



Mining, Minerals and
Sustainable Development

July 2001

No. 18

Access to Information: A Key to Building Trust in the Minerals Sector. The Government Role

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The project was made
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Abstract

In the past few years, state intervention on minerals development has significantly changed in developing countries. Aiming at attracting mining investment within a market economy context, developing countries with high mining potential have established a new legal and regulatory framework for mining activities where states provide basic geologic information, grant mining concessions and partake in the mining surplus mainly through income based taxes. In this reform, the issue of participation of adjacent communities to mining projects has largely been neglected, jeopardizing the success of the mining structural reform.

At the core of community participation lies the issue of consultation and, in particular, the extent to which consultation could weaken mining rights granted by the state. This has led to a situation where in most reformed countries the state does not intervene in the mining company-community relationship and consultation is a quasi private process. In this situation, poor and weaker stakeholders are not adequately incorporated in the consultation process and a level playing field for all stakeholders concerned with the mining development is not guaranteed, which in some cases has led mining companies to co-opt community leaders onto their interests. As a consequence, there is need for the state to establish a framework which promotes an effective interaction between stakeholders and includes both public consultation and the right of local communities to partake in the benefits of mining development.

Key information required by the state to promote effective interaction between mining and communities is analyzed. A double role for the state as regulator and facilitator is identified and, therefore, two kinds of information requirements are distinguished. The need for capacity building is highlighted, if states are to effectively use the information obtained. Some general principles regarding who should pay for gathering and disseminating information are also discussed. It is concluded that companies must pay for the information required by regulations and agreements but that gathering and disseminating key additional information should be financed by the local community budget.

I Introduction

This is one of four input papers that will be the analytical basis of the study on ***“Information Availability: A Key to Building Trust in the Minerals Sector”***, which was commissioned by the Mining Minerals and Sustainable Development Project. The study will explore the subject of access to information around mining projects and its role in improving communication among actors affected by the mineral cycle.

Within this context, drawing on the Latin America, Asian, Pacific and African experience the objective of the paper is to review the position of government as regulator and policymaker and its interaction with the mining industry and local and indigenous communities. Specifically, the paper looks at existing patterns of regulation and policy for the mining sector, identifies the key types of information needed by governments to enable effective interaction between stakeholders, discusses government reluctance to acquire and release information to stakeholders, and, in a general manner, address the issue of who should pay for information gathering and communication.

2 Policy and Regulation Patterns

2.1 The Economic Context

Since the middle 80's, large regions in the world have emerged from a long period of economic nationalism and planned economies, giving rise to a global market economy. This has entailed a profound reform of the state leading to the widespread diffusion of democratic institutions and market-based economies in the world. In spite of the unavoidable tensions and conflicts that such a process creates, there are signs that these global trends tend to consolidate over the long term. For example, despite their traditional instability, the Andean countries of Latin America¹ have overcome several economic and political crises since the late nineties, preserving their democratic and market economy institutions.

Key to this global process has been the retreat of the state from controlling and intervening in the economy and, therefore, allowing the private sector to take the lead in organizing resource allocation. Macroeconomic policies were reformed to provide an economic environment friendly to private initiative and investment. Multiple exchange rates are now uncommon. Export and import barriers have been lowered. A number of countries do not discriminate against foreign investors; allow free repatriation of capital and profits, and access to foreign currencies at market rates.

In several of these reforming and transitional economies, the minerals sector has been a key piece within the economic reform due to its potential to generate foreign exchange and economic surplus. This led to the establishment of new legal, fiscal and environmental regimes for the minerals sector.

¹ These countries are Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela.

2.2 Structural Reform of the Minerals Sector

The minerals industry could be one of few drivers for developing economies that need to reach high economic growth rates. This is because mining activities increase exports, boost economic surplus, increase fiscal revenues, create employment, give rise to service activities, and develop infrastructure. A recent study in the local impact of large mines shows, for example, that La Escondida, a copper mine in Chile, Yanacocha, a gold mine in Peru, and Inti Raymi, a gold mine in Bolivia, account for a significant portion of economic activities, income and employment in the neighboring cities of Antofagasta, Cajamarca and Oruro².

