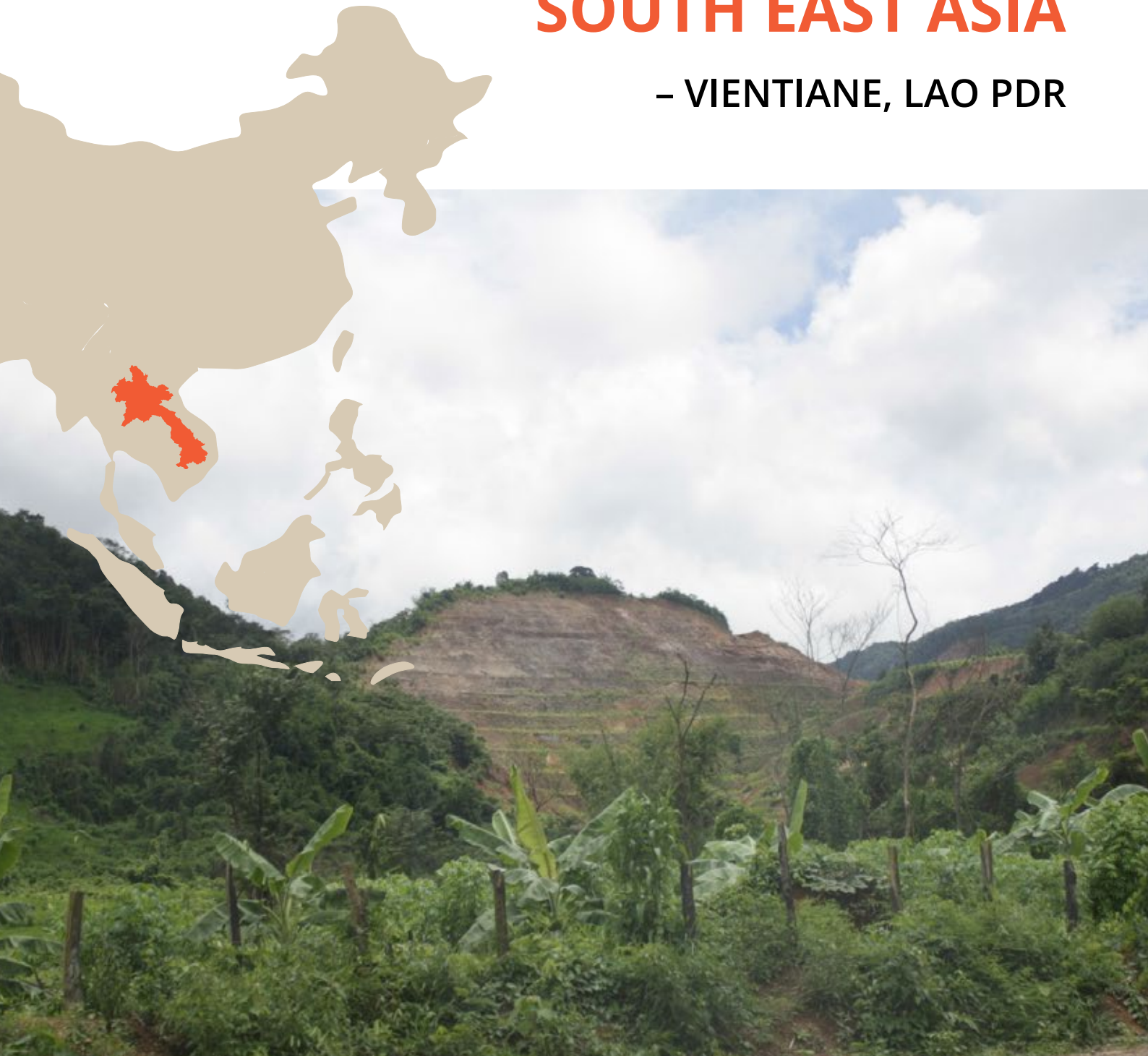
MINING AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS PRACTITIONER ROUNDTABLE: REPORT FROM SOUTH EAST ASIA

