

CAO and IFC Collaborate on Client-Community Dialogue in Albania



January 10, 2017 — In Albania, IFC is supporting three clients—Enso, Kurum and Bankers Petroleum—with the implementation of projects in the hydropower and oil sectors. The projects all share a common feature: CAO has received complaints about them. For two, CAO is now facilitating a dialogue between the client and local community members in an attempt to resolve environmental and social concerns. The third has transitioned from dispute resolution to a compliance investigation.

Why do projects in Albania land up with CAO complaints? This is a question that both CAO and IFC have asked themselves – and both parties saw an opportunity to foster a broader conversation with the private sector and civil society about how conflicts may be mitigated or dealt with constructively in Albania.

With this common cause, CAO and IFC collaborated to convene a stakeholder dialogue in Tirana which was facilitated by CAO. The dialogue was attended by national civil society, local communities, mediation professionals, and national and international companies, including IFC staff and clients. The workshop was the first of its kind organized by CAO together with IFC. CAO has been facilitating a similar dialogue initiative in South Africa between multinational mining companies and civil society groups around the African Mining Indaba.

Participants discussed ways to better engage communities in project consultations, such as ensuring appropriate representation of community members, using independent facilitators, and participation of communities in project monitoring programs. Participants underscored

the lack of trust in Albania and need for transparency and openness around projects. There is an opportunity for more meaningful dialogue, informing communities about technical issues, and improving the quality and credibility of expert panels involved in environmental and social impact assessments (ESIAs).

"I appreciated the opportunity for a variety of stakeholders to come together in a neutral setting to discuss learnings and start thinking of ways to reduce conflicts in the future related to the extractive sector." said Robert Carss, Vice President at Bankers Petroleum, an IFC client. "Access to the land is one of our biggest challenges in the extractive sector, and we require the ability to have meaningful dialogue between affected and interested parties to minimize impacts and conflict."

Dorina Topoviti, a community member, noted, "I hope and believe that we are representing not only Albania but [beyond], and I like that we are on the same page. I learned of new ideas on solution approaches and how to get to those solutions."

The workshop allowed for a number of people to meet and talk for the first time. "It was great to see IFC clients engaging with other participants not only on issues specific to their situation, but the broader structural issues that can impede effective dialogue in Albania. Several of the proposals were simple, practical steps – such as pre-meetings with communities so they understand the process ahead of time – and therefore can focus on the substance during the consultation itself," said Richard Caines, IFC E&S Principal Specialist.

"Helping convene dialogue to address development challenges is an expertise CAO can bring to IFC, its clients, and community members. Initiatives like this offer a great opportunity for companies and communities to build understanding and discuss compatible solutions." said Osvaldo Gratacos, CAO Vice President.

For more information, contact Emily Horgan, CAO.