RETHINKING CAPACITY BUILDING

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Issues To Be Covered

- The Rise of the Community
- The Concept of Capacity Building
- Four False Assumptions
- The Development Crisis
- Reflect on Our Assumptions
- Reflect on Power Relations
The Rise of the Community

Mineral companies:

- focused on engaging the community (1990)
- adopted the **9th ICMM principle** (2003):

  “Contribute to the social, **economic and institutional development** of the neighbouring communities”
Community Development and Capacity Building (CB)

Capacity Building:

- was a central concept in the community development literature
- originated as building self-help capacities within rural communities
- = institution building and technical assistance
The Early Concept of Capacity Building (1950s-1970s)

Early CB as “technical assistance”

“Simply transfer capital and know-how to other countries, and swift economic growth will follow”

This concept contains a series of false assumptions
False Assumptions

- CB is a one-way flow of information from the “developed” to the “developing” countries
- Western knowledge is superior to the local/indigenous knowledge
- Local/indigenous communities are only made up of needs and capacity gaps
- The community lacks capacity because it is “traditional”, “primitive” or “backward”
False: CB Is a One-way Flow

- from the donor countries/development agencies to Third World countries
- necessary for the local community and government but not for the companies
True: CB Is a Two-way Flow

- Government and industry themselves may lack the capacity to comprehend cultural and social issues.
- Engineers or employees of mineral companies are seldom trained in communication skills.
- For a successful collaboration, these skills are as necessary as the understanding of technical matters.
False: CB Is a One-way Flow

- The company provides
  - technical knowledge
- The community representatives provide
  - values, beliefs and emotions
True: CB Is a Two-way Flow

- Both inputs can come from both sides:
  - the community often has technical knowledge
  - the mineral company has values, emotions or constraints that affect communication

“a successful risk communication must incorporate exchange of information and opinions” (National Research Council 1989)
False: Western Knowledge Is Superior

**False**

- Western knowledge is “scientific” vs. the “non-scientific” indigenous knowledge
- Traditional/indigenous knowledge is an obstacle to the developing country’s “modernization”

**True**

- Western knowledge is just one knowledge system among many
- Traditional knowledge can be a major resource for development
False: Western Knowledge Is Superior

**False**
- There are differences between Western and indigenous thought
  - in their subject matter and
  - in the way they investigate reality and order phenomena

**True**
- The **critical** difference is not at an epistemological level but in their relationship to power
- Can a bridge be built between scientific and indigenous knowledge?

- Sure, but indigenous people know: the scientists will surely be the guys designing the bridge
True: Integrate both knowledge systems

- It is necessary to integrate as equivalents indigenous and Western forms of knowledge

“Capacity, in the new thinking, involves the integration of two parallel knowledge and production systems - ‘indigenous’ and ‘modern’”
False: Local Communities Are Only Made up of Needs

- The community is defined in terms of **needs and capacity gaps**
- Community members are **passive recipient/consumers** of services - not producers
- Only outside experts can provide real help
True: Local Communities Are Also Made up of Strengths

- **Community strengths** will lead to change rather than a focus on needs and problems
- Communities are **empowered** and become self-sufficient
- Communities **drive the development process** themselves

(Asset Based Community Development)
“…the concept of ‘capacity building’ is the idea that Aboriginal people are innately deficient, or incapable, or …lacking we have had 40 to 60,000 years of survival and capacity! The problem is our capacity has been eroded and diminished”

“…our people do have skills, knowledge and experience! And our people are not imbeciles We are fully-fledged human beings who are quite capable of looking after our own children and fighting for their future

So when we talk about capacity building - keep this in mind… ”
False: Indigenous Communities Are Primitive

- All countries should follow the same path to development as the countries of North America and Western Europe.
- Underdeveloped or developing countries are “late” in their development stage.
True: Indigenous Communities Are Marginalized

- Local communities need capacity building not because of inherent inability to comprehend, but because:
  - they have been historically excluded from participating in decision-making
  - they have been marginalized
  - they may be unfamiliar with the character and nature of mineral operations
The Development Crisis

Both the WB and the UNDP:
- admit that the history of development is filled with more failures than successes
- have realized the need to reflect on:
  - assumptions
  - power relations

*Challenge mindsets and power differentials*
The Need to Reflect on Our Assumptions

- The **terms and concepts** we use
  - play an important part in **shaping and framing solutions**
  - may imply **hierarchy** rather than partnership
  - have an effect on the **funding and design** of programs
The Need to Reflect on Power Relations

- “In capacity building projects different stakeholders have
  - different levels of power
  - different interests
  - different resources

- For these reasons, arrangements are needed
  - to level the playing field
  - and enable different stakeholders to interact on an equitable and collaborative basis”

(World Bank, 1996)
Conclusions…

- Mineral companies hold a great amount of political and financial power.
- When setting up consultation projects they should be aware of power dynamics.
- Being aware of power relations is not only for social scientists or radical thinkers.
- On the contrary, it is essential to address this issue in order to achieve a sustainable partnership.
Conclusions

- If mining companies wish:
  - to remain committed to the 9th ICMM principle
  - to use the concept of capacity building in an effective rather than decorative manner

- Then they should reflect
  - on their **assumptions** and
  - on the **power relationships** that underlie engagement with the local communities
“While intangible mindsets, vested interests and power differentials may make the biggest contribution to development success or failure”

(UNDP 2003)

Thank you
“We need to examine further the basic assumptions that underlie the old model of technical cooperation—

including assumptions about

- the nature of development
- the role of capacity within development
- the aid-donor-recipient relationship
- and knowledge and capacity…” (UNDP 2002)