

## **Boom, Bust and Human Security in the Extractive Sector: The Case of Colombia**

***James Rochlin***

The role of Canadian businesses in Colombia's extractive sector yields many global lessons regarding the promotion of human rights in a manner that is beneficial for host communities and for corporations. Colombia hosts almost all the imaginable human rights problems that can exist in relation to the mining and petroleum industries, and Canadian companies in extractive industries dominate in many areas of the Global South. This is a particularly opportune time to consider the human rights dimension of Canada's experience in Colombia's extractive sector, since the boom years have now turned to bust and therefore provide a useful panorama from which to draw a range of analytical conclusions. The central argument here is that a triad of factors are essential for a mutually beneficial relationship that ensures the promotion of human security[i] for host communities and which provides corporations with physical security and a better bottom line. First, tripartite negotiations between the government, corporations and the community are essential at the planning stage of extractive investment, and when critical issues arise once the operation is in place. Second, a human rights impact assessment (HRIA) prepared by an independent party is crucial at the exploratory phase, and annually when the project reaches fruition, to prevent potential human rights abuses and to monitor progress as well as any problematic changes. Finally, while corporate investment is typically made with euphoric hopes, the cyclical nature of extractive industries mean that no matter how good things look at the outset, careful plans must be in place to address community interests should the operation be forced to close.