Stakeholder identification and analysis can be a challenging exercise. It is at times not sufficient to focus only on the communities and other stakeholders that are actually impacted by the project, but also those who may perceive that they are adversely impacted or who consider themselves the representatives of impacted people.

Glamis Gold Ltd. experienced such a situation in the development of the Marlin gold mine, which is located in two municipalities in Guatemala. About 87 percent of the property, including the ore bodies and processing facilities, are located in San Miguel, whose population is more than 95 percent indigenous (Mam). The remaining 13 percent of the property, occupied by the mine’s administrative facilities, are located in Sipacapa, whose population is more than 77 percent indigenous (Sipakapense).

Early stakeholder analysis led the company to focus the initial consultation process on the municipality of San Miguel and three small villages where the ore bodies and mine processing facilities would be located. Consultations and community development efforts were less intensive in Sipacapa, because most of the villages were at some distance from the mine and its transportation routes. However, local activist and political interests in Sipacapa linked with national and international NGOs mounted a campaign against the Marlin project with the support of some members of the Catholic Church. The result was that the opposition to the mine was centered in Sipacapa, a municipality only minimally affected by the mine. While independent assessments determined that Sipacapa was not at significant risk for either health effects or surface water pollution, the opposite impression among local residents led them to protest the project and to question the consultation process.