– VIENTIANE, LAO PDR



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OVERVIEW

On 25 and 26th November 2013, the Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining's Community Relations Research Unit (ComRel) at The University of Queensland (UQ), with Insitu Development Consulting (IDC) and the International Finance Corporation's (IFC) Compliance Adviser Ombudsman (CAO) hosted the first South East Asia Mining Industry Community Relations (CR) Practitioner Roundtable. The two day event was facilitated by Dr Deanna Kemp (UQ), Dr John Owen and Ms Vimala Dejvongsa (IDC). The Roundtable event hosted eighteen delegates with representatives from Newcrest (Indonesia), MMG (Lao PDR), Pan Aust (Lao PDR), Oceana Gold (The Philippines), Dominion (Thailand), Robust Resources (Indonesia), AngloAmerican (Indonesia) and Angkor Gold (Cambodia). A representative from Mongolia (Rio Tinto) also participated.

This report provides a high-level summary of the two-day discussion. It has been written under the Chatham House Rule whereby comments are not attributed to individuals. Participating CR practitioners had an opportunity to comment on this report prior to its public release.

As a ComRel initiative, the aim of the CR Roundtable was to provide an opportunity for CR practitioners from South East Asia to share experiences with each other, and with a global audience through the production of a public report. Global debates on the social aspects of mining rarely include a collective practitioner voice, even though this group of people is responsible for managing and/or implementing key elements of emerging global norms, standards and guidelines. While many companies seek input from their CR practitioners during the development of these standards, it is also important to provide a professional perspective that reaches beyond corporate boundaries. A collective practitioner voice is also a key indicator that CR is emerging as a professional area of work. That this perspective is included in global debates is an indicator that it is accepted as such.

The first Roundtable was hosted in South East Asia following several collaborative research projects undertaken by ComRel and IDC. Having worked extensively in other regions of the world, it was clear that South East Asia does not have a strong CR practitioners' network to support the work of professionals in this region. Emerging practitioner networks are observable elsewhere, including Latin America, through Chile's Catolica University's post-graduate program and conferences such as SR Mining. The work of Synergy Global and Wits University now supports an Africa-based network of CR professionals, and the Papua New Guinea (PNG) Chamber of Commerce hosts an annual CR Forum for social practitioners. In Australia, CSRM continues to serve as the world's largest dedicated centre for research and education on the social aspects of mining. Australia also has a number of well established forums available to CR practitioners, including the Minerals Council of Australia (MCA) annual sustainable development conference and UQ's Graduate Certificate of Community Relations in Natural Resource Management, which is entering its seventh year.

This Roundtable was funded through a small grant provided by the IFC CAO. CSRM and IDC provided in-kind staff time to develop the Roundtable process and associated materials, and write this report. Companies supported their nominated practitioners to travel to participate in the Roundtable event.

PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

Ahead of the Roundtable, practitioners were asked to complete an online survey, comprising 32 questions. Findings provided a group profile, which was presented in the first Roundtable session.

Survey data indicated that all participants worked at projects or operations that were either mining or exploring for gold, copper and/or silver.