Therefore, in economies with mining potential, the structural reform of the minerals sector aimed at attracting capital, technology and entrepreneurship needed to develop this potential that in turn will foster economic growth. The kernel of the reform was, consequently, the establishment of an enabling investment environment for mining which comprised the following main policies (World Bank, 1992; Remy F., 1996 and Rosenfeld A. & Clark A. 2000):

- The setting up of an institutional framework needed for accessing minerals resources without impairing the environment. Thus, the typical reformed institutional framework comprises four elements. The Ministry of Mines is responsible for mining policies, institutional coordination within the government, and supervision of the mining sector. The Geological Survey provides basic geological information, which is required for mining exploration but too costly to gather by the private sector. The Department of Mines is entrusted with the mining cadastre, licensing, and administering mining rights. Finally, the Environmental Office is responsible for overseeing the environmental performance of the mining sector, enforcing compliance and reviewing environmental assessments for new projects³.
- The legal framework of mining was enhanced to streamline the processes to obtain mining rights and permits to operate. Legal procedures to resolve disputes over mining rights were also simplified. In addition, modern technologies such as global positioning systems using satellites and advanced computing systems were incorporated into mining cadastres. This significantly enhanced the security of tenure of mining rights holders.
- As competition for investment became global, mining fiscal regimes were also reformed to avoid double taxation and to levy a competitive tax burden for comparable countries (Remy, F. 1996). Currently, most mining fiscal regimes in the world are income-based taxation with no or minimum royalties to allow tax payments paid abroad to be credited against the investor's tax obligations in its home country. In addition, reimbursement of indirect taxes such as customs duties and value added tax were included into the mining fiscal regime.

² The International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada, and the World Bank supported the study on Large Mining and the Community. Its results were presented at the Mining and Community workshop of the World Mines Ministries Forum held on March 8-10 in Toronto Canada. It will be published this year by the IDRC

³ The World Bank considers that a Mineral Promotion Agency, which a purely introductory and facilitating role, will also be needed in countries with good geological potential and little mining experience.

- An environmental regulatory framework designed to prevent and control environmental impacts from mining activities was also established. This has led to the diffusion of environmental impact assessments studies prior to permitting the operation of a mining project. It also has brought about the formulation and dissemination of several guidelines on how to comply with environmental standards and improve environmental management.
- The privatization or transferring of state mining operations to private investors or stewards has been encouraged.
- New lands, previously set aside from exploration and mining, were opened to private investors.

In summary, the structural reform of the mining sector has involved new mining policies for attracting private investment to develop a country's mineral potential. In this process, the state has focused on the legal, institutional, fiscal and environmental requirements for fostering a sound, privately owned mining industry. Based on previous experience, the reform sought to maximize the contribution of the mining industry to the national economy. Implicitly, it was assumed that mining would be also beneficial at a micro level such as at the local community level. This explains that the vademecum for the structural reform of the mining sector lacks specific policies to deal with the needs or aspirations of mining projects' local neighbors. Moreover, governments have no clarity about their role in the context of the mining and community relationship.

2.3 The Rise of Local Communities

Almost simultaneously to the mining reform in the nineties, the issue of local and indigenous communities acquired prominence for the international mining industry. For example, at *Mining in the Next 25 Years* Conference held by the World Bank in 1997:

it was clear that the primary concern of mining industry executives was proper management of the relationship with indigenous people and local communities. Resolution of this issue is now recognized as one of the most pressing issues in most large mining projects

(McMahon & Strongman, 1999, p:8).

This is largely because conflicts with local communities can lead to delays in construction and production and even halt ongoing mining activities. Thus, a conflictive mining and community relationship jeopardizes the main objective of the structural reform of the mining sector, which is to attract mining investments.

Several reasons underlie the increasing importance of local and indigenous communities⁴. They could be regarded as negative and positive drivers. On the one hand, negative drivers are those factors related with the legacy of pollution, poverty and abandoned communities – ghost towns – left, mainly in the past, once a mining operation shut down and due to government neglect. Positive drivers, on the other hand, are caused by mining results or impacts that are potentially beneficial for local communities such as creation of employment

⁴ For a more detailed account see McMahon & Strongman (1999) and Joyce & Thomson (1999)

and mining business supporting activities or originate in more broad and profound social processes such as government decentralization or the revaluation of local or indigenous values and culture. Ultimately, local and indigenous communities are pressing on mining operations because they seek to avoid negative impacts and maximize the benefits from mining or mineral exploitation. They have a legitimate aspiration that mining should significantly contribute to their sustainable development; otherwise, they would oppose minerals exploration and extraction.

Within the framework developed in the structural reform of the mining sector, community aspirations for sustainable development due to mining activities can only be partially accommodated. Environmental impact assessment (EIA) hearings are an opportunity for communities to voice their concerns over potential environmental and social impacts from mining activities and put forward proposals for avoiding or mitigating them. Its main limitation is that, as currently designed, the EIA hearing is an unsuitable mechanism for the community to discuss benefits distribution from mining activities. This explains why, in a number of cases, communities will attempt to overestimate environmental and social damages in order to receive greater compensation from mining companies, which distorts a community role in environmental and social management.

