



Bettercoal Colombia Working Group 2022 End of Year Report

Background

Bettercoal is a global, not for profit initiative, established in 2012 by a group of major European utilities, working towards a global responsible coal supply chain. We promote continuous improvement in the sustainability performance of coal mining operations by independently assessing them against the Bettercoal Code 2.0, the internationally recognised standard for assessing, assuring and sustaining stringent ethical, environmental and social performance in the coal supply chain. The independent assessments result in a Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP), which the coal producer is expected to follow to raise performance to meet the requirements of the Bettercoal Code.

The Bettercoal Colombia Working Group (CWG) is a member-led group that was setup in 2018 to develop a coordinated approach to the monitoring of CIPs, grow country expertise, and to better understand complex/systemic issues related to mining in Colombia that go beyond the individual CIPs and which require specific action. The CWG is formed of Bettercoal Members EnBW, Enel, ESB, Fortum, RWE, Vattenfall and chaired by Uniper. The CWG has detailed its purpose in the [Terms of Reference](#) for the group.

Bettercoal has been active in Colombia since the inception of the organisation, as Colombia was the first country where Bettercoal carried out a site assessment and we continue our assessment activity up to the present day, working with two of the three large coal exporters in the country, Cerrejón and Drummond¹.

Progress in 2022

The CWG set three key objectives for 2022, which build on the work programmes over previous years:

1. Monitoring of the Continuous Improvement Plans of Bettercoal Colombian Producers.
2. Develop and implement actions on prioritised contextual issues.
3. Engagement with Colombian stakeholders.

The CWG continued to focus on three contextual issues that were originally identified and prioritised in 2020. These prioritised issues are based on the main risks identified through the Bettercoal Assessment Process, other relevant sources of information and input from stakeholders.

1. Fostering increased dialogue in the peace building process
2. Access to clean water and water stewardship
3. Responsible mine closure and economic diversification

¹ Prodeco was assessed by Bettercoal in 2018 and is still a Bettercoal Producer but have ceased mining. We continue to engage with them to keep dialogue channels open and to be able to ask questions brought to us by stakeholders.

Monitoring CIPs

CIP monitoring continues to be a key part of the CWG's agenda. In its meetings with Cerrejón and Drummond, the CWG discussed aspects of the CIPs that remain open and the steps that the producers are taking to continuously improve.

Knowledge Sharing

The new Bettercoal Code 2.0, which now includes a standalone principle and expanded provisions on responsible mine closure and rehabilitation, has helped inform the CWG's continued engagement in this area and the group's development and implementation of knowledge sharing activities on the just transition.

Bettercoal held a webinar in January 2022 on Responsible Mine Closure. The purpose of the session was to bring together industry stakeholders to share best practice and learnings on responsible mine closure, as well as sharing their experiences of how they have approached economic diversification planning. The CWG will continue to explore opportunities for knowledge sharing in 2023 across a broader range of stakeholders.

In-Person Engagement with Stakeholders

A key pillar of the CWG work programme in 2022 was to hold an in-person engagement programme in Colombia. Following on from our virtual engagement in 2021, this was the first time a Bettercoal delegation had been in Colombia since 2018.

A delegation of five Bettercoal Members and the Chair of the Bettercoal Board of Directors participated in a week-long programme of events. The programme focused on discussing CIP issues with producers as well as addressing the CWG's three prioritised issues with a range of stakeholders.

The delegation met with 64 stakeholders during the five-day engagement programme. These included 1-1 meetings with producers, dialogue organisations, the Colombian Mining Association, ambassadors, and business organisations. We were also able to exchange perspectives in multi-stakeholder workshops with community leaders, local government and institutions as well as in a forum organised by the trade unions that form the Workers Collective for a Just Transition.

The full list of stakeholders that we met with is included in the Annex on page 5.

Overall, the delegation engaged with stakeholders on the three prioritised issues and garnered understanding from a variety of perspectives. The input received throughout these meetings helped identify further specific areas and actions which Bettercoal and the CWG can look to focus on in the future.

Addressing identified prioritised contextual issues

Throughout the September engagement programme, the CWG continued to address the three prioritised contextual issues.

1. Fostering increased dialogue in the peace building process

Bettercoal worked with the Regional Center for Responsible Businesses and Entrepreneurship (Centro Regional de Empresas y Emprendimientos Responsables or CREER) to set-up and facilitate multi-stakeholder meetings during the engagement programme.

Members of the Colombia Working Group have previously supported CREER's multi-stakeholder dialogue project, "Building Trust in Cesar". This project's objective was to work towards a transformation of conflict within the Cesar region and to generate trust by building agreements to establish collective processes in support of development and coexistence in the region.

CREER presented the work they have been undertaking on the political and legal context of coal mining in Colombia, developing indicators of Just Transition to track progress on advancements of these principles, as well as developing principles for a Just Transition based on their work with communities. It was clear that this is making an important contribution to capacity building for one of the most vulnerable populations in Colombia and to country-specific research into the Just Transition.

