“Mining and Communities” is a pedagogical game designed to be played by government and NGO representatives who are interested in developing a negotiation framework that is based on a real understanding of community concerns and which will, therefore, ideally deliver more equitable outcomes for communities affected by mining activity. It might also be used as a university teaching tool or by those interested in learning more about the relations between communities, mining companies and other groups.

The two regions of West Papua and Papua New Guinea were selected as case studies, illustrating comparative differences in governance, land rights and attitudes towards regulating the mining industry. The case studies were written with a focus on understanding the social experience of mining with the aim of uncovering some common themes or patterns in how people are affected throughout the life of a mine.

The design of the Game is based on liberative pedagogy, which has been shown to be an effective educational approach to bring in marginalized voices, and on the concept of ‘theatre for development’ as a tool for science communication.

The game consists of two parts in the life of a mine in the hypothetical state of Minadoro: Part I takes place during the construction of the mine site and the development of a mining town, while Part II takes place during the mineral extraction phase. Participants take on roles as members of families belonging to one of two different communities—one that has rights to the land on which the mine is situated and another community that lives further downriver from the mine site. The simulation strives to facilitate a better understanding of the complex nature of community engagement and to act as a catalyst for debate: the discussion following game play will allow participants to raise similar or different issues within their own regions, and to analyse how these can be more effectively negotiated.