

A LOOK AT ENERGY TRANSITIONS IN COAL MINING TERRITORIES IN COLOMBIA

ACTORS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND DIALOGUE

→ This work compiles the key learnings from a visit by the CSRM (University of Queensland), the IHRB and the Ford Foundation to Bogotá, Cesar and La Guajira. It proposes moving beyond the concept of "mine closure" toward **responsible exits**: an approach that covers the full project lifecycle and engages actors across the entire value chain, integrating social, environmental and Human Rights dimensions.



1 CONTEXT

WHY TALK ABOUT RESPONSIBLE EXITS IN COLOMBIA TODAY?

- Colombia is the largest coal producer in Latin America and one of the **world's top 10 exporters**.
- The **33%** of coal-titled land is concentrated in Cesar and La Guajira, where coal accounts for between **43% and 95%** of departmental budgets and royalty revenues.
- The closure of Prodeco's mines in 2020 in Cesar exposed the cost of an unplanned exit: mass unemployment, falling royalties and deepening inequality.
- The transition is not only technical — it affects the economic, social, cultural and spiritual fabric of entire territories.

CENTRAL TENSION

- Global policies are accelerating mine closures, but in these territories coal still sustains employment and public finances. Without anticipatory and participatory planning, mining communities will disproportionately bear the costs of this transition.

2 WHAT WAS DONE AND HOW?

Objective: To generate situated knowledge and strategic dialogue on the conditions needed to advance toward responsible exits and just transitions in Colombia's coal mining territories, drawing on transition experiences from other countries.

THREE LINES OF ANALYSIS

1 Regulatory and public policy analysis

- International standards and Colombia's regulatory framework on mine closure, energy transition and territorial planning.

2 International sources and experiences

- Specialized literature
- Reference cases: Australia, Colombia, India, England and Peru.

3 Field visit and territorial dialogues (August 2025)

Phase I: Bogotá

- Event "Responsible exits and closures: global lessons for local action"; workshop with civil society; dialogue with the private sector (ACM).

Phase II: Field visit

- **Cesar:** technical visit to Pribbenow mine (Drummond Ltd.); dialogue with the Collective of Workers for a Just Transition; meeting with women, youth and LGBTIQ+ communities.

- **La Guajira:** dialogue with Wayuu and Afro-descendant communities in Paradero (Albania); meeting with local authorities.

- **Participants:** local communities, civil society organizations, workers, trade unions, local and regional authorities, Wayuu people, academia and the private sector.

3 RESULTS

AXIS 1



Social participation and justice

- Current participation mechanisms are largely procedural: they inform, but do not allow communities to shape decisions.
- The Constitutional Court (T-029/2025) required substantive participation in the Prodeco case. **A landmark judicial ruling in a mine closure process in Colombia.**
- Women, youth and LGBTIQ+ communities face structural barriers to participating in decisions about the future of their territories.
- Global lesson: when workers and communities **co-design the transition from the outset**, closure is experienced as an opportunity, not a threat.

AXIS 2



Governance and territorial institutions

- Colombia does not yet have a comprehensive responsible exit policy. The current framework is reactive, fragmented and focused primarily on environmental issues.
- Local authorities in Cesar and La Guajira acknowledge the urgency of the transition, but lack the tools, information and resources to lead it.
- **The gap between the national decarbonization agenda and land-use and master plans at the municipal level is one of the greatest obstacles.**

AXIS 3



Conceptual alignment

- "Closure," "just transition" and "responsible exit" mean different things to communities, companies and the State. **This lack of alignment breeds distrust.**
- Pedagogical mediation processes are needed to translate technical and legal language on mine closure into the cultural realities of the territory.

AXIS 4



Workforce retraining and economic diversification

- Informal female employment in Cesar reaches **66%**, above the national average (58%); women will be among the most vulnerable if closures are poorly planned.
- **How are we going to survive when the mine is no longer here?**
- **Technical training must be accompanied by real productive investment.**
- Colliie (Australia): invested over **AUD 600 million** in retraining, including the Colliie Jobs & Skills Centre with tailored programs and access to financing for new industries.

AXIS 5



Shared responsibility

- Mining companies must actively take ownership of planning for **"life after the mine."**
- International coal buyers also bear **responsibility for the social costs of the transition** — yet they remain absent from the public conversation.
- **Trailing liability:** the principle that a company which operated a project retains responsibility for its impacts, even if it transfers assets or withdraws from the territory.

4 CONCLUSIONS

Drawing on the work's findings, these are the lessons that chart the path toward responsible exits and just transitions in Colombia's mining territories:

- **1** A social and human rights lens on mine closures
- **2** Due diligence and multi-scale shared responsibility
- **3** The (dis)connection between the national agenda and territorial planning
- **4** The (mis)alignment of the mining sector with the transition agenda
- **5** Absence of a regulatory framework on responsible exits and closures

- **6** Strengthening workforce retraining and economic diversification strategies
- **7** Governance, participation and shared responsibility in territorial planning
- **8** Multi-stakeholder dialogue as an enabler of the transition
- **9** Addressing uncertainty through adaptive planning
- **10** Coexistence of diverse and shared narratives toward a just transition