Bettercoal also met with a representative of the Comisión de la Verdad, Convivencia y No Repetición (Truth Commission) to better understand the findings and recommendations from the Final Report that was published in June 2022 to address past armed conflict, and how this work will be taken forward with the new government.

The CWG engages with producers on this prioritised issue to raise concerns that stakeholders have shared with us and to better understand producers' engagement with the Truth Commission process.

2. Access to clean water

Through the Bettercoal Assessment Process and engagement with other stakeholders, the CWG identified water stewardship and access to clean water as a key issue. Given the relevance that water has not only as a basic human need, but also for economic activities and its cultural and religious relevance, the CWG believes that in such a context a holistic approach to water management would be beneficial.

The CWG's continued monitoring of CIPs, including in the area of water stewardship and access to clean water, is an important part of ongoing engagement with producers and other stakeholders.

As part of the CWG's engagement programme, the delegation visited Cerrejón's mine site in La Guajira, which included the Bruno Creek and the section of the diverted stream. The delegation discussed the importance of building trust on water stewardship with Cerrejón and shared examples of approaches to water stewardship projects that have been successful in other countries. The delegation also emphasised how water stewardship is covered in the Bettercoal Code and assessment process, such as by identifying actual and potential impacts associated with mining activities and management of its impacts.

3. Responsible Mine Closure and Economic Diversification

A topic dominating country discourse is the Energy Transition of which "Just Transition" is an important pillar. The Just Transition is a priority of the new government but also, from a coal mining perspective, the relinquishment of Prodeco's mining licences has also had a significant impact on conversations around what happens when coal mining stops. We heard concerns from a wide range of stakeholders on the impact of the cessation of mining operations on coal mining regions.

Throughout the week, we shared information about the Bettercoal Code 2.0 and its new principle on responsible mine closure and rehabilitation. This principle includes expanded provisions on mine closure planning as well as specific text on the Just Transition. The delegation emphasised to stakeholders the importance of carrying out assessments against the new Bettercoal Code 2.0 and the benefit of applying the model of 'continuous improvement' to this critical issue.

In conversations with stakeholders about the Just Transition, some members of the delegation also spoke about the project 'Transition to a Diversified Economy'. This is a project co-funded by the Netherlands Enterprise Agency and three utilities, all Bettercoal Members – Uniper, RWE and Onyx-Power – and other project partners including CNV and CREER. They shared that their participation and work in the CWG helped increase their understanding of issues in Colombian coal mining and helped shape their decision to support this project. The project aims to support the transition in Colombian mining regions from coal mining dominance towards a more diversified local economy. A key project objective is to build a project coalition that brings together different stakeholders around a common vision and strategy regarding alternative local economic development.

Conclusion

The CWG is currently planning the group's work and objectives for 2023, building on the progress made in 2022, and looking at developing knowledge sharing activities in its prioritised areas. We want to thank the stakeholders that we met with during our engagement programme, and we value how our discussions deepened the CWG's understanding of the context in which the Bettercoal Code operates in Colombia.

Annex

Below is a list of all the stakeholders the Bettercoal delegation met with during its September Engagement Programme.

Type	Organisation
Business Association	Asociacion Colombiana de Minería (National Mining Association of Colombia)
	Fenalcarbon
Dialogue Organisations	Centro Regional de Empresas y Emprendimientos Responsables (CREER)
Community Organisations whose representatives participated in multi-stakeholder dialogue sessions	Asociación Nacional De Usuarios Campesinos
	Sectores afrocolombianos
	Mujeres campesinas Codazzi
	Mesa de víctimas y grupo motor PDET
	Sector campesino y productores La Jagua
	Líder proceso reubicación El Hatillo
	Líder sectores LGBTIQ+ y jóvenes El Paso
	ANUC y ANMUCIC
	Asociación de Zonas de Reserva Campesina
	Reincorporados Tierra Grata
	Asociación Departamental de Mujeres Indígenas, Campesinas y Negras (ADMUCIC)
Local Government, Academics and Institutions whose representatives participated in multi-stakeholder dialogue sessions	Cámara de Comercio
	Agencia de Renovación del Territorio
	Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje (SENA)
	Universidad del Área Andina
	Universidad de Santander UDES
Government	Programa de desarrollo y paz del Cesar (ONG)
	Truth Commission
	Ambassador Ernst Noorman (Ambassador of the Netherlands to Colombia)
	Ambassador Fiona Nic Dhonnacha (Ambassador of Ireland to Colombia)
	Mr. Klaus Botzet (Deputy Chief of Mission and Head of the Economic Department of the German Embassy to Colombia)
Coal Producers	Cerrejon
	Drummond
	Prodeco
	CNR
Trade Unions	CNV, Sintraminergetica, Sintracarbon, Sintracerrejon, Sintradem, Sintradrummond



Annex 1 Addendum: We worked to try and arrange meetings with the national government ministries, but the new government was engaged in the process of developing the National Development Plan and conducting regional consultation. For the multi-stakeholder events in Valledupar, we were pleased to see so many groups participate in the roundtable discussions, but it should be noted a number of other groups were invited but were unable to attend.