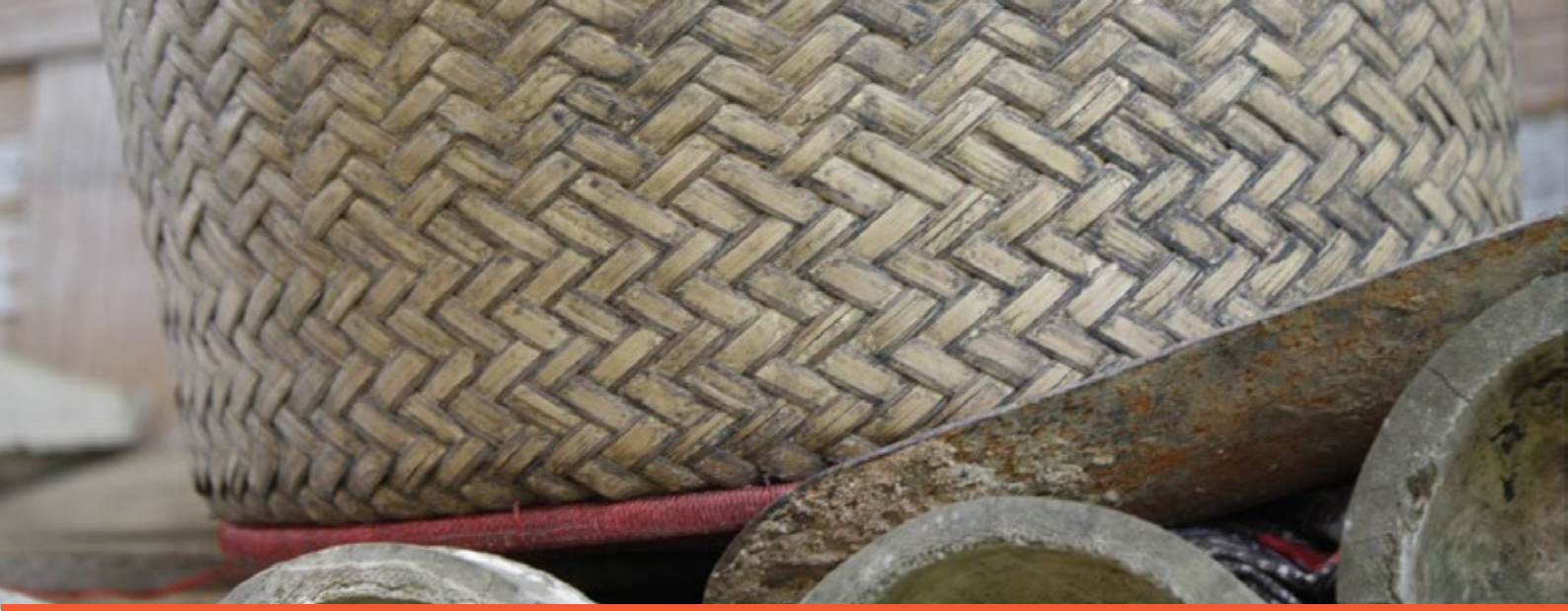
While the vast majority of participants had site-based roles, those who were based in regional offices were also exposed to site-based practice.

In terms of educational background, one third of respondents indicated that they had a social science background (i.e. development studies, psychology, sociology and/or political science). Another third had technical backgrounds (i.e. geology, hydrology or engineering) and the remainder classified themselves as having a business and/or administrative background. In terms of current responsibilities, the group selected 'community development', 'community relations', 'complaints and grievance management' and 'staff supervision' among their primary responsibilities. On average, participants said that they spend 60 per cent of their time in the office, and 40 per cent in the community. The majority of participants (70 per cent) indicated that they operate according to a formal plan of action. However, many participants indicated that a large proportion of their work remains ad hoc and reactive.

The survey data confirms that participants have regular interaction with a broad range of other functional areas, primarily including human resources, environment and supply, and exploration. Regular interaction was not as strong with technical departments, such as mine planning, minerals processing and the General Manager/Mine manager's office. More than 60 per cent of respondents indicated that their work is not well understood or valued by other parts of the business.

Participants were, on the whole, confident with their own level of knowledge, and the majority reported that, by and large, the company was performing well in terms of overall social performance. In addition to providing a general assessment, participants were asked about particular performance areas. The group ranked their operation's performance in community development, local supply, grievance handling, stakeholder engagement and cultural heritage as 'strong'. Identified areas for improvement included gender issues and engagement with women, where 67 per cent of respondents indicated that improvement is needed. The majority of participants also indicated that performance was either 'poor' or 'needs improvement' in their work with vulnerable peoples. Of those respondents who rated their company's social performance in resettlement, one third indicated that their performance in this area needs improvement.

Many of these results became key topics of discussion over the course of the Roundtable. However, presenting this data on the first day meant that some areas of commonality were 'on the table' from the very outset.



THE ROUNDTABLE PROCESS

Knowledge about CR as a professional domain of work is largely normative, in that there is much written about what should be done, but far less is known about how the work is actually practised. There is much to learn about the influence and effectiveness of practitioners operating in this domain of work, including their needs, concerns and ideas for the future of mining, community relations and development. As such, the Roundtable process was not designed as a training session, where facilitators impart information and 'teach' participants. In fact, the process was designed to achieve the exact opposite; that is, to surface information on particular topics, and to discuss practice from the perspective of practitioners.

