



THE STORY OF THE DI

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THE BEGINNING

Can the private sector contribute to development?

The concept for the Devonshire Initiative grew from research done by Marketa Evans during her time as Executive Director of the Munk Centre for International Studies. In that role, she was conducting research exploring the potential for the private sector to make positive contributions to development, in particular relating to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). There were very few examples of Canadian companies engaging in development-motivated partnerships or projects at the time. Rather, she found examples of poor relationships between Canadian extractive companies operating overseas and the communities in which they were operating. These cases may have contributed to the low rates of Canadian private sector interest or engagement in development. [Talisman's](#) controversial involvement in Sudan, which ended with the sale of its claim in 2002, was a high-profile example of the possible risks of a multi-national extractive company operating in an environment with open conflict.

At the time, conversations in Canada about the MDGs lacked input from the private sector, even when they led to recommendations about the contributions that should be expected from the private sector. Additionally, conversations about the benefits of private sector involvement in emerging markets lacked details on how that involvement would benefit the poor. To begin addressing the complete absence of communication across sectors, Evans examined where private-NGO partnerships were occurring.

Her attention turned to the UK, which had seen some partnerships between NGOs and the private sector, and she focused on what factors influenced the success or failure of those projects.

With then World Bank Vice President Frannie Leautier, Evans organized a World Bank conference in April of 2006 to address the issue of business and NGO collaboration to meet the MDGs. The event strengthened Evans' connections with UK actors, in particular with the Kimberley Process on conflict diamond mining, which had formalized as a Certification Scheme in 2002. These connections led Evans to invite DeBeers to Toronto to share their experiences with the Kimberley Process (KP). They were accompanied by Partnership Africa Canada (PAC), another founding partner of the KP.

Evans felt it was time to take the lessons from the UK experience and to focus on revitalizing the conversation in Canada around NGO and private sector collaboration in pursuit of the MDGs. She presented at a public consultation at the Canadian government's CSR Roundtable discussions, and called for such a platform. At the end of her talk, the committee did not express interest in the idea but she was approached by audience members from the extractive industry about setting up a workshop to learn more about the Kimberley Process.

THE 'DI' IS BORN

Evans obtained some funding from DFATD (then DFAIT) to host a workshop to explore the lessons learned from the Kimberley Process. With her assistant, Ted Thomas (then a University of Toronto undergraduate student), she was able to assemble a small group of key people from NGOs and mining companies for a one day event on March 5th, 2007. Ian Smillie from PAC presented on the Kimberley Process, lessons learned about cross-sector collaboration, and the relationship between PAC and DeBeers. The conclusion from attendees was that the workshop and the dialogue between groups were valuable and something they wanted to continue to explore and engage with.

In October of 2007, the group decided to call itself the “Devonshire Initiative”, after the street Devonshire Place that housed the Munk Centre where they met. The group would meet semi-annually over its first 3 years, with those early workshops focusing on identifying and removing the barriers to collaboration between the sectors. Trust, or lack thereof, was one of the main hurdles, and participants focused on clearing up misconceptions, bridging the divide between the two sectors, and building trust.

Use of the [Chatham House Rule](#) helped to build trust between the individuals attending DI events in those early years, and has shaped the DI space as it exists today. Under the Chatham House Rule, general learnings can be taken from the conversation and shared with those who are not in attendance, but nothing said can be attributed to a particular individual or organization. This made the DI a safe space where people could speak openly without concern that what they shared could be used against them if it was revealed outside of the DI. Mining companies were concerned that

the NGOs would be critical of their operations rather than engaging with them in constructive dialogue. The NGOs were concerned about the potential impact that partnering and dialoguing with mining companies could have on their reputation with funders as well as other NGOs.

The DI became more established as a forum for dialogue through the sweat equity of those early players, who were contributing time and effort alongside their responsibilities at the organizations and companies they represented. These individuals were on the cutting edge of their fields and were willing to take risks to illuminate the need for cross-sector collaboration for both the development and extractive sectors.

In 2008, shifts in leadership of the DI coincided with work to formalize organizational systems and structures including membership criteria and contributions, the Steering Committee functions, and the back office support relationship. In 2010 the role of Director was formally established, and Alanna Rondi, who had been on contract leading the DI's process of formalizing, became its first Director.

External to the DI there were misconceptions in the broader mining and development communities regarding the interests and motivations of those involved in the DI. A common one was that there was an inverse relationship between accountability and collaboration. It was believed that since the DI focused on collaboration between the sectors, it would be incapable of also holding its members accountable for their business practices. As such, the NGO members of the DI were perceived to endorse the actions of the mining companies they were talking with in the DI space. Conversely, the DI members believed that, rather than accountability and collaboration being a zero-sum game, with collaboration and dialogue, organizations could better hold each other accountable for their practices.



