

FairPensions and CAFOD Target Irresponsible Mining Companies

FairPensions has launched a major joint campaign with development charity CAFOD, targeting mining companies who do most damage to the environment and living conditions in poor communities.

The recent commodities boom has seen investors rush to buy shares in oil, gas and metals. Meanwhile mining companies are moving into areas previously deemed uneconomical because of their remoteness or political instability. Frequently this involves multinational mining companies hiring local contractors who operate with minimal regard for the damage caused by mining.

Our case is that substandard practices in mining not only create unacceptable social and environmental problems but can also damage the value of investments. Pension funds should therefore press for high standards in the mining industry in order to protect themselves from very real financial risks. Already we have seen some pension funds start to meet with their fund managers about investments in mining companies.

CAFOD's development efforts involve supporting local partners in Honduras, the Philippines and the Democratic Republic of Congo who work to secure a fair deal from mining. CAFOD's staff regularly see the effects of mining operations on the ground. Too often these involve social conflict, damage to ecosystems and water tables through poor planning or management, and displacement of communities against their will. There is a wealth of evidence that when mining companies ignore the concerns of local people or operate in an environmentally damaging way it increases the risk of commercial operations being disrupted by local protests or shut down by host governments. Getting higher standards in mining should be a win-win for poor communities and for investors. To find out more, read the full FairPensions and CAFOD Mining Sector briefings at www.fairpensions.org.uk.



One of the world's richest gold fields is in Mongbwali, north east Democratic Republic of the Congo. Yet the town's only hospital is short of staff and basic equipment.



In the Philippines, opponents of a mine on the island of Mindanao have been forcibly displaced.

TAKE ACTION

FairPensions needs you to contact your pension fund, asking it to use its investor rights as a positive influence on mining companies. Email your pension fund from our website:

http://www.fairpensions.org.uk/act_now/mining

Or, fill in the enclosed action postcard.

For more action postcards, write to:

FairPensions, Freepost RLZG-HGGY-LEUG, Trowbray House, 108 Weston Street, London SE1 3QB

Or email info@fairpensions.org.uk

From Living Wages to FairPensions: Catherine Howarth becomes Director of FairPensions



In July Catherine Howarth joined the Campaign for Responsible Investment. She says: "FairPensions has made a real impact during its short existence. Our extensive supporter base deserves much credit for this. There's much more to be done to achieve real accountability amongst global pension funds. I look forward to building our base and our campaigning strength so we continue to make measurable progress. Thank you for all you do."

Catherine's previous role at London Citizens included a high-profile campaign for a London Living Wage, which successfully influenced companies, investors, public bodies and politicians. Catherine is a pension fund trustee at The Pensions Trust and a former Senior Researcher at the New Policy Institute.

New 'Personal Accounts' Pension Scheme Lobbied by FairPensions to adopt Responsible Investment

The Pensions Bill, introduced to Parliament in January 2007, has provided a unique opportunity for FairPensions. The Bill aims to provide a new pension scheme that will open in 2012 and cover the 7 million UK workers who currently have no private pension provision. Over the last six months we have actively built support both inside and outside parliament for this new 'Personal Accounts' pension fund to commit to best practice in responsible investment.

After months of lobbying by FairPensions (which included briefing opposition front benchers and Labour backbenchers as well as meeting with key civil servants), the Personal Accounts Delivery Authority has announced it will consult on a responsible investment strategy this Autumn. This consultation provides FairPensions with the opportunity we need to ensure responsible investment is central to the scheme's strategy. In an encouraging sign, its Chair, Paul Myners, has been made public his view that he would like the scheme to be "an exemplar in governance and accountability."

Adopting responsible investment from the outset would set a strong example to pension funds across the UK. The Personal Accounts fund will quickly become the largest pension fund in the country so its policies will inevitably be influential on other smaller funds. Given its scale and nature, it will also have a very large influence on the many companies it will invest in. We believe it has a responsibility to use that power to engage with companies whose behaviours damage society and environment. Responsible Investment will also protect the investments of the pension fund - for example by minimising climate change now rather than dealing with worse and costlier consequences 20 years later. Most people with 'Personal Accounts' will be workers on low or insecure incomes, so it is critical that we safeguard their savings. FairPensions will continue to build support on this critical issue.

Volunteers raise over £7,500 for FairPensions at festivals



Sixty volunteers have worked for over 1,100 hours at festivals up and down the UK this summer, fundraising for FairPensions by working at festivals including Glastonbury, Reading, Leeds, Latitude and Rise. The bar work was organised by the Workers Beer Company, an offshoot of the Battersea and Wandsworth Trades Union Council which raises money for grassroots campaigns. FairPensions would like to thank everyone for turning up, weekend after weekend, and for working so hard!

Responsible Investment is spreading through the investment industry with your support

This Summer FairPensions conducts its second annual surveys of Responsible Investment among Pension Funds and Fund Managers. Early results indicate many have made genuine progress. This is a startling change, as it seems that the attitudes of multi-billion pound pension funds have shifted in the last 12 months! Please continue to support us as we drive big investors to take concrete action on issues like irresponsible mining and climate change. Only with your support, donations and action will we succeed in keeping responsible investment high on everyone's agenda.

Gordon Brown recognises FairPensions with "Social Justice Campaign" Award



Ben Watson, our Campaigns Assistant, has been awarded the title of 'London Social Justice Campaigner 2008.' The presentation was made by Gordon Brown at 10 Downing Street.

"I am absolutely delighted to receive such a prestigious award." Ben commented "It shows the enormous potential that FairPensions has to change the world for the better. By presenting the business case for Responsible Investment to important investors, FairPensions can help ensure that transnational corporations are not fuelling environmental destruction or undermining living conditions in the developing world."

The award is an initiative of the Sheila McKechnie Foundation – a charity that was set up in 2005 in memory of the former Director of Shelter and the Consumers' Association. The Foundation seeks to develop a new generation of campaigners who will tackle the root causes of injustice both in the UK and overseas.