

Cultural Integration: Alliance Building

Challenge

Water and sanitation debates often cause social-environmental conflicts, especially for mining projects, when resettlement requirements often inflame this tension. Mining companies usually purchase the least expensive, off-shelf equipment to mitigate waste-water treatment in the affected communities to their detriment. Could responsible user-centered design restore stakeholder balance?

Solution

Our research uncovered a World Bank document entitled *Promoting Sanitation Markets at the Bottom of the Pyramid in Peru: A Win-Win-Win for Government, the Private Sector, and Communities*. The lead author, the Coordinator for Creating Sanitation Markets (CSM), works in the Lima, Peru office. The program promotes sanitation as a business opportunity—rather than a business liability. CSM developed a “sanitation package” that includes technology, installation, financing, and hygienic information. The CSM package empowers rural communities to micro-finance their own sanitation solutions, rather than “waiting for outside solutions.”

Result

By aligning the mining company with the Creating Sanitation Markets Program, we created value for the mining project, the affected communities, and the local municipalities. The model provided opportunities for scalable sanitation markets and included local training for system use-and-maintenance. Business and local government participants gained new income-generating opportunities and local citizens acquired access to safer water. Our multi-stakeholder approach freed the company from the constraints of a siloed and short-term approach. Instead, it positioned the mining project as a Sustainable Development participant. We inspired long-term thinking—and still made our client’s numbers.