Discussion centred on six specific themes including: (i) the emergence of CR as a professional field of practice; (ii) land access and acquisition; (iii) company-community conflict; (iv) community development and (v) organisational dynamics. An impromptu discussion was also held on the topic of gender, given the survey results and a request from the group to discuss the topic. While the discussion has not been written up as a stand-alone topic, points made by practitioners that related to gender have been incorporated throughout this write up. From the discussion though, it was clear that participants did not have access to tools and resources to properly characterise gender issues and dynamics related to mining. The Facilitators will, in the future, consider incorporating a stand-alone gender and mining discussion session.

Facilitators stimulated discussion by posing a series of questions in the plenary session, and conducting structured, small group break-out discussions. Prepared scenarios were introduced at different points in the process to enable participants to engage with tangible, yet hypothetical case examples. Given that the Roundtable was a closed, private sector, practitioner-only event, the forum provided a relatively 'safe space' for CR practitioners to talk freely, amongst a group of peers. For most practitioners, this was their first opportunity to engage in a dialogue about the profession.

The role of the Facilitators was first to 'frame' each topic by providing an overview of global issues, patterns, perspectives and examples of practice in different contexts.

The following sections provide a sense of the discussion under each of the above-listed topics. Common themes are drawn out in the Conclusion.

[1] Many participants were representing companies that were still in exploration and indicated that resettlement was not relevant to current activities.

TOPIC 1: GLOBAL MINING, LOCAL COMMUNITY RELATIONS

The striking feature about this discussion was the number of common issues identified across diverse contexts. There were vast differences, for example, in proximity and size of local communities, from the nomadic herders of Mongolia to the fence line communities in Indonesia. Another key difference related to freedom of expression, where there was a stark contrast between Indonesia and the Philippines, for example, and Lao PDR. Practitioners were also working in different stages of the mine development cycle. Despite this diversity, practitioners made a range of common observations about their profession, and the industry within which they work.

THESE INCLUDED:

- Globally, mining does not have a good reputation, which makes local-level engagement a challenge from the outset. Regardless of whether communities want mining to proceed, practitioners explained that most people are inherently cautious of large companies. Mistrust is most acute where there is a history of forced resettlement or compulsory land acquisition by previous owners or the government.
- Participants indicated that the degree of difficulty in CR work increases over time; that is, as an operation advances along its mine life cycle. As such, companies need to be more willing to build CR teams and support them to adapt to increasing levels of complexity. The construction phase was identified as the most difficult and disruptive for local communities. This stage was seen as the point at which a company could invest significantly in CR – or conversely – where negative legacy issues start to accumulate.
- Companies enter into different types of agreements with local communities and governments. These agreements can determine the parameters that CR practitioners then operate within. Agreements were described as being imperfect mechanisms because different parties do not always share the same understanding or expectations around the meaning or content of agreements.
- The level of trust that a local community has in the government and or in traditional authorities also influences CR practice. In contexts of low trust, greater pressure rests on CR practitioners and they are not often given adequate resources and support from senior levels of the organisation. The relationship with local government was seen to be different in each of the contexts represented, however it was agreed that despite these differences maintaining a strong working relationship with local government was an important priority throughout the region.
- Local government was considered to be integral to CR practice. Practitioners explained that when government/external affairs and community relations do not work together on the ground, problems emerge. They indicated that the synergies and challenges between these two functional areas need to be much better attended to by operations, corporate offices and the international community. Practitioners also spoke of an alignment of their company's community development work to national poverty alleviation goals within a developing country context.

