutions. As a result, some CLS members boycotted the meetings. In particular, incidents that involved state agents SAEMAPE or the Division of Mines were perceived as 'accusations' intended to punish a local agent. This threatened ITSCI's ability to coordinate with the same state services to resolve problems in the field.

The ITSCI team in Luena decided to tackle the tension head-on and rebuild these crucial relationships. The solution was the establishment of regular preparatory meetings, scheduled one week before each CLS meeting. At these meetings, ITSCI sits down with representative of SAEMAPE, the Division of Mines, and the Territory Administrator. Together, they talk through outstanding incidents, which are now referred to simply as "traceability."

The preparatory meetings made strides in ensuring state services were valued partners in resolving cases involving state agents at ITSCI mines. The preparatory meetings will surely remain an important element of the Luena CLS. By providing a collaborative setting where the local context of the traceability and due diligence system is understood by all partners, the innovations at the Luena CLS have fostered newfound trust.