

Reaching across sectors and building bridges



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By **Marketa D. Evans**

Right from the beginning, our Office has made it a priority to reach across sectors and build bridges between people with different perspectives. Many diverse stakeholders have an interest in the environmental and social impacts of mining, and in corporate responses to these challenges. But significant asymmetries of information remain. So we've tried to focus our efforts in reaching different types of stakeholders through platforms and networks and associations.

We have worked to proactively reach NGOs and civil society organizations with word about this Office. In partnership with the Compliance Advisor Ombudsman of the World Bank Group, we recently co-chaired a panel discussion on "business & human rights" at the Civicus World Assembly, held this year in Montreal. This was done in part to foster great awareness of access to remedy mechanisms among civil society groups in the south. But since many in the mining industry may not be aware of Civicus, and its importance, a little introduction is in order.

What is Civicus?

Based in South Africa, the Civicus World Alliance for Citizen Participation ("Civicus") was established in 1993 as a network of both individuals and civil society organizations, at all levels, from local to international, to help support citizen action and participation. Civicus is active globally, and has a special focus on areas of the world where the exercise of civil action is under threat. Civicus, by the way, is Latin term meaning "of the community." Civicus is a membership based organization, individuals and groups are welcome to join as members. For more information see www.civicus.org.

What is the Civicus World Assembly?

For the third year in a row, the Civicus World Assembly was held in Montreal this past September. The Assembly is the premier global meeting spot for many of the organizations that belong to Civicus. This year, hundreds of individuals from around the world took part in a multiday discussion of a wide range of issues impacting civil society and human rights around the globe. One of the key themes at this year's conference was "building partnerships for social innovation." In its framing of this theme, Civicus leadership noted that the "private sector shows some new models of engagement, such as social entrepreneurship, social investment, corporate social responsibility and the evolution of philanthropy.... These new initiatives suggest alternative models of development, the need for new rela-



A great deal of Marketa Evans' time is spent on the road addressing various groups on the importance of Corporate Social Responsibility. In addition to speaking engagements, Ms. Evans also participates with other world organizations in helping develop programs designed to "reach across sectors and build bridges."

tionships and new ways of managing interactions, and decision-making processes that increasingly make space for multi-stakeholder engagement." It is with that belief in multi-stakeholder engagement that we undertook our work at the Civicus World Assembly. For more information about the gathering, and for reports, blogs and pictures, see <http://www.civicusassembly.org/>

What did we do?

With the World Bank Group's Compliance Advisor Ombudsman, the Office put together a panel discussion exploring some non-judicial tools and mechanisms currently available for resolving company-community disputes. The session was chaired by Red Argentina de Cooperación Internacional. Working from case studies presented by our panellists from the Niger Delta Women's Movement for Peace and Development and Publish What you Pay Canada, participants had a hands-on opportunity to work through some real world scenarios to explore how such approaches can be helpful. An interesting, interactive discussion followed the group works, exploring some of the critical issues, including:

- How could the dispute resolution tools presented earlier in the session be useful?
- Under what conditions might they work?
- When would they not be appropriate?
- What benefits or drawbacks do they present for communities?

We invite you to contact us and learn more.
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