NGO-MINING PARTNERSHIPS FACE PUBLIC SCRUTINY

In early 2012, after the DI had been up and running for a few years and new organizations and individuals were joining the conversation, the media became aware of three CIDA funded “pilot projects” run in partnership between mining companies and NGOs. This triggered a media storm which called into question the use of tax dollars in joint civil society-private partnerships.

The media coverage featured much misinformation on the projects and the DI itself, sending the DI members in the partnerships — particularly the NGOs — into a defensive mode to try to prevent a fallout with funders. Thankfully, the lasting impacts of the media storm were small. Very few donors retracted their support, none of the partnerships collapsed from the scrutiny, and the sectors continued working together.

Several key lessons were learned from the incident. Firstly, it led to a better articulation of why it was important for NGOs and mining companies to work together and why a space like the DI was needed. Secondly, the NGOs in particular learned the importance of having a communication strategy in place within a partnership in case they are called upon to justify it to external parties.

As well, the DI published an op-ed in [Embassy magazine](#) and responded to media enquiries while the situation unfolded to help inform journalists as to why it was important for NGOs and mining companies to be constructively dialoguing and working together. The DI also ran workshops on the importance of communicating about partnerships with the public and the media. This provided learning opportunities for those organizations caught up in the media storm as well as those witnessing it from the sidelines.



BEYOND BUILDING THE CASE TO IMPROVING PRACTICE

Since the early 2010s, DI membership has committed to the notion that cross-sector dialogue is valuable for both sides, and has continued to host workshops aimed at expanding knowledge and strengthening relationships. With the implementation of the Government of Canada's first CSR strategy, "Building the Canadian Advantage: A CSR Strategy for the Canadian Extractive Sector Abroad", the DI also saw a shift in government involvement. Key government representatives from DFATD (then CIDA) became regular participants in the forum, finding that attending the DI's workshops and being part of the network was an effective way to keep engaged and up to date with what was going on in each sector. The DI space was used to answer questions on government programming and policy, and occasionally, government representatives would present on particular topics of interest to DI members. In many cases, government participants found it beneficial to simply be in the room as conversations were taking place, much the same as any other DI member reaped the benefits of involvement. Today, the DI holds one event a year in Ottawa, which helps engage more with Ottawa-based NGOs and enables increased participation from the government.

Between 2011 and 2013, individuals new to the DI stepped up to the Steering Committee, and many founding members stepped back. This change has coincided with a shift in the broader conversation taking place at the DI. Rather than discussing whether cross-sector dialogue and collaboration is worthwhile and valuable, the

focus has changed to establish best practices and improve on previous collaborations. The DI members have also reached a point of greater familiarity with each other and the gap in understanding between the sectors has become smaller and smaller. The sectors speak in a common language in the DI space about operations and collaboration. It is understood that not only is there greater risk from not speaking to each other, but indeed, learning from one another is a way to mitigate risks.

External recognition for what the DI had accomplished in bringing together a diverse set of stakeholders, building trust, and creating a collaborative learning environment, was starting to build. The DI was requested increasingly to speak about the group, its evolution and its objectives in various forums. And in 2011, it was highlighted as a model multi-stakeholder platform for dialogue by the [World Economic Forum](#) (page 13) in their 2011 publication, the *Responsible Mineral Development Initiative*.

Since the DI was founded, it has made significant contributions to mainstreaming dialogue about cross-sectoral collaboration within Canada. Though the DI and its members have faced criticism for these contributions, today DI members are less concerned about how the DI is perceived by outsiders. Moreover, the membership has become resolved that collaboration between the sectors is inherently valuable. It should also be acknowledged that today the DI is no longer a unique player in the realm of cross-sector dialogue; they remain a leader in this area, but other organizations have begun working in this space as well.

DI LOOKS INTERNATIONALLY

Starting around 2012, the DI began engaging with international networks, such as the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and other groups in the World Bank, as well as the International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM) the World Economic Forum (WEF), the United National Development Program (UNDP), Fund for Peace, and others. Initially, DI members recommended reaching out to external experts they had experience with to attend DI events. Those who were contacted included individual actors, hosts of platforms, and think tanks around development and mining. At the time, the DI's low profile meant that existing connections between members and other organizations were the most effective way to connect the DI with others in the international community. Through those connections and persistence in connecting the DI itself with others, the DI gained more credibility as an institution and a greater voice in the international community. As well, the relationships became a way for external organizations and networks to reach DI members.

