

DIALOGUE ON DEVELOPMENT AND THE MINING SECTOR

On May 22, CCIC convened a dialogue of 20 people from 14 organizations on the mining sector and development focussing on NGO partnerships and engagement with mining companies.

The group identified some common starting points, which included:

- We give priority to the **rights, interests and well being of our civil society partners** in the South, local communities and marginalized peoples above all else and seek to benefit them through our approaches and practices of development;
- We agree that given the size and significance of Canada's extractive industry, its often poor track record on environmental, social and human rights fronts and its increasing presence in countries where we work, as international development actors **we need to engage with the issue of the impacts of the mining sector on development** ;
- We believe it is ultimately through the strengthening of developing countries' legislative, regulatory, economic and social frameworks and **some form of regulatory mechanism within Canada** that Canadian mining companies working abroad can be held accountable for their practices;
- We share a common **concern over the global trend to promote economic growth as the main driver of development** and the current government's position linking Canadian commercial interests with development interests in the South.

In the course of the discussion, participants identified some priority questions for further exploration:

- What is the appropriate use of public funds in relation to engagement with the mining sector?
- In the absence of a shared analysis and common strategy, is a diversity of approaches helpful or is it undermining each other's work?
- What constitutes an effective due diligence process in relation to choosing corporate partners and engagement strategies?
- What are the ways organizations can carry out their responsibility to bear witness to what they observe in relation to the impact of the activities of mining companies?
- How is the principle of free prior informed consent (FPIC) understood and applied by communities, mining companies and NGOs?

Many of the participants agreed it would be useful to continue the dialogue and identified some potential next steps:

- Holding a learning session on where the accountability agenda with the extractive sector is going and what are the barriers and opportunities
- Holding a learning session on FPIC - the dimensions of FPIC and the barriers and challenges in implementation
- Developing some case studies of different modalities of engagement with mining companies

A full report of the meeting will be available in June.