

# Meet the actors

Press conference style interviews exploring different perspectives on illegal and predatory mining, environmental justice, and human rights.



## CHARACTER 'ACTOR' LIST

- 1. Afro-Colombian cocoa farmer**
  - Concerned for the river, land, and the people.
- 2. Emberá community member**
  - Concerned for the river and the cultural heritage.
- 3. Gold Miner**
  - Working in mining out of necessity, paying armed groups.
- 4. Predatory Miner**
  - Part of a criminal network, illegal miner, exploiting abandoned land, using fake companies to sell gold.
- 5. Photojournalist**
  - Neutral observer, capturing injustice without direct intervention.
- 6. Government Representative**
  - Wants to help but faces funding and capacity issues.
- 7. River Guardian**
  - Responsible for speaking up for the River Atrato.
- 8. International Gold Trader**
  - Buys gold to sell on for jewellery/technology; struggles with supply chain ethics.
- 9. Manufacturer**
  - Manages a gold jewellery factory in India.
- 10. Buyer for a High Street Jewellers in the UK**
  - Responsible for choosing and buying jewellery stock.

# 1. AFRO-COLOMBIAN COCOA FARMER

## Backstory:

You are a cocoa farmer living along the River Atrato. Your family has grown cocoa for generations. You rely on the river to transport your cocoa beans to be weighed and sold. Recently, illegal mining has polluted the river, making transport dangerous and damaging your crops and livelihood.

## Motivation:

You want to protect the river not only for your health and community, but because it is essential for your way of life and survival as a farmer.

## Key Talking Points:

- “The river is our road. Without it, we can’t survive.”
- “Cocoa is our life—but pollution ruins the land and the water we depend on.”
- “We are farmers, not miners. We want to protect the land, not destroy it.”
- “We feel powerlessness, we have no one to turn to for help”



# 2. EMBERÁ COMMUNITY MEMBER

## Backstory:

You represent the Emberá Indigenous community living near the River Atrato. Your people have deep spiritual and cultural connections to the land and water.

## Motivation:

You want to protect your people’s rights, culture, and traditions from being destroyed by mining, displacement, and violence.

## Key Talking Points:

- “The miners don’t cooperate with us, they just want to extract more and more until there is nothing left”
- “We are being pushed further away from the river into the forest.”
- “A lot of the younger generation are moving away”
- “We are losing our land, our language, and our traditions because of mining.”
- “Our community deserves respect, to be treated with dignity, and the right to stay on our land.”





### 3. GOLD MINER

**Backstory:**

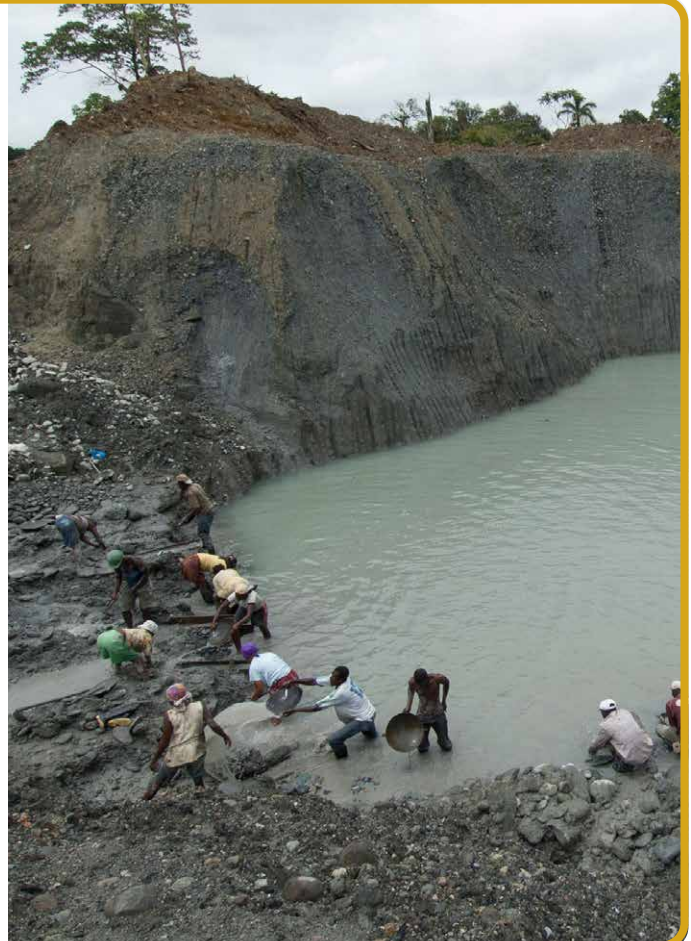
You work in legal mining. You don't love it, but there are no other jobs. You have a family to feed and no real support from the government.