- Practitioners expressed a view that some of the key concepts that drive their work, such as 'sustainable development' and 'corporate social responsibility' need further discussion with staff working on the ground. Many agreed that these terms mean different things to different people and greater clarity is required. Practitioners observed that senior managers, for example, equate 'sustainability' with a 'sustainable business' (i.e. uninterrupted production).
- Participants indicated that the term 'stakeholders' can sometimes be too general for the work that they do. While all the mines represented had a similar 'set' of stakeholders, including the company representatives, governments, civil society, local communities, the media and so forth, in each operating context, there was a different emphasis. Practitioners lamented that international guidance provides few tools for navigating local-level interactions with (often corrupt) local governments, local elites and the so called "community". They said that more support should be provided to particularise international standards, rather than producing more of the same.
- The most common metaphor used by the group was CR as a "bridge" between company and community, and between government and company. In later sessions, those in management and supervisory positions also described their work as providing an "internal bridge" between CR field staff and senior management for information, communication and data to and from the field.
- There was a strong view among participants that other parts of the industry do not appreciate the type of stress that CR practitioners are under, particularly local staff who live and work in the host community. It was explained that while CR work never stops, there are few supports for local practitioners in handling their work and ensuring that they do not burn out. Practitioners explained that companies simply expect local people to handle it, like any other professional, but they do not account for the emotional and psychological stress that goes hand in hand with the type of work.
- One of the clearest statements made by practitioners on Topic 1 was that the most significant professional challenge comes not from stakeholders, but from within their respective organisations. Internal communication was identified as the most difficult challenge to overcome. Other internal challenges included lack of respect from other parts of the business, lack of inclusion in decision-making processes and the "blinkered" approach that many senior managers have to production priorities at the expense of relationships with local people.

TOPIC 2: LAND ACCESS AND ACQUISITION

Participant evaluations indicated that on this topic in particular, more time is needed to surface and then discuss the full raft of land-related issues.

COMMON QUESTIONS AND OBSERVATIONS ON THIS TOPIC ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- Boundary issues can be problematic in communities that have not previously had to formally define hard land boundary lines, and/or where boundaries and territories have been contested. Where communities are forced to be specific about boundary lines, practitioners noted that conflict often ensues, and usually just at the time when the company wants land access urgently. Practitioners emphasised that early, careful work relating to land is important to building a stable environment for operations.
- One practitioner suggested that companies need to think broadly about land tenure in poor areas and to not apply the same logic they would in areas with formal and transparent land tenure systems. For example, in some locations, there is an incentive to under-report the size of land in order to minimise land tax. This does not mean that connection to land, land use or even land ownership is limited to the amount of land that is formally registered. Formal records alone cannot be relied upon to compensate communities for loss of land. Doing so risks livelihoods, relationships and the potential for conflict escalation.
- On a similar point, one participant said to be careful not to assume that governments are blocking formalisation of land tenure because they do not have the will, or capacity. The participant explained that in one area of work, local government had delayed a land tenure mapping process because they knew that once formal land title was provided, people would borrow against their land. According to the participant, local government authorities were concerned that borrowers could then be vulnerable to unscrupulous money lenders. Landowners would most certainly lose their land because of a lack of ability to re-pay the loan. Livelihoods would be lost, and social instability and disorder would ensue.
- CR practitioners indicated that landowners did not always understand the consequences of selling or leasing their land to make way for mining. During the Roundtable, practitioners gave examples of local landowners getting angry because they did not understand that foreigners would come and get jobs on their land, and they would miss out. It wasn't until after compensation was paid, and spent, that locals understood what their future might look like.
- Similarly, the concept of 'local-local' employment was problematic in some locations where historical inter-community conflict meant that (prior) landowners did not want another local group working on "their land". Practitioners said they do not need guidance on leading or best practice approaches to such challenges, but guidance on how to navigate particular problems and to assist practitioners in determining the best pathway forward.

INTERNAL ISSUES RELATING TO LAND WERE AS FOLLOWS:

- Above all, participants said that resources need to be invested early in the mine life cycle to build knowledge and understanding of land, and associated beliefs and stories of place. Participants said that early knowledge is not often built, or built well enough. This gap means that companies do not always account for local understandings of land, including cultural connection, use of and ownership over land.
- Practitioners discussed at some length, the challenge of resourcing studies at the exploration stage, when the chances of progressing to the next stage of development are minimal/uncertain. Practitioners noted that the industry needed to develop a set of 'triggers' or indicators that would prompt detailed socio-economic studies. Representatives from some of the larger companies indicated that they had these sorts of systems in place.

