

Corporate Engagement Project - Trainings

The Corporate Engagement Project is part of [CDA Collaborative Learning Projects](#), a small non-profit organization in Cambridge, Massachusetts USA. Through a process of field assessments, trainings and periodic consultations, the Corporate Engagement Project (CEP) collaborates with companies to help them ensure they have positive rather than negative impacts on the communities where they operate. As part of this approach CEP assists companies in the development and implementation of practical options to build positive, constructive relationships with the communities where they work. Since 2000, over 60 international companies - mostly from the extractive industries - operating in Africa, Asia, Australia and North and South America have participated in the Project.

During site visits managers have requested trainings for their community liaison officers and management teams. CEP has designed a training program based on the evidence gathered from the last nine years of field work looking at how the daily, ongoing operations of companies interact with, affect, and are affected by the societies where they operate. The training program provides participants with practical tools and skills through sessions on:

- ***Understanding the Company's Relationship with the Local Community.*** The quality of the company's relations with the host community depends on the type of impacts the company has on the people in the community. When these impacts are positive, they accumulate and lead to constructive relations with the community. And when these impacts are negative, they also accumulate and lead to worsening relations, opposition and even acts of violence. CEP has spoken with many company managers who believe that they are neutral actors in the communities where they operate. However, Project evidence shows that company policies and daily practices – like hiring, compensation and contracting - have a direct impact on the people in the community, thus affecting the company's relations with the community. Through the presentation of a short case study and a framework for analysis, this module helps participants examine how company operations can impact communities and come up with options for change where needed.
- ***Review of Company Policies through a Conflict Sensitive Lens.*** Company managers often look at the local context of conflict, whether its inter-ethnic fighting or militias battling the government, and feel that the situation is beyond their control. In fact, company policies and practices can unintentionally exacerbate conflict dynamics, and consequently affect the company's relationship with the local community, as well as the stability of its operations. This module combines a case study exercise and framework for conflict analysis to help participants look more closely at situations of tension and conflict in the community and examine ways company actions can affect this dynamic.
- ***Position of Community Relations department in the Organization.*** Most Community Relations departments are in charge of “fire-fighting” and take a reactive rather than strategic approach to their role. This module provides ideas and options for how to position the department as a strategic internal service provider to other departments that need access to land and communities, and operational stability.
- ***Community Engagement Skills.*** This module will develop the participants' capacity to engage with local stakeholders and build positive relations with community members through respectful and constructive interaction. Through a variety of role play exercises participants will practice and observe good listening skills (and bad ones), body language and implicit messages, cultural sensitivity, and framing questions for positive, productive conversations.
- ***Social Investment.*** Many social investment projects are not linked to the business case, do not yield a good return on investment, and can even negatively affect local perceptions of the company. This module focuses on how to create successful community investments that meet both company and community expectations. Through a brief case study, small group work and role play exercises,

participants will think through the key issues of social investment and identify the important questions to ask outside experts (such as NGOs) hired to develop and implement such programs.

- ***Conflict-Resolution Skills.*** This session uses a number of role play exercises to build the participants' comfort and capacity to engage with community members even during tense and challenging circumstances.

These sessions are highly interactive, using a combination of case studies, role play, small group work and plenary discussions to keep the learning process engaging for participants. The sessions can be structured to last 2-3 days, depending on staff availability. Ideally, prior to trainings we would conduct a 2-3 day assessment in the field to help make the training context specific. Training sessions often provide a "safe" space for staff to speak their mind, as insights emerge during these sessions that need the attention of management. With the permission of participants, we will document these in a Note for Management. If the company is interested in other topics not currently included in our training program, provided we have experience and evidence on the subject, we can work with the company to develop training modules to fit the company's needs.