**Motivation:**

You want people to understand you're not a bad person—you're surviving in a tough situation.

**Key Talking Points:**

- "I know mining hurts the land, but what choice do we have?"
- "The armed groups force us to pay for 'protection.' We don't want violence either."
- "I would leave mining if there were alternative jobs or ways of making money"
- "I would like to work in construction, building sustainable houses"



### 4. PREDATORY MINER

**Backstory:**

You are part of a criminal group that profits from predatory illegal mining. You use heavy machinery to extract as much gold as possible after areas are abandoned, with no concern for the environment or communities.

**Motivation:**

You care about fast profit. You use fake documents to "legalise" gold and sell it through international jewellers in big cities like Medellín and Bogotá.

**Key Talking Points:**

- "The land was already damaged. We just take what's left."
- "Business is business. If we didn't take the gold, someone else would."
- "We have ways to make the gold look legal."
- "It's supply and demand. People want gold. We supply it – I don't think consumers care about how it gets to their shops."



## 5. PHOTOJOURNALIST

### Backstory:

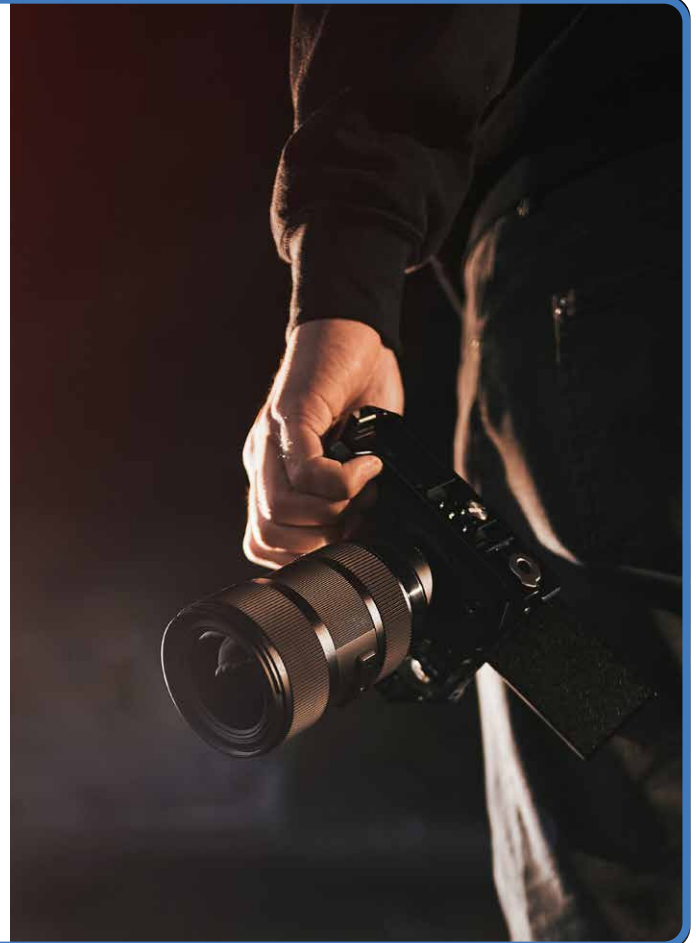
You are a journalist documenting the situation in Chocó. You aim to tell the world what's happening without getting directly involved—but it's not always easy.

### Motivation:

You want to stay neutral but feel the emotional pull to intervene when witnessing injustice.

### Key Talking Points:

- "My job is to show the truth—even when it's tough to listen to peoples stories – it can be heartbreaking for me"
- "Sometimes I want to help directly, but my power is in telling the story."
- "If we don't share these images and voices, the world will forget."



## 6. GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVE

### Backstory:

You work for the government, trying to enforce environmental laws, but resources are limited and corruption makes it difficult.

### Motivation:

You want to help, but face huge challenges, including lack of funding, safety risks, and political obstacles.

### Key Talking Points:

- "We want to protect the river, but it's not that simple"
- "Stopping illegal mining requires cooperation from all the different actors—and resources we don't always have."
- "We are trying. Change takes time."





## 7. RIVER GUARDIAN

### Backstory:

You are one of the Guardians of the Atrato, appointed to defend the river's rights after the 2016 court ruling. You work with no salary and face threats for speaking out.

