

World Bank Brown Bag Meeting & Georgetown Conference on Indigenous Peoples and New Economic Opportunities in Latin America

By Jean Pierre Chabot

On February 8th 2007 the World Bank sponsored a brown bag meeting in which FOCAL was invited to present on the seminar that occurred in Lima, Peru on the 1-2 of February 2007 on the topic of *Governance and the Extractive Industries on Indigenous Territories*. FOCAL's presentation was preceded by a presentation on the *El Ciebo Coop Federation*, which is an innovative indigenous export organization operating in Bolivia. Participants at the World Bank brown bag meeting included, among others, representatives from the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank Group, the Inter-American Foundation, and representatives from the Canadian government. The team of Canadian representatives included representatives from Foreign Affairs Canada, CIDA's Indigenous Peoples Partnership Programme (IPPP), and the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

The brown bag meeting was followed by a full-day conference held at the Georgetown University Campus on February 9th 2007. The Georgetown conference focused on the results of a study conducted by Harry Anthony Patrinos and Emmanuel Skoufias of the World Bank on *Economic Opportunities for Indigenous Peoples in Latin America*. The presentations at the conference looked at the second phase of the World Bank study on Indigenous peoples, poverty, and economic opportunities. The conference looked at the opportunities and challenges that are inherent in the design of programs for supporting economic development in Indigenous communities in Latin America.

An interesting finding included in the World Bank study was the identification of social capital, in the form of social networks, as a key factor in understanding the problems faced in implementing programs designed to increase economic activity and wealth in Indigenous communities. The study identified two types of social capital: bonding and bridging social capital. Of the two types of social capital bonding social capital was identified as being a possible limitation to increased economic development. The World Bank study took an asset approach to understanding the complex issue of poverty in Indigenous communities in Latin America. Use of the asset approach allowed the study to assess the impact of the access of Indigenous peoples to multiple asset types. The study showed how asset portfolios of Indigenous peoples tend to be less diversified, therefore impacting their ability to take advantage of economic opportunities. Participants of the Georgetown Conference also had the opportunity to view the film, "Circle of Light", that was presented by Kathryn Fournier of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.