2.4 The Consultation Dilemma

The lack of a proper mechanism for local people to influence the way mining activities are carried out and partake in the benefits generated is, arguably, the foremost limitation of the mining sector structural reform. This is because such an issue has risen to the forefront of the mining policy debate in the past five years. For example, the government of Ecuador and the World Bank hosted a conference on **“Mining and the Community”** in May 1997 in Quito where the Latin American experience was reviewed⁵. A similar event – **Mining and the Community for Asian and Pacific Nations** – took place in Madang in July 1998 to review the Asian and Pacific Experience⁶. In the Mining Millenium 2000⁷, a World Mines Ministries Forum was held in Toronto, Canada, in March 2000. Again, **“Mining and the Community”** was one out of four workshops organized in the Forum to discuss key mining policy issues. In these events consultation of local communities was flagged as the appropriate mechanism to deal with local communities participation in mining developments.

Consultation as a process for involving communities in the decision making for a minerals development project creates a policy dilemma. On the one hand, it is hard to imagine how

⁵ See McMahon (1998)

⁶ See **Conference Proceedings, Mining and the Community for Asian and Pacific Nations**, a Conference organized by the World Bank, the Department of Mineral Resources Papua New Guinea, the Metal Mining Agency of Japan and the Papua New Guinea Chamber of Mines and Petroleum, July 26 – 29, 1998, Madang Resort Hotel, Madang. These proceedings were produced in a CD ROM.

⁷ The Mining Millenium 2000 was organized by the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada, The Canadian Institute of Mining, Metallurgy and Petroleum and sponsored by Caterpillar, Rio Algom and Komatsu. Content Management Corp., Ontario, Canada, produced the conference proceedings in CD ROM.

community concerns and interests can be incorporated in a mining project without community consultation. On the other hand, effective and equitable community consultation appears to require that the people consulted should have the right to accept or reject a mining development. This is commonly called a prior consultation because consultation must be prior to the granting of either a concession or the permit for mining development. Prior consultation, however, represent a major change in the way mining rights are granted by states as it implies that the state gives title rights which will be renegotiated at a later stage. Such a situation is fiercely resisted in most countries with a mining tradition. Moreover, it conflicts with the legal framework that vests, primarily, the right to mine in a mining concession.

In Latin America, prior consultation has only been enshrined in Law in Colombia. Prior consultation is defined as:

a fundamental collective right of indigenous peoples, and a procedure that allows the State to fulfill its constitutional duty to guarantee their ethnic, cultural, social, and economic integrity.... The process of prior consultation with indigenous peoples is of a public, specific and compulsory nature

(Warhurst, 1998, p: 14).

In Asia, the situation is rather similar and prior consultation only exists in Papua New Guinea and the Phillipines⁸ (Clark, 1998). It is important to note that in Papua New Guinea (PNG) public consultation has evolved because 97% of land tenure belongs to customary landowners.

Under the customary land ownership system, land belongs to a clan or sub clan community. No individual owns land although the rights to use a certain portion of land may be conferred on an individual. Papua New Guineans have deep affinity and identity with their land, and regard land as the foundation of their spiritual and physical well being. It is therefore essential that land-owning clans be consulted and involved in the approval process of any mining development where the land, by PNG Law, is legally theirs and not the State's... The reality is that both the State and the developer have no alternative but to consult the landowners and accommodate their needs and aspirations so that all parties are in support of the proposed mining development.

(Hancock & Omundsen, 1998, p: 2)

⁸ Under the Phillipines' Mining Law (1995) and complementary regulations indigenous and cultural issues are addressed as follow:

- “No ancestral land shall be opened for mining operations without the prior consent of the indigenous cultural community concerned”
- “In the event of an agreement with an indigenous cultural community ... the royalty payment, upon utilization of the minerals shall be agreed upon by the parties. The said royalty shall form part of a trust fund for the socio-economic well being of the indigenous cultural community.”
- “A socioeconomic development plan must be part of every contractor’s Environmental Protection and Enhancement Program.”
- “A mine rehabilitation fund shall be established for the social rehabilitation of areas and communities affected by mining activities.”

As a way to accommodate community consultation within reformed mining legal frameworks, the notion of consultation as a private process has been proposed. Assuming that both surface and sub-surface land rights are clear and consistent,

consultation takes place as a process managed by the company, as a means to both inform the local community, collect their views, and receive their inputs... [T]he company retains the right to make unilateral and binding decisions protected by the laws that provide their ownership rights over the deposit. Consultation under this definition involves only the company and the community, not the state.