Currently, the DI participates in monthly 'Extractives for Development' conference calls with several policy bodies working in the 'E4D' space (such as WEF, UNDP, ICMM, the World Bank, etc.). The E4D group shares updates on new knowledge products, country specific initiatives, and upcoming events. Building these relationships has helped the DI stay involved in international conversations taking place around topics the DI membership are concerned with.



INFORMING & INCUBATING

There have also been projects which have spun out of the work of the DI. The first of these is La Responsabilite Social de l'Entreprise, or RSE, a multi-stakeholder CSR network in Burkina Faso whose structure is based on that of the DI. It was established by IAMGOLD and Plan Canada, who were partnering on a project there. RSE was established to bring together relevant stakeholders in the communities the project was taking place in for improved dialogue, and subsequently improved project management and effectiveness.

Another is the [Beyond Zero Harm Framework](#), or BZH, a participatory process for discussing, defining, measuring and analyzing community well-being. The concept was first discussed at a DI workshop in early 2012 where members were exploring how to measure social and economic impact. The initial issue was that out of all existing measurement tools and frameworks, there was none which explored whether communities were being strengthened by the presence of mining companies or weakened. The focus of the framework evolved from measuring a mining company's capacity to have a positive impact on communities in which it works to engaging stakeholders in understanding the impact of the mining company, whether positive or negative, with the goal of leveraging its presence for a greater positive impact on the community.

The BZH Framework was developed through a multi-sector working group comprised of mining companies, INGOs, and academics. It has also been assisted by re-Plan, a Toronto based social assessment, advisory, and management firm that has been participating in the DI since its early days,. The working group met three or four times a year to develop and revise the framework. The BZH framework is now available publicly on the DI website for use by anyone. Guidance on piloting and implementation is provided currently by several of the working group members.

DI REVIEWED & RE-FOCUSED

In 2014, the DI went through a strategic review which re-focused members on what and how the DI's mission and activities had changed since its creation. The objective shifted from focusing on "improving social and development outcomes where mining companies operate" to "improving development outcomes in communities where our members operate". The DI's revisited value proposition was spelled out as the following 4 priorities:

1. A safe space for dialogue, for learning and sharing, and for building understanding and trust based on shared values.
2. A forum for members' evolving practice and a connector to new initiatives, tools, and partnerships. The DI is an incubator of new initiatives.
3. A forum for building relationships, networking, and collaboration.
4. A model for multi-stakeholder dialogue that inspires and informs.

The strategic priorities which guide providing this value are: knowledge and dialogue creation, building capacity and improving practices, and conducting networking and outreach activities.

Finally, the DI has altered its membership criteria in 2015. Previously, the group was entirely funded by mining companies, which paid a flat rate for their membership. Under the new structure, NGO members will also make a small financial contribution, while funding requirements for small miners and explorers will be brought down from the level of larger companies. This will not only expand the DI's funding stream but more importantly, expand the breadth of industry perspectives within the forum. Additionally, the University of Waterloo and St. Paul's University College have become members of the DI and provide administrative support to the Initiative as the Munk Centre and University of Ottawa have in the past.

IN CONCLUSION

Since 2007, the DI has committed to providing a safe space for its members to facilitate learning, sharing, and collaboration between NGOs and mining companies. As both sectors continue to change and interact with each other in new ways, the DI also continues to change and evolve towards being the most effective it can be in meeting the goals of its members. There are still ongoing discussions about the ideal size of the DI membership, whether the DI should remain a space for dialogue or if it should instead look towards taking a stance on an issue or generating tangible outputs, and other topics around what the DI is and what it should be. Members are continuing to ask questions within this space about how it can be used most effectively in generating innovative and challenging dialogue which pushes the membership towards better practices in their fields.

Those outstanding questions are the next chapters in the story of the DI. Continuing to ask questions and seek answers leads the DI members towards broadening their knowledge, encouraging innovation, and promoting best practices at the intersection of mining and development.

Erin McLaren interned with the DI starting in June 2015. She is a graduate from the University of Waterloo in the Faculty of Environment with a major in International Development.



APPENDIX

Information Sources

Business Plan (2010) *Devonshire Initiative*

Business Plan (2011) *Devonshire Initiative*

2014 Strategic Review “Tinker or Tweak: Do Not Overhaul” (2014) *Devonshire Initiative*

Devonshire Initiative Background Chronology (2015) By Marketa Evans for the Devonshire Initiative

21 interviews with individuals involved in the establishment and development of the DI. (June through August, 2015) Conducted by Erin McLaren for the Devonshire Initiative

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