

productive resolution of conflicts is thus a vital foundation for more-sustainable development.

This paper will seek to map the terrain between conflict and mining, focusing on the types of interventions that mining companies, governments and interested non-state actors can use proactively to prevent or resolve social tension.

CONFLICT AND MINING

What is Conflict ?

Conflict is the opposing action of incompatible or divergent ideas, interests, or persons⁴. Typically emerging from a complex mix of causal factors, conflicts are caused by insecure or inequitable access to resources, by competition between social groups for political power, or by incompatibilities between groups with distinct value systems. Throughout history, conflict has played a vital transformative role, as an opportunity for the redistribution of resources, the redefinition of political rights and the resolution of competing value-systems.

A conflict can be non-violent (as in the case of broad-based civil protest or legal challenge), latent (repressed under a dictatorial regime) or violent. It can take place at the local, regional, national or international level. It includes the fragile peace that exists after a period of open conflict, as well as the unstable peace that prevails before conflict emerges.

Researchers distinguish between three means for resolving these conflicts⁵: by reconciling disputants' basic interests, typically through negotiation; by adjudicating between rights, such as through a legal process; or by contests of relative power, through strikes or military force.

A conflict is significant for the purposes of this study if it affects or is affected by the activities of a mining or minerals-based operation.

Mineral Wealth as a Cause of Conflict or Source of Stability ?

It is unclear what role mineral exploitation plays in a country's susceptibility to collapse into violent conflict. Poverty is perhaps the leading source of conflict, and conflict entrenches poverty. Three-quarters of the 20 least developed countries have experienced

⁴ Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, online edition, 2001. <http://www.britannica.com>.

⁵ Ury, W., William Ury, Jeanne Brett, and Stephen Goldberg, *Getting Disputes Resolved* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1988)