(Warhurst, 1998, p.19-20)

Consultation as a private process has, at least, two shortcomings. First, a level playing field is needed for different stakeholders to interact in equitable and collaborative basis. As different stakeholders have dissimilar power, state intervention seems unavoidable to level the playing field and to refrain mining companies to co-opt community leaders onto their interests. Second, weak or poor stakeholders, in particular, would have difficulties to engage in consultative processes and development activities. Therefore, government intervention is needed for establishing special arrangements to engage these stakeholders in consultation and participatory processes.

Summarizing, local and indigenous people consultation was neglected in the structural reform of the mining sector. Because of its importance for sustainable development, consultation has become a key mining policy issue. Whereas there is some consensus that local consultation is necessary, there have been opposing views about state or government intervention on this issue. On the one hand, with some exceptions as in the PNG case, prior consultation may weaken legal security of mining titles therefore discouraging mining investments. On the other hand, consultation where mining companies and local communities interact without government participation would seriously impair the engagement and collaborative participation of weaker stakeholders. Accordingly, it seems that for a constructive relationship between mining and communities to take place, state or government participation is unavoidable. The question is to identify and define the most efficient and effective way for the state to be involved in this process. Under such a framework, it will be possible to identify the key types of information needed by governments to enable effective interaction between stakeholders. Exploring these issues is the focus of the following section.

3 The Policy Challenge: Promoting Effective Interaction Between Stakeholders

3.1 Establishing an Enabling Policy Environment

There is some consensus that the state should provide a policy framework to promote effective interaction between stakeholders, especially for the proper participation of poor and disadvantaged ones (Sanchez, 1998; Ballard, 1998; Davy, 1998; Warhurst, 1998). Public consultation, which could be understood as an intermediate solution to both prior and private consultation, would be a key component of such a framework and it should aim to promote sustainable development at the local/community level. In this framework, the way

community's concerns and requests are addressed, as well as the way possible conflicts between mining companies and communities are resolved, must be clearly defined. Some main features of the said framework for public consultation are here advanced for discussion:

- ***Public consultation needs regulation but must also remain flexible.*** Communities' right to be informed over the lifetime of a mining project should be enshrined by law. As mentioned by Sanchez (1998, p: 25–26),

every concerned member of the community should have the right to consult the relevant documentation. In addition, the information about the project must be relayed in a proper format and in sufficient detail. It has to be understandable by the general public and delivered in a way that is accessible to all concerned and affected... There is a role for the state in assuring that the information is available in proper form and quantity for the communities.

Establishing and regulating the right of communities to access to information should avoid, however, being overtly prescriptive. According to Davy (1998, p: 5)

the emphasis should be on defining clear objectives, and detailing how compliance with the objectives will be measured. This might be best supported by a combination of legislation and economic incentives, supported by capacity development to ensure the appropriate expertise exists in the relevant agencies.

- ***Consultation should include the right of local and indigenous communities to partake in benefits from mining activities.*** Benefits could be linked to landownership rights and the scale of the mining project. Greater benefits would accrue to local and indigenous people whose land is affected by the mining development than those obtained by communities adjacent to mining developments. Benefits would include project equity, royalties, grants, provision of infrastructure, promotion of training, education and accumulation of social capital, local employment sourcing and local employment business development. The regulatory framework should provide both a minimum scope of benefits applicable to local communities in relation to their land rights and a mining project's scale, together with compensating taxation provisions for the mining companies to maintain their economic competitiveness. As in the Development Forum in Papua New Guinea⁹, public consultation should have two principal functions.

The first is a venue for the sharing of information on the project from the developer and the state with the [local people] on the nature, scope and impacts of the project. The second is to establish how the benefits derived from the project are to be shared by the various stakeholders, which are then recorded in a series of project agreements... In return for the benefits to be provided under the agreements the [locals] commit themselves not to disrupt the project development and to work together with the Government and the developer.

(Hancock & Omundsen, 1998, p:3)

⁹ The Development Forum was established through a resolution of the National Executive Council endorsed by the government in November 1998.

