



# **M MSD: *Biodiversity***

## **Environmental Impact Assessments I**

- Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) are becoming one of the most troubling aspects of activities, whether mining, industry or construction, that have a major impact on the local environment.
- Little transparency exists in the award of contracts, the scientific refereeing of reports produced, while oversight of effective compliance is extremely limited.



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### **Environmental Impact Assessments II**

- In the long term, this situation can only result in bad publicity for the companies in question, residual claims against them and further confrontation with advocacy groups.
- In all aspects of the EIA process there be a ‘presumption of transparency’



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### **Environmental Impact Assessments III**

- The standards an EIA should meet will either be those of the country in question or international standards, whichever is the more demanding.
- An alert list of stakeholders, including government, NGOs, donor agencies and scientific bodies, should be informed as new documents are posted to ensure that time for comment is adequate.



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### **Environmental Impact Assessments IV**

- Ensuring compliance is more problematic, because mining is a long-term process and effective response to catastrophic and unexpected events is by definition hard to monitor.
- A process that involves more consensus between EPAs and the mining companies can produce more timely payments to the authorities for remediation operations.



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## **Governance Issues I**

- All sections of the community are poorly informed about the scientific aspects of biodiversity and the processes that exist to update knowledge are very haphazard.
- Typically, when a new area is brought onto the agenda, governments begin an initiative intended to ‘mainstream’ topics such as environment, gender, desertification, climate change etc. After a few years, interest declines and it is thus deemed ‘mainstreamed’, an unsubtle code for ‘forgotten’.



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## **Governance Issues II**

- Policy-related decisions that depend on evolving science need to acquire institutional permanence as well as a tracer to the heart to government.
- Governments change position slowly, especially when their own internal information systems have become centralised and rigid. External bodies, notably multi-lateral agencies, NGOs and companies have a better record of institutionalising new ideas.



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## **Governance Issues III**

- In the case of NGOs and advocacy groups, the problem is not usually lack of information but the imbalance created by their concentration on a single issue.
- The advantage is that NGOs are highly motivated and will take considerable risks to elicit information other bodies are trying to keep hidden.



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## **Governance Issues IV**

- NGOs also need a charter to which they can sign up to guarantee both a reasonable approach to advocacy
- The charter needs to be such that large NGOs like IUCN will sign, otherwise the initiative will be useless.



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## **Biodiversity Units I**

- Many large extractive industries have now established biodiversity units, although with highly variable resources and internal authority. The key tasks of such units would be:
  - a. Ensure that existing projects have conducted and reported biodiversity surveys
  - b. Provide terms of reference for new surveys and ensure quality of outputs and long-term compliance



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## **Biodiversity Units II**

- c. Monitor relevant scientific and regulatory literature for its significance
- d. Encourage publication of results in refereed journals
- e. Ensure the quality of data disseminated via the web



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## **Biodiversity Units III**

- f. Fund the preparation of accessible handbooks relevant to project areas
- g. Support contributions to core funding of national and international bodies
- h. Ensure coherence with other aspects of sustainable development



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## **Biodiversity Units IV**

- Extractive industries presently spend a great deal on advertising, funds which are often wasted when a failure of transparency comes to the surface. The capacity to ‘leak’ information anonymously to large audiences has the consequence that such failures will be increasingly reported.



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## **Taxonomy I**

- At the heart of all biodiversity assessment is taxonomy- the capacity to identify and enumerate the species recorded in the field and link them with data from other regions to provide a context for the findings.



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## **Taxonomy II**

- ‘The absence of adequate scientific infrastructure in most countries, especially in those that are species-rich, constitutes a major impediment to an international response by the scientific community. Even those countries with substantial scientific resources cannot meet their management needs. In these countries, for example, systematic collections are not funded to a level that is capable with keeping up with the existing rate of specimen acquisition, let alone at a level that is appropriate for the biodiversity crisis. Existing data in herbaria and museums remain largely inaccessible by modern technologies for data management. ... And, finally, the numbers of students trained in systematics and organismal biology have diminished, contributing to what many, including ...UNESCO have called the “taxonomic impediment”.
- (Wheeler and Cracraft)



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## **Taxonomy IV**

- Governments do *not* take this responsibility seriously, and indeed at times are openly sceptical about their role in this area.
- As a consequence, mining companies, and a coalition of other bodies from related industries should be involved in a more comprehensive programme to revive and enhance skills in systematics and taxonomy. This should include;



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## **Taxonomy V**

- a. Advocacy in the developed world to increase the profile of systematics
- b. Core support to institutions and infrastructure involved in the storage of reference collections
- c. Funding of new institutions in developing countries where a lacuna is identified



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## **Taxonomy VI**

- d. Support to training institutions in developing countries
- e. Support for the publication and dissemination of data



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## **Taxonomy VII**

- A problem of taxonomy from the point of view of developing countries is the concentration of resources in ‘old’ institutions in the developed world where most holotypes are stored.
- Increasing access to specimens and literature through electronic means, DVDs and the internet should therefore be integral to any programme to support systematics.



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## **Field handbooks I**

- There is a need for popular syntheses of current science in this area.
- This should take the form of field handbooks; as these represent a cornerstone of effective biodiversity surveys and EIAs



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## **Field handbooks II**

- Handbooks are also of particular importance in building the capacity of local consultancy companies in developing countries who may not have access to specialised taxonomic skills.
- They are an easy guide to external evaluation and thus an aid to the process of transparency.



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### **Field handbooks III**

- Another key element in the dissemination process is translation into vernaculars. Populous countries, such as those in SE Asia, where there is an established national script and a growing ecology movement, require access to these materials.
- Subsidised translation is part of creating a sense of ownership which will allow national scientists and advocacy groups.