

# TOOL 7

## Strengthening the community asset base

This tool provides an overview of some of the major contributions mining can make to a community's asset base and outlines some of the key areas that companies should focus on sharing benefits. As discussed in Section 4.3, however, it is important to emphasize that indigenous communities may not desire the kinds of benefits that mining projects may bring, and instead may choose to maintain their traditional lifestyle.

### Employment and human capital development

Indigenous Peoples are often economically marginalized, experience above-average levels of poverty and have below-average rates of participation in mainstream labour markets. This is due to a combination of factors, including accumulated socioeconomic disadvantage, discrimination, geographical location and, in some cases, cultural preferences for traditional lifestyles.

One of the most tangible ways in which mining can benefit Indigenous Peoples is by providing employment opportunities in locations where there may be few, if any, alternative sources of paid work. Jobs are important, not only because they generate income and the benefits that flow from that, but also because they provide opportunities to build skills and increase mobility. However, there can be a variety of barriers to the employment of Indigenous Peoples, including:

- lack of education and relevant training
- lack of basic skills or practical restraints (such as not having a driving licence)
- geographical isolation
- cultural beliefs and practices
- challenges in balancing mainstream employment with family and cultural obligations
- poor health and well-being.

Actions that companies can take to support employment and human capital development are outlined in the sections below.

### Make a commitment to indigenous employment

This sends a clear signal that a company is determined to share benefits at the local level and build positive and long-term development initiatives. This is particularly the case if the company can show that it is focused not just on meeting the short-term labour needs of an operation, but on growing the labour pool and developing the skills and capabilities of people in the longer term. Concrete steps companies can take include:

- determining the employment aspirations of Indigenous Peoples
- developing an indigenous employment policy
- ensuring that non-indigenous managers are trained (on an ongoing basis) in cultural understanding to support and work with indigenous employees from the indigenous community
- setting internal targets for indigenous employment and retention, and regularly reviewing performance against those targets
- using social baseline information in order to understand the barriers that may be preventing Indigenous Peoples from participating in the workforce and developing strategies to address these
- ensuring that appropriate labour standards are being met and that all local employees, including Indigenous Peoples, are treated equitably.