- ***Transparency and accountability in local benefits requires the establishment of a “community development budget.”*** A portion of the benefits package is likely that will be financial resources for community development investments. As, in addition to mining company money, public resources would be directly or indirectly contributed into these funds because of compensating taxation provisions included in mining and community arrangements, transparency and accountability in management this money is a must. Moreover, incentives for communities to pressure over mining companies, as if they were “fat cats with deep pockets”, need to be avoided. The policy and regulatory framework, therefore, should establish an institutional mechanism – the community development budget – where company and public resources will be allocated and disbursed according to certain legal rules. Despite of its actual significance, it is also strongly suggested that communities should also make contributions to the community development budget to strengthen community ownership and responsible management of funds.
- ***In socio-cultural “hot-spots”, prior consultation should be a requisite for mining developments.*** The framework must clearly define socio-cultural “hot-spots” where communities lack the capacity to adapt to a proposed mining development, while retaining the integrity of their social and cultural identities

(Davy,1998).

In such cases, “decisions regarding the maintenance of cultural diversity should ultimately rest with the communities concerned

(Davy, 1998, p:5).

3.2 Key Information Required By Governments

Thus far, the analysis has implied that in the relationship between mining and community the state has a double role to play: on the one hand, as regulator and, on the other hand, as facilitator. As regulator, the state should establish the basic and minimal rules for exploration and mining companies to interact with local communities to promote sustainable development. As facilitator, the state must be able to promote win-win arrangements between local communities and mining companies to avoid conflicts. It is likely that depending on national particularities and state traditional behavior, the role of the state will have different importance for distinct countries. At the extreme, if a state is only a regulator, it will require very precise information to fulfill its role, which will be required by law. Thus, the focus will be on selecting the key information that the state needs to enforce cost-effectively the social regulatory framework.

For enforcing regulation, governments require three types of information:

- Comprehensive environmental and social information on the plans and agreements reached between mining and communities. This information will result from environmental and social impact assessments carried out by the developers and from the agreements reached between the stakeholders concerned.
- Clear information is necessary on land rights and the specific boundaries of the area of influence of the mining development. Effective coordination between different

government agencies is a necessary condition to this end, which is a serious limitation in many developing countries.

- Monitoring of compliance with environmental and social regulations and agreements should be implemented. “This process should include a review of the effectiveness of environmental [and social] management and administrative policies and activities. Results should be verified by independent outside parties” (Rosenfeld & Clark, 2000)

As facilitator, the main asset of a government is credibility, so it can be a reliable mediator for both communities and mining companies. Key information for facilitating is to understand the actual interests of the involved parties, including the “hidden agenda” of some of them. Dealing effectively with these issues requires significant negotiating capabilities and in depth knowledge of the parties; attributes that are usually absent in ordinary public servants. Overcoming this limitation requires strengthening key government agencies such as Mining ministries with highly qualified personnel, a challenge that governments have to face along with establishing a regulatory framework that promotes effective interaction between stakeholders of mining developments.

3.3 Information that Governments are Reluctant to Share

With the exemption of information linked to national security issues, democratic governments usually are not reluctant to share information with the public. Moreover, freedom of information is now part of constitutions of most democratic states. However, access to government information can often be very costly due to painful and cumbersome bureaucratic procedures. This partially explains the significant efforts to establish a one-window system which provides straightforward access for the public to cadastral and geological information within the structural reform of the mining sector. This will likely be another area of attention within the process of establishing an effective interaction between stakeholders concerned with mining developments.

4 Financing of Information and Communication

Collecting and communicating information in an adequate format is a key requisite for effective consultation and, therefore, for effective interaction between stakeholders of a mining development. Therefore, in this section the issue of who should pay for collecting and disseminating information is addressed. There are two situations considered. First is the information needed for the consultation process and the monitoring of the mining development’s impacts and the implementation of the stakeholders agreements. Costs of collecting and making available this information should be included in a mining project’s budget as they originate in requirements that minerals developments have to comply with.

Another situation occurs when key information, currently not available and outside the scope of regular consultation and monitoring processes, has to be developed. As such information ultimately benefits stakeholder interaction, it is suggested that costs associated with its development should be covered from the “community development budget” established as a part of the consultation process and within the rules established by the social regulatory framework. As in the Development Forum of Papua New Guinea, stakeholder involvement in resolving resource development issues is not an event but an ongoing

process (Hancock and Omundsen, 1998), in these meetings stakeholders could agree on what key additional information is required. Such an agreement would imply that the gathering and releasing of this additional information has been prioritized as a development activity and, therefore, should be included in the “community development budget.” In this way, it is expected that a mechanism will be in place to avoid any stakeholder requesting for costly and doubtfully useful information. It also will be a way to account for highly relevant although unexpected new information requirements. This, of course, assumes that contributing to community development will be a necessary component of minerals resource development.

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