

STATEMENT
THE ANDREW LEES TRUST (ALT UK)
ON THE RIO TINTO QMM MINE IN ANOSY, SOUTHEAST MADAGASCAR

In 1994, the environmental campaigner, [Andrew Lees](#), died whilst investigating the then proposed Rio Tinto mine in southern Madagascar. After his death the [Andrew Lees Trust](#) was set up in his name to deliver social and environmental projects in Southern Madagascar. The Trust has also, since that time, advocated the interests of Malagasy populations in defense of their indigenous rights to land and livelihoods.

In this, ALT has contested the premise of the Rio Tinto QMM mine, which was advanced on the basis of erroneous science, and a utilitarian optic that asserted the southeast littoral forests would be gone in twenty years due to local practices. The company's approach to forest loss was not only questionable on a scientific research level (Virah-Sawmy, 2009) but also 'othered' the local Antanosy people and their customary management of natural resources (Seagle, 2012; Scholsberg, 2013; Mohai et al., 2009) in order to justify the extraction of 6000 hectares of mineral sands along the south east coastline.

The company claimed that the mine would be the best solution for poverty reduction in the region. This outcome has yet to be demonstrated to villagers whose lands, livelihoods, and access to natural resources have been deleteriously impacted by the company's approach and practices, including by poor communications, a failed compensation programme and flawed biodiversity offsetting programme (Harbinson, 2007; Huff, 2016; Hai-Tsinjo Consulting, 2008; Ballet and Randrianalijaona, 2014; Franchi et al., 2013; Kraemer, 2012; Kill et al., 2016; ALT/PANOS, 2009).

There also remain outstanding questions about whether the Malagasy nation as a whole is benefitting sufficiently from the fiscal arrangements of the project (Harbinson, 2007; Parker, 2004).

ALT has recognised the need for and made significant efforts to amplify the voices of Malagasy communities and the challenges they face in daily life. ALT projects in the south of Madagascar have attempted to open up [local people's perspectives on poverty and the environment](#) and these have touched on the impacts of the mine.

In both Madagascar and the UK, ALT has actively sought dialogue, and worked with other organisations like [Friends of the Earth](#) to maintain pressure on Rio Tinto to listen to the difficulties and views expressed by the Antanosy people. Between 2011-2013 ALT joined with international researchers and other NGO representatives to lobby Rio Tinto for improved social engagement with communities in Anosy. ALT focused specifically on advocating for increased communications and fair compensation from a human rights perspective.

ALT takes an ethical stance with regard to the mine. ALT does not endorse Rio Tinto or the QMM mine, has resisted all attempts at co-option and has never been engaged by QMM in conservation planning; it is not a stakeholder in QMM's Biodiversity Action Plan. Indeed, ALT sees the restricted access to and loss of indigenous forest, of its flora and fauna, and the *irreducibly social goods* of the natural environment (Taylor, 1990) to be detrimental to the physical and spiritual wellbeing of local populations, and to the planet as a whole.

The views of The Andrew Lees Trust (ALT UK) are entirely independent from and do not necessarily reflect or represent the views or positions of any partner organisation of ALT.

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