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A meeting of stakeholders in Kenya (Credit: the authors)

Effective anti-corruption advocacy through multi-stakeholder engagement: lessons from Kenya

By Alex Gruenewald and Matteo Pellegrini
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Multi-stakeholder engagement works. This is the conclusion of an external evaluation into Transparency International's approach to preventing corruption in the mining sector.

Transparency International's [Accountable Mining](#) program is working across its global network to look at where and how corruption can compromise the process of awarding mining permits. The program's approach is to bring stakeholders from the mining industry, local, state and national governments, civil society and the communities affected by mining together to discuss openly what the problems are and how they can work collaboratively to fix them – 'multi-stakeholder engagement'.

Here we share four key insights from our larger evaluation that provide useful lessons for civil society advocacy. The evaluation included an in-depth case study of the work of [Transparency International Kenya](#) (TI-Kenya) in the south-eastern Kwale County, and this blog focuses on examples from TI-Kenya's success.

1. Work in teams and with existing networks

Civil society teamwork is crucial. This means working within existing civil society coalitions and building partnerships with organisations that have strong operations and legitimacy in the places where you intervene.

For this work, Transparency International chapters built consensus for a multi-stakeholder approach by advocating that mining operations can be conducted more responsibly, with better long-term results for all involved, when companies, governments, civil society organisations and communities are connected and collaborative.

For example, TI-Kenya worked with [Haki Madini (Justice Mining) Kenya](#) (a coalition of civil society and faith-based organisations on mining in Kenya), to build partnerships that had

strong existing operations and legitimacy in parts of the country where TI-Kenya works. TI-Kenya played a facilitation role to resolve disagreements within civil society that undermined the unity of their message and goals.

Working in partnerships prevented duplication of efforts, provided co-funding for activities, strengthened TI-Kenya's legitimacy at the local level among communities and improved civil society's ability to resolve differences and speak with one voice, which in turn increased the resonance and impact of its proposals to decision-makers.

2. Focus on constructive multi-stakeholder dialogue

Multi-stakeholder engagement bears fruit when rooted in constructive and non-confrontational dialogue. Organisations can play a facilitation role between stakeholders that may have fractured or adversarial relationships.

In Kenya, communities felt marginalised and they felt that they lacked adequate mechanisms to report and seek remedy for their concerns. While civil society organisations had tried to promote community benefits, their recourse to adversarial tactics had often alienated the mining industry and government decision-makers, and ultimately had done little to address community grievances.

TI-Kenya supported the development of Mining Alliance Working Groups that focus on different issues affecting communities. There is a rotating membership comprising different stakeholders to ensure a cross-pollination of ideas. These working groups have ensured that stakeholders have turned the page on fragmented action and adversarial tactics and they now engage in incremental dialogue resolving differences respectfully and constructively through processes and mechanisms they have themselves shaped.

3. Connect the local to the national

Organisations will often work with multi-stakeholder groups at different levels on related issues. For example, they may be involved in a national-level forum with national stakeholders while simultaneously working at a local level with different actors. When using this approach, it is crucial to ensure that there is 'vertical integration' and sharing of ideas between the different levels. Community-level work should be informed by national-level partnerships, and vice versa.

In the case of Kenya, the TI office, in collaboration with other leading civil society players, runs national-level mining forums with a wide variety of participants, and are structured as a participatory, bottom-up process. This national-level work informs both partnerships and advocacy, with change being achieved and leveraged at multiple levels.

Meanwhile, county-level forums have become a key mechanism to discuss progress in establishing benefit-sharing mechanisms nationally and for stakeholders to learn from TI-Kenya's efforts in Kwale County.

4. Ensure that your networks are sustainable when your project ends

All multi-stakeholder engagement work should ensure that there is sustainability built into the approach. This means ensuring that once project funding is finished, networks and groups can continue to work independently.

For TI-Kenya, a key premise was that multi-stakeholder action should continue regardless of TI-Kenya's ongoing ability to provide support. The Mining Alliance Working Groups have been established to be led by conveners external to TI-Kenya for each group, with an overall coordinator overseeing the process.

TI-Kenya plays a facilitation and capacity-support role in developing the groups. As they become more independent and autonomous, the groups can assert their leadership and actively work to communicate and address issues. TI- Kenya can progressively step back while ensuring the multi-stakeholder network continues to function sustainably and run independently after the project ends.

In conclusion, effective multi-stakeholder engagement leverages capacities and connections that your organisation may not have. For smaller organisations working on systemic issues such as corruption, leveraging these capacities and connections can ensure that your work has wider effects and that it results in systemic change.

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