- Related to the point above, several participants highlighted that there is often a "disconnect" between social mapping and land mapping. Several participants described instances where GIS mapping was not connected to social mapping, including for example livelihoods and genealogies. This meant that when land was marked for ground disturbance, it was not possible to connect land and people (without having to reconcile different databases). As a result, practitioners do not always have the necessary information to undertake consultations regarding land access.
- The Mongolian participant highlighted that international standards for resettlement did not account for nomadic lifestyle of herders, and needed significant adaptation to be more useful in these types of situations. While Mongolia provided a vastly different land use context to the South East Asian countries, the point about the urgent need to 'localise' international standards was consistent with other participants.
- Lack of social information relating to particular locations often means that CR practitioners do not have a full history of land-related conflict. Practitioners emphasised that they need more than 'point in time' assessments, but detailed historical information so as to make sense, for example, of overlapping land claims that could have been known if more resources were invested during the initial social baseline or impact assessment. They emphasised that companies must invest resources early in order to build knowledge and understanding before the commencement of ground disturbance activities, not build it "on the run" when there is pressure to gain land access and the community is undergoing rapid change.
- Several practitioners said that early on in the mine life cycle, it is the company that knows the value of land. It is not until later, when the company has sunk its capital and is in a more vulnerable position, that a community becomes more attuned to the value of land to the company, particularly under an expansion scenario. Unless a company has been fair from the outset, practitioners explained that communities will leverage their position by using legacy issues, particularly if a company was not fair in the early stages of land access and acquisition.
- Most CR practitioners indicated that they were not included in the decision-making processes about land access and acquisition. They were included once a decision had been made; that is, in implementation, rather than in strategic conversations. Most practitioners understood that this was due to lack of planning on the part of exploration departments, concerns around confidentiality and/or lack of trust due to issues of land speculation and information leaks.

TOPIC 3: COMPANY-COMMUNITY CONFLICT

The conflict session generated much discussion and debate, and in many ways served as an extension of the previous session on land. The 'frame' for this session positioned conflict as a process, rather than as a single or 'point in time' event.

During this session, discussion centred on the types of conflict that practitioners had observed in the course of their work in the industry.

- In terms of manifestations of conflict, across the region, participants described the full range of conflicts, including protests and demonstrations (both peaceful and violent), blockades, sabotage and theft, targeted violence, strikes, media campaigns and more silent forms of protest, called 'foot dragging' which describes actions designed to delay already agreed actions. This can include, for example, failure to vacate property, non-attendance at meetings or refusal to set a date for finalisation of negotiations.
- Practitioners readily distinguished between conflict management and conflict resolution. For instance, while a grievance management approach can be used to de-escalate conflict, it is not necessarily effective in resolving issues. Over time, unresolved issues can accumulate. Overlooking unresolved issues was said to fuel subsequent and sometimes unrelated, conflicts. Practitioners also indicated that outstanding issues affected relationship building processes in the day-to-day course of their work.
- When discussing the mine life cycle, practitioners again described how important the exploration phase is from a relational perspective, and how difficult the construction phase is (by comparison). During construction, practitioners indicated that there is not always a permanent CR presence, and when conflict erupts, there is not always a systematic approach in place to assist practitioners or the community in dealing with it. Practitioners described patterns in which: issues simmer, spill over into violence, or "quick fixes" are offered (e.g. pay offs and inflated compensation for impacts) to ensure project completion, which sets up legacy issues to be managed into the future.
- A range of conflicts were described that were triggered by events external to the company and that, in the end, were proven not to be the fault of the company. This included the death of animals, environmental pollution and the like, which had been attributed to the company, despite an otherwise good relationship. One example provided was when a near neighbour – a commercial agricultural farm – had polluted the groundwater, but the automatic response by the community was to blame the mining company (which in this instance was still in early exploration). Practitioners said that these events served to highlight just how tenuous company-community relationships can be. Issues of trust bubble to the surface very quickly when there is any doubt over a company's conduct.
- Participants also described conflicts that were triggered by internal company decisions and actions (or inactions). Among them was miscommunication about termination of casual and contract employees, many of whom were local. Practitioners indicated that human resource departments often make decisions without consulting or communicating with CR personnel. Access to employment and business opportunities was a source of tension at several sites.
- Understanding the relevance of low-level conflict was considered a vitally important skill for CR practitioners, and important to preventing conflict escalation. Participants indicated, however, that it was often difficult to get the attention of management on issues such as small-scale blockages and low-level sabotage when there is no imminent threat.

