



Dialogue Process – Suggested Next Steps

CAO Complaint regarding impacts of Bankers Petroleum Albania Ltd. Operations

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CAO Facilitators

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INTRODUCTION

Following the January 27, 2014 dialogue meeting with community representatives about impacts of Bankers Petroleum operations, it was not clear to the CAO team whether all those in attendance were supportive of engaging in a dialogue process with the company, or whether they are willing to develop and adhere to ‘dialogue goals’ and ‘ground rules’ that will enable any potential engagement process to be successful.

It also was not clear the extent to which participants in the January meeting represented the wider interests of their respective communities.

The CAO therefore visited communities in April 2014 and held one-on-one conversations with residents and others focused on clarifying those issues. The next steps in the CAO dialogue process, as proposed below, incorporate input from those conversations, as well as from CAO’s previous experiences and insights – beginning with our initial assessment in May 2013 and subsequent stakeholder meetings that began in October 2013 until present.

APPROACH: Citizen Roundtables

Based on public input and broad agreement that smaller ‘problem-solving’ groups will be more effective than larger, multi-commune stakeholder groups at identifying and addressing specific issues, the CAO proposes to assist in developing and launching “Citizen Roundtables” in each of the communes.

The Roundtables, once established, would serve as a regular forum for community and company representatives to learn from one another, exchange information and ideas, develop practical solutions to issues identified by each commune, and engage in cooperative community planning. Each Roundtable must establish goals and protocols (or ‘ground rules’) that will guide the discussions and activities.

An ideal mix of Roundtable participants will include citizen representatives of various interest groups; for example youth, elders, women, farmers, or others, as identified by each commune. Several Commune Council representatives also would participate. The Roundtables would not include council leadership or elected or appointed officials from the communes or larger region. In this way, the Roundtables will constitute a cross-section of voices from among the citizens of each commune.

STEP 1 – Identify Roundtable Participants

Following on conversations the CAO team had with stakeholders about effective and appropriate community representation, the CAO will work with communes to identify a small group (no more than 8 to 10 people) of Roundtable participants who represent diverse voices or sectors in the population. The participants must be viewed as generally representative and trusted by a larger group of commune residents, and be willing and available for a set period of time (to be determined by the groups themselves) to attend regular meetings (i.e. monthly or quarterly), report back to the broader community about discussions and activities of the group, listen to and understand the perspectives of others, and consider ideas and solutions that are good for the whole community.

STEP 2 – Capacity Building

Once the Roundtable participants have been selected, it will be important to introduce and develop skills for active listening, effective communication, and interest-based decision making. These concepts are at the core of successful alternative dispute resolution (ADR) processes; ‘alternative’ means trying different, more creative and inclusive approaches. The CAO team will conduct 1.5 day workshops for the participating communes and for the company staff focused on introducing and building these skills.

STEP 3 – Launch the Roundtables and Begin Dialogue Process

After facilitating and evaluating feedback and effectiveness of the capacity building workshops, the CAO will determine whether community and company participants are prepared to begin the substantive discussions. If so, the first agenda item for each Roundtable will involve:

- A) Establishing goals and objectives for the Roundtables (i.e., what do the participants hope to accomplish?);
- B) Communication and engagement procedures (ground rules to help focus the discussions in a productive way and prevent the process from becoming side-tracked by unnecessary procedural disputes); and
- C) A general timeline for achieving the short-, medium- and long-term goals identified by Roundtable participants. (For the Roundtables to be successful, participants must be willing to focus both on communes’ immediate concerns, as well as longer-term opportunities, challenges, and visions for the future.)

The CAO also will focus initial discussions on the sustainability of the Roundtables, and strategies for how the process can continue when the CAO concludes its involvement.

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