



## **Backgrounder: Mining Justice**

Widespread, well-documented human rights abuses associated with Canadian mining companies abroad are having a negative impact on the lives of grandmothers, vulnerable children and youth in Africa. These companies must be held accountable for their actions in communities in which they operate. The international community, through such bodies as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has been promoting socially responsible, rights-based mining practices for over a decade, but Canada lags behind in its own commitments.

Almost half of the world's head offices of publicly listed mining operations are registered in Canada. 1300 mining companies are based in Canada. 75% of those are located in Vancouver, "The Mining Capital of the World". Others are registered in Toronto, Calgary and Montreal. Canadian-listed mining companies represent the largest source of foreign investment in Africa's mining sector. Canada should be leading by example.

### **Why should GRAN be concerned about mining?**

Once-thriving communities have often become impoverished when a mine is built in their community. Abusive mining practices disproportionately affect women, since they experience the negative social, ecological, and economic impacts associated with mining on a daily basis.

GRAN takes a rights-based approach to our advocacy and has four areas of focus which are all in support of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals, adopted by Canada and many other countries around the world. We advocate for the right to education, health, freedom from violence and economic security. Abusive mining practices violate these rights.

### **Reported impacts of mining on local communities in sub-Saharan Africa**

#### **Environmental destruction**

- Appropriation of land and water resources
- Pollution of water – made unsuitable for people or crops
- Contamination of land – agriculture becomes impossible
- Displacement of communities to areas where making a living is not possible

#### **Social disruption**

- Injuries or deaths from peaceful protesting
- Extrajudicial killings
- Increased spousal abuse
- Women forced into prostitution
- Rape becoming more common
- Spread of HIV/AIDS
- Destruction of cultural values
- Breaking of promises by the mining companies to provide social services, schools, medical clinics, job training and jobs

#### **Financial exploitation**

- Mining companies evade paying taxes and royalties to the local governments
- Profits go to shareholders out of the country

## GRAN Actions

### Advocate for the Appointment and Empowerment of the Ombudsperson

The creation of an independent Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise (CORE) was announced in January 2018. According to the Canadian government's description, the CORE will be mandated to investigate allegations of human rights abuses linked to Canadian corporate activity abroad. As of March 2019, this position is still not filled. To be effective the Ombudsperson must:

- be independent of government and free from political or corporate interference
- be able to compel witnesses and documents
- be able to recommend and monitor sanctions
- report the findings publicly

The Government of Canada has an opportunity to implement its Feminist Foreign Policy by ensuring that the Ombudsperson is empowered to protect the rights of women and girls and that Canadian mining practices abroad do not result in gender-based violence.

### Advocate for Access to Canadian Courts

Not every country has a free and fair judicial system. Therefore, there is an urgent need to improve access to justice for alleged victims of human rights abuses by Canadian mining companies by allowing cases to be tried in Canada.

- There are 3 cases currently being tried in Canadian courts:
  - Nevsun Resources (Eritrea)
  - Hudbay Minerals (Guatemala)
  - Tahoe Resources (Guatemala)

### Raise Awareness

A major goal of our campaign is to increase awareness about mining justice among the grassroots of GRAN and the general public. On the GRAN website you will soon find the Power Point Presentation from Hello Friends 2018 called "*Mining Justice: the Impact of Canadian Mining on sub-Saharan African Communities*" and accompanying notes. GRANs are encouraged to use the tools on the website to reach out to their own communities and raise the issue of mining justice in Canada.

## Conclusion

What can GRAN do to help women and children in sub-Saharan Africa have healthier lives, freedom from violence, economic security, and quality education in their mining communities?

We can work together with other social justice groups who are advocating for mining justice to tell our government that Canadian mining companies should no longer be able to act with impunity around the world. GRAN is a member of the Canadian Network for Corporate Accountability (CNCA) <http://cnca-rcrce.ca>, an umbrella group which has been advocating for mining justice for many years, and provides excellent resources and support.

***"I want a world where....women and communities are empowered. And I believe that we must build that empowerment together so that every woman can stand up for herself and others."***

-- Gladys Mauhusa of WOMIN (African Women United Against Destructive Resource Extraction)