- A sensitive discussion was had between participants about the political context, and the degree to which small-scale protests can represent quite significant underlying issues. Some participants were working in political contexts where dissent is not readily expressed, and where the pattern is to speak up, and retreat, rather than speak up and escalate. In these contexts, it is more important to be able to read the conflict landscape to ensure that vulnerable people are able to register complaints and grievances and have them recognised and resolved. In these contexts, issues can easily be overlooked by senior management because there is rarely an imminent threat to production.

IN TERMS OF BREAKING INGRAINED PATTERNS OF CONFLICT, PARTICIPANTS MADE THE FOLLOWING SERIES OF RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Invest in social baseline studies as early as possible, including exploration where feasible.
2. Improve internal communication in order to build knowledge of social issues, noting that giving people information is not the same as ensuring that they have knowledge to make informed decisions.
3. Ensure that CR practitioners have stable pathways through which to inform senior managers about emerging conflict issues.
4. An internal system that enables rapid escalation to senior management on pressing issues.
5. An internal organisational structure that enables direct access to senior decision-makers.
6. Constant internal dialogue, and the appointment of key 'bridging' positions i.e. people who bridge cultures, functions, and field staff with senior management.
7. Processes through which to open up the minds of senior technical decision-makers to the realities of local community life. Suggestions included getting them out into the community before a conflict erupts, and finding other ways to stretch them to think beyond production.
8. Articulate a stronger internal change agenda that includes specific social performance goals.
9. Work to have CR accepted as both a technical and creative discipline, where risks also need to be taken, not only avoided.
10. Encourage operations to undertake post-conflict reviews and retrospective analysis, once the 'heat' has gone out of an issue. This is important to ensure that lessons are learned.

TOPIC 4: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

After an initial introduction to the topic by the Facilitators, participants shared the following thoughts on the topic of Community Development in an open plenary session, choosing not to break out into small group discussions:

- Mining projects, particularly mega projects that contribute a significant proportion of GDP, are expected to make major development contributions at a range of levels – national, regional, local – where expectations are not always compatible or aligned. Nonetheless, all participants said that their companies were aware of the high expectations placed upon them, and were taking steps to contribute to positive development outcomes.
- Practitioners indicated that when community development initiatives are successful, various levels of government often seek to claim credit. This is difficult to manage, and often means that company work is not recognised by the people they are looking to build relationships with.
- Several practitioners indicated that their site had committed to a range of international standards relating to social performance and that they were audited against these standards on a regular basis. One practitioner noted that the annual cost of the social audit program was greater than the site's total community development budget. Practitioners commented that in developing country contexts, the costs associated with audit regimes were inordinate compared to the local community development spend that they had been able to secure.
- Practitioners indicated that the beginning of a mine life cycle was the most difficult in terms of securing budgets for community development initiatives. For example, practitioners described having to compete with exploration for budget, when resources were limited. Practitioners also noted that this situation could carry over into construction and operation where companies were under more pressure to mitigate impacts and sustain relationships.
- Practitioners described a range of internal dynamics that made it difficult to promote or undertake development initiatives. Practitioners explained that finance/accounts, human resources and procurement were notoriously reluctant to discuss how local development outcomes could be maximised. Instead, practitioners described a 'silo' mentality within many of their organisations that militated against internal collaboration.
- Participants felt that local people do not always take enough responsibility for their own development, and expect the company to 'deliver' development (often in place of government) as compensation for their presence in the community. Practitioners believe that some communities could take more responsibility for their own development ambitions. The group recognised that progress on this front will depend on building the capacity of local people and authorities to take advantage of mining's benefits.

- Finally, practitioners observed a need to move beyond community-level contributions to development, and build a more comprehensive understanding of development outcomes at other levels as well. One area of concern was how development impacts were felt at the household level. Several participants indicated that gender considerations were of utmost importance, but were often overlooked for different reasons. For instance, none of the companies participating in the Roundtable had undertaken a gender analysis, although many practitioners were acutely aware of gender dynamics, and could describe how they included women in different forums and engagements. Practitioners also noted that there were gender imbalances in their CR teams – this varied from company to company – but it was generally agreed that more resources and female staff could help their organisations to improve their performance in this area.

The final point of discussion in this session focused on comparing and contrasting company and community perspectives on local community development.

