



Executive Summary – Study of Small Grants around Mining and Communities

Communities around the world are faced with serious social and environmental consequences of industrial mining. Social problems can include an influx of outsiders into often isolated communities, increase in HIV/AIDS, conflict and violence, and loss of farming land and fishing grounds. Environmental problems include air and water pollution, new health problems, erosion, and destruction of habitat and productive land. On a broader scale, national treasuries may not benefit sufficiently to justify these costs, and in some cases the opportunities for corruption are significant.

In recent years a vigorous civil society response to these issues has emerged around the world. Community-based groups are responding to daily livelihood and health issues. National coalitions are advocating for justice and transparency. International networks are promoting a more even playing field between mining companies, host governments, and affected communities. Together, these groups have made strides in towards greater responsibility in the mining industry.

Global Greengrants Fund has contributed to this movement with small grants as part of a larger effort by other funders, civil society organizations, and communities.

Challenging Traditional Grantmaking Models

Addressing the social and environmental issues brought on by industrial mining challenges traditional grantmaking models. Industrial mining has disturbing effects from the local level, in host communities, to the international level, where it influences international financial governance. Problems in some places are actually caused by decisions made in others, and solutions at the international level often do not take into account the priorities of local communities. Isolated local grantmaking often fails to deal with the root of the problem, and grantmaking at national and international levels often leads to undemocratic and unsustainable results. Traditional grants made just to community groups, national-level nongovernmental organizations, or international policy groups are insufficient to deal with this complex problem.

Instead, dealing with problems of this magnitude and reach often requires supporting movements. Large, loosely organized collections of individuals, informal and formal organizations, media, and academia often must come together to bring about change for problems of this scale. Yet, funding movements can be difficult, given the variety of organizations and the complexity of issues involved. To inform this emerging grantmaking practice, Global Greengrants Fund undertook a research study of how small grants can support social movements in the mining sector. The study chose two cases, in Ghana and Peru.

The hypothesis was that small grants improve the capacity of local actors to respond to changing strategies of mining companies and the state to impose a mining project or demobilize civil society criticism to existing projects. Research in both Ghana and Peru supported this hypothesis. The research also found that while small grants were an effective means of supporting these social movements, there were important limitations to what small grants could do.

The conceptual framework proposed four basic things that successful movements do:

- Social movements mobilize resources and develop movement infrastructure to intervene in social conflicts and the power structures of society.
- Social movements raise consciousness and reframe problems, discriminations, and inequalities in society.
- Social movements respond to political opportunities on different scales to promote their interests and social change
- Social movements develop alternatives to current political, economic, and cultural practices.

The study found that small grants support movements to do these things in the following ways:

Social movements mobilize resources and develop movement infrastructure to intervene in social conflicts and the power structures of society.

Small grants built skills, supported basic office and transport infrastructure, supported important organizing and networking meetings, and enabled organizations to secure further funding from other donors. Small grants supported the growth of a vigorous and important national mining network in Ghana and the organizing of local mining networks in Peru.

Social movements raise consciousness and reframe problems, discriminations, and inequalities in society.

Small grants allowed communities to learn about the effects of mining beyond the benefits presented to them by mining companies. The grants supported local research to establish community rights to land and resources, documented the abuses of mining companies and security forces to policymakers and the general public, and supported efforts to advance alternatives such as agriculture and tourism. Small grants were unable to support large-scale efforts at promoting alternative economic models beyond raising the issue for wider debate or starting pilot projects.

Social movements respond to political opportunities on different scales, to promote their interests and social change.

By their nature, opportunities for movements come rarely. When an opportunity arose, flexible grants allowed movement organizers to take advantage of moment. In Ghana a national coalition of civil society organizations reacted quickly to a proposal to allow mining in forest reserves. In turn, they were able to successfully protect the vast majority of the forest reserves in the country. In Peru small grants supported organizations that lost funding due to pressure from mining companies on other donors and allowed the movement to continue without losing momentum.

Social movements develop alternatives to current political, economic, and cultural practices.

Small grants were limited in their ability to promote alternatives. Nevertheless, there is a role in documenting the feasibility of alternative economic practices such as the cultivation of medicinal

plants, community reforestation, and small-scale mining. Small grants have also supported the entry of excluded communities into policy discussions and supported indigenous communities to develop their traditional governance practices to deal with modern mining and policy processes.

Characteristics of ‘Movement Grantmaking’

The ability of grantmaking to support these outcomes largely depended on a responsive model that included movement leaders in grantmaking decisions. The study found that the ability of grants to successfully support the movement was based on the following factors:

- Flexibility
- Decentralization
- Longer-term support, repeat grants
- Trust
- Including the donor in the movement

Elements that would make the grantmaking model stronger were the following:

- Better documentation
- Limiting the scope of advisors
- Encouraging networks and collaboration
- Increased grants to fund alternative sources of income
- Increased support for alternative knowledge generation
- Increased focus on women
- Increased grants for activist security or vulnerability

For a copy of the complete Mining Study, please visit www.greengrants.org or contact our office, 303-939-9866.