Achieving commitment to dialogue

How innovative communications helped with buy-in to dialogues around artisanal and small-scale mining

We knew that establishing a meaningful dialogue between governments, large-scale mining companies (LSM) and small-scale and artisanal miners (ASM) would not be easy to accomplish, given the sector’s power inequalities and politics. The following is a reflection on the communication strategy and activities in the first year of a longer process of engagement.

Defining the strategy

IIED researchers and the Communications Group worked together on a detailed audience mapping exercise, laying the foundation for an ambitious, phased communication strategy for the first year. Phase one involved personal engagement by researchers with a small group of ‘movers and shakers’ from the three audiences, first via individual interviews and then as a group in a visioning workshop. We wanted to build trust and mobilise a group of people who had not been brought together before, including artisanal and small-scale miners themselves.

With phase two we planned to engage a broader — but still niche — group of ASM, LSM and government representatives to start unpacking contentious issues and to gather a full and inclusive range of perspectives. The final stage was both global and digital in nature, aiming to raise the profile of the forthcoming dialogue series and mobilise a wider network of ASM/LSM/government people who might want to participate.

As part of phase one, we produced a photo exhibition and short video interviews with artisanal miners in Tanzania, to add to the voices of the two ASM participants from Peru and Mongolia at the April 2015 visioning workshop. To do this, we commissioned a photographer/cameraman to go to the Geita District to meet miners and collect their stories. The resulting outputs were powerful and informed the workshop debates, but the trip was logistically complicated and costly and we were not able to repeat the exercise in other countries at that stage (the concept was developed to support a dialogue in Ghana in early 2016). Although we also used the images and stories to compile a series of photo stories on the IIED website and a longread combining images and video (shared more than 150 times), we would have liked to have captured even more of the diverse nature of ASM to share with this particular workshop audience.

Engaging with new audiences

A key activity of phase two was ‘#ShareASM’ day on 25 June 2015, where we invited members of the target audiences to share their work online. The aim was to provide a neutral space where people from government mining departments and mining companies, as well as small-scale and artisanal miners...
information. Finally, we wanted to communicate with a global audience interested in mining and sustainable development to build confidence in the proposed dialogue series and establish it as a legitimate tool in the change process.

**KEY LESSONS LEARNT & INNOVATIONS**

- A multifaceted communications and engagement project such as this requires strong collaboration between communications specialists and researchers to make sure any strategy remains coherent and well timed. This can be challenging, and trust needed to be built between colleagues who were using different tools, methodologies and approaches. The benefit of agreeing on a varied, well-staged approach was that we could play to our combined strengths and maximise impact.

- Collecting materials from and reporting back to the mining community, the #ShareASM day and the visual representation of ASM stories at the visioning workshop were all innovations through which we started to build trust, gained new audiences and triggered dialogue. This kind of intensive communications work is costly and care must be taken to set realistic budgets.

- Reporting back to the mining community that had been willing to share its stories with global audiences increased the miners’ interest and engagement in the dialogue process, particularly their participation in a future national dialogue.

**PARTNERS’ VIEW**

Very good as a scene setter to establish a voice … the innovation in communications helps to reframe the way people participate.

Participant at visioning workshop held in April 2015

**FURTHER READING**

To see this collection of work and more: www.iied.org/towards-inclusive-responsible-mining

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**Knowledge Products**

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Employees work deep within a tunnel at the Nsangano Gold Mine, Mawemeru village in Geita District, Tanzania. An image from the specially commissioned set of photos.