PARTICIPANTS MADE THE FOLLOWING OBSERVATIONS:

- One participant indicated that the community expected the company to provide infrastructure. The CR team was trying to encourage a broader conception of 'development' that included a range of objectives and indicators (e.g. wellbeing, education, higher levels of self-determination). However, the government's framework has an emphasis on infrastructure. The company is aware that infrastructure is a fairly narrow contribution, but is required to focus on this in the short term.
- Many practitioners said that their senior management were focused on what their return on investment would be for every development dollar spent. Working "in between" competing ideas of development was a common position among practitioners.
- Practitioners also indicated that some senior managers were still of the opinion that their company pays a significant amount of taxes and royalties, and that development was a government responsibility, and not the responsibility of a mining company.
- Related to the point above, practitioners indicated that unless senior decision-makers can see a direct link to an immediate business case, they are reluctant to fund development initiatives. They understand the importance of making local contributions, but want to see tangible business as well as development benefits.

TOPIC 5:
CR PRACTICE AND ORGANISATIONAL DYNAMICS

This final session engaged participants in a 'practice mapping' exercise where they represented their practice visually, on a four point axis that included: (i) external engagement; (ii) access to resources; (iii) internal influence; and (iv) structural inclusion within the organisation. Participants were provided with a detailed explanation of the exercise, a template, and a set of basic criteria in order to produce their individual maps. After completing the maps, participants explained their diagrams to other members of the group. Facilitator's emphasised that the value of practice mapping is not in achieving absolute accuracy in the ranking, but in the dialogue created about aspects of practice that are important for working internally, and engaging externally.

Most participants had undertaken or been involved in assessments and audits that had focused on the performative aspects of CR. Most had also undergone performance reviews, where individual performance had been judged or evaluated against agreed goals or key performance indicators. None of the participants had systematically undertaken a practice mapping exercise where they had documented the way they work *within* the organisation in a holistic sense. Several had done so intuitively, but not systematically, nor in collaboration with others.

Facilitators explained the exercise, reviewed each map, and then worked with participants in small groups as they engaged with others to explain their practice map, and its associated context.

FEEDBACK ON THE MAPPING EXERCISE WAS AS FOLLOWS:

- Systematically considering internal dynamics is useful for self reflection on 'internal practice', and provides a consistent framework for engaging with others.
- The mapping exercise provided an opportunity to learn from others, and compare experiences on this particular aspect of work, without disclosing confidential information.
- The maps are not a precise instrument, but rather, a discursive device to open up discussion about internal effectiveness.
- The exercise was helpful in identifying patterns of change over time where 'past' and 'present' maps were developed, and then superimposed.
- The exercise was helpful because it was simple. The complexity came out in the stories.
- The maps provided some participants with clarity on where to direct effort internally, in order to be better positioned in the organisational landscape – where there are strengths to build on, and where there are practice voids to address.
- For people who completed maps with colleagues from the same organisation, several commented that the exercise provided a non-threatening way of challenging assumptions about colleagues, their position within the organisation, and their level of access.

CONCLUSION

The themes explored in this Roundtable reflect the many and varied challenges confronting CR professionals in the mining industry today. A consistent reflection during the Roundtable was that while professionals were operating in highly particular contexts, it was also clear that they were part of a growing global profession. The need for greater awareness about the nature of CR work – locally, regionally and internationally – was also a consistent theme. There was a strong emphasis on the challenges of engaging internally about complex external dynamics. Increasing the influence and standing of CR within the mining industry was also an identified need.

Of all the regions, it was agreed that South East Asia was relatively isolated in terms of professional support for CR practitioners. Few practitioners had participated in national or region-wide events related to their work or had received training in the key areas of professional CR practice. It was agreed that more professional development opportunities are needed in order to support practitioners in this region. It was also agreed that other professions, including technical managers, need to improve their knowledge and capacity in the social science arena. Without enhancing the industry's capacity to engage locally and respond to the external environment, social performance would be constrained.

At the close of the event practitioners were invited to complete an evaluation form. The feedback confirms the importance of initiatives aimed at increasing the overall professional profile of CR in mining. The evaluation results also provided suggestions for future events, namely: more time to explore complex topics, training and skills development on critical areas, and a mechanism to support participants and organisations to continue the conversation within their organisations, after the Roundtable.

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