



Mining, Minerals and
Sustainable Development Project

WHAT IS MMSD PRODUCING?

February 2001

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After ten months of activities, the Mining, Minerals and Sustainable Development Project (MMSD) was keen on taking some time to think about its direction and aims. The Project's activities have been quite diverse and so has the range of groups involved.

The Project has taken time to reflect on its achievements and challenges in light of what it seeks to accomplish in its remaining year. This document seeks to provide readers with an insight into what MMSD is working towards and the types of outputs – both short- and long-term – that it intends to produce. This document is complemented by the *Challenges and Opportunities Facing the Minerals Sector in its Contribution to the Transition to Sustainable Development* (available online at http://www.iied.org/mmsd/mmsd_pdfs/eight_dilemmas.pdf) around which MMSD will focus its work program in the coming months.

This documents describes what MMSD understands to be its main outcomes: the Final Report, a series of working papers, and the relationships built in the process of producing these documents.

I. What is to emerge from the MMSD Project?

One of MMSD's most important outcomes will be the set of relationships it has been building and will continue to build in its remaining life span. Adequate concrete outputs cannot be constructed without first building relationships with the people who can help inform them. Relationships are thus an essential constituent of MMSD's products: the Final Report and a series of working papers. The Project will consciously try to build these relationships not only with the immediate aim of producing these documents, but also working to create a firm basis for longer-term benefits.

Finding the way forward requires developing a shared vision, and building trust which has been – thus far – in short supply. This cannot be done quickly or hastily. It is crucial to the whole process that these foundations are put in place with the utmost care.

1. Relationship Building

MMSD is striving for balance. The world around the mining and minerals sector includes a bewildering variety of interests: local communities, consumers, suppliers, governments, labour organisations, indigenous groups, NGOs, consultants, international organisations, financial institutions, and others. The industry itself is diverse and ranges from large multinational companies to artisans, producing a wide variety of commodities. What is more, the groups involved in the sector hold distinct views in different parts of the world.

There is no single person or central work team in the world capable of reflecting this variety with integrity without engaging with these varied actors on the real issues of

concern to them. This is one of the principal reasons why MMSD must work through regional partner networks rather than from a single central base. The depth of engagement necessary to understand and probe the very varied and often conflicting views can only come about by building relationships with as many of the key actors as is feasible within the time and budget limits of this project. Indeed, simply identifying them is a significant task and doing so a valuable accomplishment.

These relationships, ten months into the active phase of the Project, already have a significant value. This value will continue to grow so long as all can see the potential for positive outcomes.

One of the principal aims of the Project is therefore to build valuable relationships among these many actors, to help develop and enrich the Project's reports, and to do so in a form capable of being carried forward by the parties after the Project ends. This means developing an agenda for future change as a key part of the Project's outcomes.

MMSD intends to examine the principles developed in the process of building those relationships: what works and what does not, and to publish this experience for the benefit of the participants and future efforts which may build on this work.

2. Working Papers

The Project Report will synthesise and summarise a much larger body of information, generated by MMSD Research Fellows, core staff, and our regional partner organisations, and numerous external collaborators.

There will be a large number of regional reports, individual research papers, workshop proceedings, and other such documents. Each of these studies will be subjected to a process of review involving diverse viewpoints and expertise before results are submitted to the Assurance Group. The mechanisms will vary from broad peer review panels, to larger workshops, to extensive multistakeholder discussions.

A number of these documents will have enough value in and of themselves that they will be published and distributed as MMSD Working Papers.

These Working Papers will serve as a foundation for the Project Report and a source of more detailed information for those who want to probe beyond the summarised treatment the Report will contain. The Project will also have a variety of less visible but useful outputs, such as bibliographic databases and contact networks.

3. The Project's Final Report

The central product of MMSD will be the Project's Final Report. Here MMSD intends not only to document the state of the mining and minerals sector from the perspective of the transition to sustainable development but also to propose an agenda for future change in that direction.

A draft report will be published in December 2001. This draft report will be made available to interested people and organisations that request it. They will be given

various opportunities to comment on, discuss, and propose changes to the document. These comments will form the basis for a final review by the project Assurance Group in February 2002. The Final Report will be published in March 2002.

