

The Mining, Minerals and Sustainable Development Project

Project Summary

What is MMSD?

The Mining, Minerals and Sustainable Development Project (MMSD) is an independent process of participatory analysis with the objective of “identifying how mining and minerals can best contribute to the global transition to sustainable development”. It is a two-year project designed both to produce concrete results during that period, and to create structures capable of being carried forward thereafter. A key product of MMSD will be a project report to be presented during the proposed Earth Summit in 2002.

MMSD is managed by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) in London, UK, under contract to the World Business Council for Sustainable Development. The project was initiated by WBCSD as one of a number of projects being supported by the Global Mining Initiative (GMI). The GMI was formed by the Chief Executive Officers of several of the world’s principal mining companies.

The objectives of MMSD are explained in a Scoping Report prepared by IIED for the WBCSD in 1999, which suggests why a new initiative is needed, and how it will work. The Scoping Report, and other information about the MMSD project and IIED is available at www/iied.org/mmsd/.

Why is the project needed?

The mining and minerals sector is subject to a number of powerful trends which will shape the business environment in which the industry operates in the new century. Perhaps none of these is more challenging than the call for a global transition to sustainable development, based on a vision of achieving a better quality of life for the world’s population today, while preserving and enhancing the ability of future generations to achieve a higher quality of life for themselves when we are gone.

Globalisation, the communications revolution, rising public expectations of corporate responsibility, pressures from financial markets, the urgent requirements of the world’s poor, the need to respect cultural diversity, the imperative of respect for human rights, as well as the need to eliminate environmental hazards, protect biological diversity, and other trends together mean that future mining and minerals consumption will have to follow patterns quite different from those followed in the past.

While progress has been made, at least at the industry’s leading edge, in social and environmental performance, a clear picture of how the cycle will have to adapt to these challenges has yet to emerge. Critical bottlenecks such as lack of trust among companies, governments and civil society, and the absence of the necessary skills, resources and institutional capacity to deliver on the sustainable development agenda are slowing progress.

A number of initiatives addressing elements of the mining, minerals and sustainable development agenda are underway. In isolation, they could lack the critical mass needed to achieve the

transformation required. MMSD is attempting to bring greater coherence to these activities, and increase their collective impact. It will do this by bringing together the widest possible range of actors to develop a comprehensive and intelligible agenda around which stakeholders can come together to create change.

What will MMSD do?

The project intends to combine high quality analysis and research with stakeholder engagement and will consist of four main elements.

Research and Analysis. A focused programme of research and analysis, at both the global and regional scale, designed to advance understanding of priority issues.

Stakeholder Engagement. An ambitious programme of engagement with stakeholders, both at the global level and regionally.

Information and Communication. An ongoing programme of communication with interested parties regarding goals, processes and key outputs.

Implementation. A consensus-based programme for voluntary implementation by a variety of stakeholders of the project results.

IIED's goal is to combine a fair and transparent process of engagement with high standards of analytical rigour, to produce outcomes acceptable to a wide range of stakeholders.

Some elements of the project will be implemented by the project Work Group in London, or directly contracted by them to existing institutions with relevant expertise and networks. But the project also aims to decentralise much of its work into a series of regional centres in the principal mineral producing and consuming regions of the world. MMSD is actively seeking to build partnerships with existing institutions to carry this work forward. The project will have an ethic of cooperation, trying wherever possible to build on and complement existing activities.

Who runs the project?

Governance and implementation of the project are divided among three main groups, to ensure the quality, effectiveness and integrity of the work.

Day to day implementation of the project will be the responsibility of the Work Group based in London, under a Project Director who reports to the Executive Director of IIED. Various project functions will be subcontracted to policy institutes, research centres, individual consultants, and others. As indicated, we anticipate a major role for regional partner institutions.

The Sponsoring Group will represent the organisations financing the project and will be responsible for overall project stewardship and supervision. The intention is to establish a broad-based funding group from business, government, international institutions, private foundations and leading NGOs. The Sponsoring Group will communicate with the Project Director through Richard Sandbrook, of the WBCSD, whom the Sponsors have appointed as Project Coordinator.

The Assurance Group will be made up of individuals who are acknowledged as authorities in the various subjects related to the project objectives. It will be balanced and diverse, recognising the variety of stakeholders with vital interests in themes related to sustainable development in the mineral industries, the differing interests of the world's mineral producing and consuming regions, and other factors. The Assurance Group will be in charge of assuring adequate peer review of all project outputs. It will oversee the design, conduct and outputs of the project, and provide regular advice to the Work Group.

Where does the project stand?

Key project activities at this time are:

The project has appointed a Director, Luke Danielson, who started work in London on 1 April 2000.

Nick Robins and Elisabeth Wood, also of IIED, will have substantial ongoing roles in MMSD as it develops.

Two senior staff - the Research Manager and the Coordinator of Stakeholder Engagement - are actively being recruited, and recruitment for several other positions will shortly be announced.

In April, the project will announce formation of its Assurance Group. The Group as announced will have approximately half of its eventual complement of 24 members, to leave space for inclusion of additional members as needs are identified in specific areas. The first Assurance Group meeting will be held in late May 2000.

The project is organising a Research Workshop for early May 2000 to begin the development of its research agenda.

An invitation to participate

MMSD is an ambitious venture that depends for its success on the active involvement of communities, companies, governments, civil society, the research community, existing institutions active in the field and many others for its success. If you would like to receive periodic bulletins about MMSD, or have other enquiries, please e-mail mmsd@iied.org.

6 April 2000