### Motivation:

You are fighting to make the legal victory real, without resources or full government support.

### Key Talking Points:

- "We are the river's voice, but we are ignored."
- "Without funding and protection, it's hard to do our work safely."



## 8. INTERNATIONAL GOLD TRADER

### Backstory:

You work for a company that buys gold from miners to sell on to exporters and manufacturers. You know there are ethical issues but argue that supply chains are complex.

### Motivation:

You want to protect your company's reputation but also show willingness to improve.

### Key Talking Points:

- "We follow international laws and ask for paperwork—but it's incredibly hard to trace every gram of gold."
- "I'm just a middleman in a whole big chain of people – everyone is looking for their share"
- "We are open to improving, but it's a global challenge, not just our problem."

## 9. MANUFACTURER

### Backstory:

You manage a jewellery factory in India, turning raw gold into rings, earrings, and necklaces. Your factory buys gold from international suppliers. Your job is to make sure that your workers make beautiful products to meet customer demand.

### Motivation:

You want the business to succeed and keep workers employed. You care about craftsmanship, and your workers, but you don't have any control over how the gold was originally mined.

### Key Talking Points:

- "We trust that the gold we buy is legal and has been checked by our suppliers."
- "We are focused on design, quality, and meeting customer orders."
- "We rely on others to make sure the gold is ethically sourced before it reaches us."
- "If gold became more expensive, I might need to pay my workers less."



## 10. BUYER FOR A HIGH STREET JEWELLERS IN THE UK

### Backstory:

You are responsible for choosing and buying the jewellery that will be sold in high street stores across the UK. You focus on quality, price, and what will appeal to customers. Sometimes you ask the manufacturer about ethical sourcing, but your priority is keeping up with trends, competition and customer demand.

### Motivation:

You want to keep your shop successful and affordable for consumers. You are aware that ethical issues exist but are under pressure to find attractive products at the right price.

### Key Talking Points:

- "Our customers mostly care about price and design first—but ethical sourcing is becoming more important to them."
- "We rely on our suppliers to meet ethical standards. We can't check every piece personally."
- "It's got to be the customers that demand fairer products, we are willing to listen if they do—but change takes time and costs money."

## Questions prompts for specific 'actors' (for the Reporters)

### **AFRO-COLOMBIAN COCOA FARMER**

- How has mining affected your ability to farm and sell your cocoa?
- What would you like the government or international community to do to help you?

### **GOLD MINER**

- Why did you choose mining, even though it harms the environment?
- What risks do you face every day in your work?
- If you had a different way to support your family, what would you do?

### **GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVE**

- What is the biggest challenge in stopping illegal mining operations?
- How are you supporting the River Guardians and local communities?
- Why do some people feel the government has not done enough?

### **INTERNATIONAL COMPANY REPRESENTATIVE (JEWELLERY/TECH)**

- How do you trace where your gold comes from?
- Why isn't it easier to guarantee that gold is ethically sourced?
- What would motivate big companies to make faster changes?

### **PHOTOJOURNALIST**

- How do you stay neutral when you see suffering?
- What impact do you hope your photographs will have?
- Have you ever felt you should intervene rather than just document?

### **PREDATORY MINING OPERATOR (CRIMINAL NETWORK)**

- How do you justify exploiting land and communities for profit?
- What do you say to people who call your business criminal?
- What would happen if the global demand for gold suddenly dropped?

### **EMBERÁ COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE**

- How has displacement changed your community's way of life?
- What does protecting the river mean for your identity as an Emberá person?

### **RIVER GUARDIAN (GUARDIAN DEL ATRATO)**

- What challenges do you face as a Guardian without funding or protection?
- Why is it important for the river to have legal rights?
- What would help you do your job better and stay safe?

## **MANUFACTURER**

**(JEWELLERY MAKER / GOLDSMITH)**

- How much do you know about where the gold you use comes from?
- Is it possible to design jewellery only using fair trade or ethical gold?
- Would you be willing to pay more for gold that is proven ethical?

## **BUYER FOR A HIGH STREET SHOP**

**(UK RETAILER)**

- How important is ethical sourcing when you choose what to sell?
- What pressures do you face from customers or the company?
- Would you stop buying jewellery from suppliers linked to illegal mining?

### **Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund**

SCIAF is the official relief and development agency of the Catholic Church in Scotland and a proud member of the Caritas family.  
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Scottish Charity No: SC012302. Company No: SC197327.  
Photos by Steve Cagan, James Cave (SCIAF).