



2.1 Understanding the local context for engaging with Indigenous Peoples

Despite numerous commonalities, the specific indigenous context needs to be ascertained at the earliest stage of a project. Baseline information is particularly important to gather and, among other things, should focus on the following key characteristics of the local context:

- demographic information about the nature of the community in terms of tribal identities, clan relationships within the tribe and population growth data. This is important to ascertain in order to monitor changes in these characteristics during engagement and project development
- land ownership and tenure from a legal and customary perspective, as well as any contestations about tenure within clan families. Overlapping ownership claims to be documented through government channels, but also through independent inquiry from local experts
- cultural heritage significance and association with particular sacred sites to be ascertained, for example from tribal elders who have the confidence of the community
- livelihood and subsistence data on how the community meets its basic food and shelter needs, as well as the level of connectivity (if any) that the community has with the market economy, to be ascertained prior to engagement
- information about the ethnic composition and relations in the area, as well as the history of migration
- current conflicts between local and regional governments and indigenous communities, and historical grievances with extractive industries in the region.

TOOL 8 will provide more specific guidance on how to undertake such baseline evaluations. Good practice guidance on recognizing indigenous land rights is provided in **TOOL 3**.

2.2 The principles of good engagement

Ensuring inclusivity at the earliest stage

While it is important to acknowledge the role of elders and other traditional community leaders, it should not automatically be assumed that those who occupy formal leadership positions, whether they be traditional or government appointed, represent all interests in the community. In particular, companies need to be sensitive to those sections of the community who are frequently excluded from the decision-making process, such as women and young people. During engagement with indigenous communities, company representatives should make it clear that they are committed to acting in an inclusive and non-discriminatory way.

Where traditional decision-making structures exclude women and younger people, it may be necessary to obtain input from these groups by less direct means – for example, and where possible, via community needs surveys and baseline studies, or through informal discussions with small groups. Also, company representatives should endeavour to explain to traditional decision makers that, while they respect existing structures and will work through them wherever possible, it is important for the company to understand how its activities might affect all sectors of the community.

Good practice community engagement, in the context of Indigenous Peoples and mining, aims to ensure that:

- Indigenous Peoples have an understanding of their rights
- companies in turn understand the rights, aspirations and concerns of Indigenous Peoples, both in their operations and more generally
- indigenous communities are informed about, and comprehend, the full range (short, medium and long term) of social and environmental impacts – positive and negative – that can result from mining
- companies understand and address positive and any potentially negative impacts, and recognize, respect and use traditional knowledge to inform the design and implementation of mitigation strategies