II. How is the Project's Final Report Being Constructed?

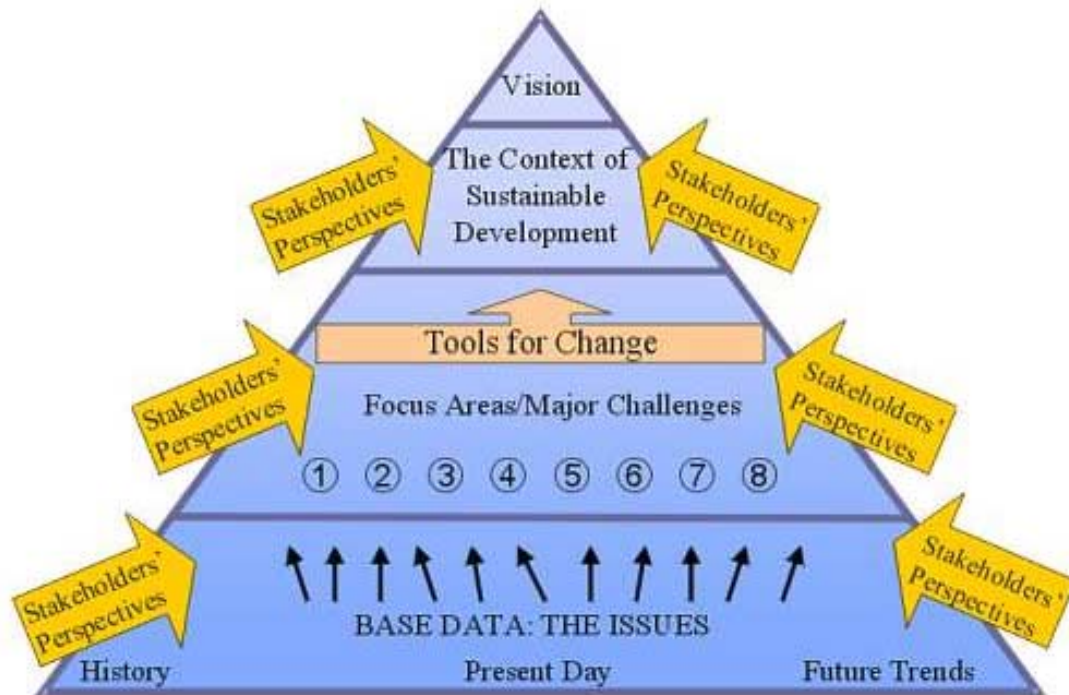
The Report will consist of two elements, an Executive Summary and the main body, which we estimate will be about 180 pages in length. Because the problems MMSD addresses are complex and will not be resolved in the course of this Project, the Final Report will necessarily focus on the progress achieved and the agenda for the future. It will not offer a definitive set of "answers."

Given the Project's scope and limited life, it is unreasonable to expect groundbreaking original research on specific narrow topics. The insights a project of this type can generate will come instead through creating a synthesis of this enormous range of information to try to identify – not necessarily solve – key problems and trade-offs. The Final Report will not be an 'engineer's report' or an 'economist's report' but an interdisciplinary effort drawing on many fields of expertise. If there is excellence, it will come from the quality of integration of this diverse information base.

At the base level, the Report will concern itself with the spectrum of issues which forms the sustainable development agenda in this sector. The list is a long one, and ranges from energy use to human rights to water quality to local economic problems. We have arrived at our current version of this list through a continuous process of consultation, which started with the project *Scoping Report* in mid-1999, and continues still. The list of issues suggested by one or another contact has appeared in several versions as it has grown. The most recent version appears on our project website at: http://www.iied.org/pdf/Proposed_Outline_for_MMSD_Report.pdf

These many issues will have to be clustered in a manageable number of groups so that they can be made the focus of individual projects or consultations.

These 'issue clusters' will be grouped into perhaps eight focus areas, or key dilemmas as shown in the following diagram. These eight dilemmas will be the fundamental building blocks of the study.



As conclusions emerge from analysis of the eight focus areas, the report will examine the tools available to drive change toward a more sustainable future. The development of this part of the Final Report will come from the Project's *Planning for Outcomes* element, which has already published in draft its first working paper, available on our website at http://www.iied.org/pdf/mmsd_Planning_for_Outcomes.pdf, and will be closely linked to the last of the series of dilemmas discussed in the document entitled *Challenges and Opportunities Facing the Minerals Sector in its Contribution to the Transition to Sustainable Development* (available online at http://www.iied.org/mmsd/mmsd_pdfs/eight_dilemmas.pdf).

III. Putting Some Boundaries Around the Final Report

In a limited time with limited resources, MMSD cannot engage as deeply as would be desirable with every stakeholder community in the mining and minerals sector. There are simply too many and it is too large an undertaking: in the broad sense, everyone in the world is a consumer of minerals and therefore a stakeholder.

It is also crucial to recognise that stakeholder groups have different capacities for engagement in processes of this type, based on their levels of experience, their economic resources, and other factors. It is important that MMSD does not slip into the trap of presuming everyone has an equal capacity to participate effectively.

Accuracy, fairness, and balance require that in developing its report, MMSD focus on those areas where it can achieve the highest levels of engagement with relevant actors, while doing its best to acknowledge and describe issues falling outside that area, perhaps calling attention to future needs, but not writing prescriptions for people who are not at the table.

As just one example, we group some 150 minerals being produced in the world into three broad categories:

- (1) Minerals for which transportation costs are a very low fraction of the final product price, and are traded in truly global markets (e.g., diamonds, copper, molybdenum or gold).
- (2) Minerals for which transportation costs are a high fraction of value and are therefore traded in local markets (e.g., most types of sand and gravel).
- (3) Minerals falling somewhere between these two categories which are traded at more than a local but less than a truly global level (e.g., some grades of coal, limestone).

As a global project, MMSD engages more easily with stakeholders around the first of these three groups of commodities. It will therefore be most informed about them, and more able to have access to, and understanding of, the divergent opinions and sources of conflict around them. Therefore, its work will be concentrated on the first category.

This does not mean that MMSD will not say anything relevant about the second and third groups of minerals, or that these do not present significant concerns. It simply means that the focus has to be where broader engagement can be achieved.

Ultimately, the Final Report will not be able to deal with all the myriad issues and problems around the industry and the sector as a whole. Its purpose is strategic: to try to see through this cloud of concerns to a manageable number of strategic issues.

The focus will then tighten to the question of what we mean by sustainable development, and precisely how the mineral sector fits into this context. The Final Report will present the vision emerging from this work for the future of the sector in the context of an overall social transition to sustainable development.

As always, we welcome your comments and suggestions about our activities. Please address those to mmsd@iied.org.

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