

Community Engagement Partnerships

Connecting people, changing development

Communities should be in the driver's seat when it comes to critical decisions about their lives and livelihoods.



Yet too often development and business activities are imposed on communities without their meaningful participation or permission.



Grassroots groups find themselves up against powerful actors, including governments, private companies and development financiers.



Around the world, there are many groups, movements and organizations that can offer a diversity of skills, tools and resources to support community-led struggles.

However, many communities lack opportunities to connect to these groups and access these resources.



The Coalition for Human Rights in Development initiated the Community Engagement Partnerships to:

- support community-led struggles
- connect communities with our members and partners around the world
- strengthen the collective capacities of our movements

assistance with access to remedy through courts and complaints offices

support with campaigns or advocacy with governments and investors

scientific or technical services and expertise

The partnership for each community may include different types of support and capacity building

support with community organizing through community-led research and know-your-rights trainings

access to information and analysis, including financial research

physical and digital security protection

How the partnerships work

1

We listen to the community that requests a partnership, and try and understand what their goals, needs and priorities are.

If the community has specific asks, we identify which groups might be willing and able to help, and create linkages.

Otherwise, we bring together a few organizations to help the community identify and evaluate potential strategies and collaborations.



2

A coordinator works with the community to make sure the linkages made are helpful, and conducts additional matchmaking as the communities' needs evolve. The partnership may include a small grant or a connection to external funders.

3

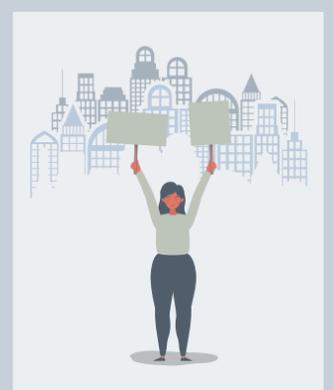
The community partners share their experience and lessons learned with the Coalition to strengthen collective learning and work.



If there are security concerns, the Coalition Secretariat connects the community with the **Defenders in Development Security Working Group**, which can help provide a coordinated and comprehensive response to address issues such as intimidation, surveillance and physical attacks in specific development contexts.

The Coalition Secretariat can help those who request support by:

- discussing and helping them identifying their needs
- connecting them with collaborators that can help identify protection strategies
- assisting them to apply for complementing financial and technical security support
- responding to new needs as the security situation evolves



Case study

Partnering with communities affected by oil extraction projects

In 2016, a group of oil companies began acquiring land in Uganda for oil exploration and development, to feed a pipeline project which would stretch to the coast in Tanzania.

The project is expected to affect over 5000 households, including indigenous peoples, small farmers and pastoralists. But the communities were not consulted.



The Association for Rural Development (ARD)*, together with other civil society groups, began working with affected communities to:

- get access to information about the development plans
- advocate for their land rights and fair compensation
- create a platform for dialogue between communities, district leaders and companies.

* the name of the organization was changed for security reasons.

The Community Engagement Partnership (CEP)

2016 / 2018

The Coalition's CEP working group started collaborating with ARD to

access funding from Global Greengrants Fund

for community workshops on project monitoring, facilitated by Business & Human Rights Resource Centre and International Accountability Project.



connect with Inclusive Development International

to identify and help engage investors and interested financiers of the project.



Lesson learned

Information about the economic and political institutions behind local activities is hard to find. Communities need this information to consider additional advocacy strategies.



late 2018

ARD leaders started receiving threats and being harassed. Several times local government officials blocked ARD staff from supporting the affected communities in negotiations.



When communities raise their voices against a development project, they are seen as anti-development, and once you stand up to support these communities you are seen as going against government efforts. This leads to threats, arrests, intimidation. Some people began feeling afraid, and out of fear accepted inadequate compensation.

Lesson learned

It is important to proactively anticipate risks and put together a holistic protection strategy, to help prevent and respond to threats and attacks. If the situation escalates, urgent requests from frontline communities and groups require rapid response coordination among supporting organizations.



2019

A Uganda-based organization, Defenders Protection Initiative, conducted a risk assessment and a security training.

The CEP working group provided a grant and supported ARD to address security risks

ARD secured a grant from Front Line Defenders to improve their office security; a grant from another organization was used to temporarily relocate the Director.



The Lifeline Fund for Embattled CSOs provided a short-term grant to enhance digital security practices

Communities and ARD connected with international groups working on the pipeline, to collaborate on advocacy and show they were not alone.



late 2019

The security situation improved and project construction was put on hold.



Lesson learned

It is crucial to listen to frontline communities and be responsive to their evolving needs. Resources closest to the community are the most effective and efficient means of delivering support. There are also benefits from linking local efforts with larger regional and international campaigns and organizations.



2020

The CEP Working Group continues working with ARD to accompany communities as the project progresses and their needs shift.

Thanks to the Community Engagement Partnership, ARD could counterbalance the collaboration between governments and oil companies on the project, by offering an opportunity for communities and civil society organizations to develop a coordinated response. This resulted in:

- offers for compensation in the form of land for land
- the government and companies beginning to engage with local communities
- reduction in overt intimidation against local communities and human rights defenders.

