

April 30, 2013

OHCHR's Management Plan 2014-2017

Since its inception in 2006, the OHCHR's management plan has helped to streamline OHCHR's operations, strengthen accountability, and ultimately increase the effectiveness of the OHCHR's critical mission of human rights promotion. As the office develops its targets for the upcoming cycle, we – **VIVAT International, Franciscans International, and the Sisters of Mercy** -- believe that these expected accomplishments must incorporate an increased focus on the role of the extractive industry in human rights violations.

In the past decades of economic growth, extractive industries have ballooned in both size and influence. As reserves run low in established mines, investment is increasingly focused on developing countries. A recent report by the Metal Economics Group details that in 2011, 25% of mining investment was directed toward Latin America.

However, these inflows of investment are often accompanied by a marked increase in human rights violations. In Colombia, 80% of the human rights violations of the last ten years were committed in mining and energy-producing regions. In addition, 87% of Colombia's displaced population hail from these places. More mining interests are also turning their attention to Africa, which hosts 30% of the world's mineral reserves including 40% of gold and 90% of platinum group elements. Such future development is tending to increase strife on this continent already struggling to develop. Currently, this increased prevalence of conflict arising from the extractive industry is not reflected in the SMP.

To address this problem, one of the Expected Accomplishments should include a specific clause emphasizing the need to be particularly vigilant of such violations in regard to extractive industries. Such a clause could be incorporated within, for example, goal number 5 in the current strategic priorities report, which states that: "Rights-holders, specially discriminated groups and particularly women, increasingly use existing national protection systems and participate in decision-making processes and the development and monitoring of public policies." An additional clause would also complement the goal's current focus on women. By including a clause aimed specifically at the extractive industry, the OHCHR would alert human rights defenders to a common source of violations and help to shape an office that for the next four years effectively raises the level of human rights adherence globally.

Further, OHCHR can play a strategic role through its global and national presence by offering normative clarity in the application of international human rights obligations to environmental legislation, especially with regard to impact assessments of extractive projects and the provision of technical assistance to national institutions in implementation.

An increasing and disturbing trend that we are witnessing on the ground is the changing of national environmental and mining laws and the exploitation of loopholes in laws without the full knowledge or consent of the people. With an increased focus on extractive industries, OHCHR is uniquely positioned to monitor these legislative changes to environmental codes, to counteract reduced democratic spaces, and to decriminalize social protest. Focus on these threats and trends should be a priority for OHCHR during the next four years.