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From issue: **Consulta Previa and Investment** (Spring 2014)

■ AQ FEATURE

Getting to the Table

by

[Diana Arbeláez-Ruiz](#) and [Daniel M. Franks](#)

No mining project in Latin America can succeed today without full community consultation. Here's how it can work well.

Mining is a lot more than complex technology, logistics and finance. While mineral extraction does require an amazing array of machinery, computers, and processes for transporting and treating the materials, it is just as much a social project that is negotiated and conducted within a social context.

And just as the technological challenges require qualified engineers, geologists and other specialists, the social aspects of mining demand skilled, sophisticated experts who can lay the foundations for productive dialogue between communities, governments and project proponents.

Such a dialogue is critical to the viability of mining projects today. Securing the support of not only the communities immediately surrounding a site but of the larger society can be accomplished only within a framework of understanding that can endure throughout the life cycle of a project. Whether this step is required by law or pursued voluntarily, few mining projects can hope to succeed over the long term without it. Continuous dialogue among governments, communities and extractive companies that involves a consensus about both sharing opportunities and managing risk is essential.

Latin America is ahead of other regions in the expertise and practice of dialogue around mining. Largely as a result of its history of conflicts over mining, the region has generated scores of groups dedicated to fostering dialogue at all levels: project, regional and national.

With the support of the International Mining for Development Centre, we conducted two workshops in November 2013 in Lima, Peru, that were aimed at tapping this rich experience—and learning from it. The workshops included more than 60 specialists from 10 countries in the Americas: Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Panama, and Peru—with representatives from Australia.

Here are some of the things we learned...

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