



# Small Mining International – news from SMI

We are pleased to provide this insert reviewing plans and activities of the International Agency for Small-Scale Mining (SMI). The Agency is going through a number of changes which it is hoped will strengthen its role in the promotion of this important field of mineral development. Those who may not be familiar with SMI are also referred to an earlier issue of this *Journal* (Vol. 12, No. 3) in which a detailed review of SMI was presented along with the plan to establish a network of institutions working in related areas.

Arrangements to move the secretariat of Small Mining International (SMI) to the UK have been completed, and the files and records of the organization have been shipped from McGill University to the UK. The SMI secretariat will now have a new "home" at the Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG), which has recently transferred to their new premises at Warwickshire, in the west midlands of England. The move of secretariat was made possible when the Chief Executive of ITDG, Mr. Chris Underhill, responded favourably to the request of SMI. The officers and members of SMI would like to take this opportunity to express its appreciation to ITDG as well as to McGill University which has generously hosted SMI over the past several years.

ITDG is one of the very few international development organizations actively involved in small-scale mining projects. The objective of the ITDG's intervention in the mineral industry sector is to introduce appropriate technologies and skills to small-scale miners with a view to enabling them to establish viable, safe, environmentally sound practices and responsible mining operations. ITDG works with other like-minded groups to achieve its objectives, and it is in this spirit of collaboration that they have agreed to host the secretariat of SMI. It must be recalled that SMI and ITDG have implemented joint projects in the past, such as the publication of an equipment guide for small-scale miners, and two more recent international conferences on small-scale mining. The movement of the secretariat to ITDG, therefore, will foster a closer link between the two organizations.

Plans and programmes for SMI are now being considered by the members of the board, as an outgrowth of the move, and already two project ideas on mercury pollution abatement and small-scale mining policy have been forwarded to IDRC of Canada for pos-

sible inclusion in their mining initiative programme.

## Future plans and programmes

The recent move of SMI headquarters to ITDG opens a number of directions for cooperation. Small-scale mining has long been an important part of the ITDG program, and closer collaboration between SMI and ITDG can be to our mutual advantage. It is particularly useful that SMI will be actively linked to an ongoing program as this would appear to be where our most effective work can be done. Among the areas being considered are:

- a) including a short section on small-scale mining in each issue of the ITDG newsletter;
- b) publishing occasional joint reports and studies on small-scale mining (as in the case of the 1990 Guide to Appropriate Equipment);
- c) putting out occasional issues of the ITDG newsletter (e.g., once every second year) in which the emphasis is on small-scale mining;
- d) develop joint or cooperative activities in various aspects of small-scale mining with ITDG taking a degree of initiative to generate funding for these programs because of its contacts and experience in this area.

Here there is mutual advantage in that SMI has access to world-wide expertise and interests but limited capacity to initiate and monitor projects, while ITDG has links with funding agencies, a proven track record in project monitoring and implementation, and a long-term working interest in the subject.

Using the ITDG link as a model, it is planned to promote similar working links with other groups working in the field as outlined in *Journal of Mineral Policy, Business and Environment* (Vol. 12, No. 3, p. 41). The best example is the continuing link with the present journal which reaches an audience which relates to



small-scale mining from a different angle. *The Journal* regularly publishes an SMI page and puts out occasional issues dedicated to small-scale mining (see the above issue which included articles on small scale mining and related policies and experiences). Ideally this could be done once every two years alternating with ITDG. On the question of articles for ITDG or *The Journal*, there is much good material available which has received limited circulation, usually to a rather different audience.

Another group working in related areas is the Prospectors and Developers Association (PDAC) which meets annually in Toronto. This year there was a session on mining and community development which has clear implications for small-scale mining (see also below). SMI already has good contacts at PDAC and efforts are being made to expand these. For example, SMI could consider organizing a session at a forthcoming meeting.

Consideration is being given to developing this type of continuing relation with other groups which hold regular meetings. The World Mining Congress, which meets every 3-4 years, is giving increasing attention to activities in developing countries, and might agree to host a session at a forthcoming meeting on small-scale mining. Beyond this, there are a number of periodic meetings which might agree to such a link. The Asia/Pacific Federation of Mining Associations has interest in this area. and the UN Regional Commissions hold periodic meetings, often with support from UNDP, at which it would be appropriate to have small-scale mining sessions. All this will require some initiative and effort on the part of SMI to organize the sessions, but we would be presenting material to a guaranteed interested audience.

Related to this, it should be noted that both the World Bank meeting in Ecuador and the PDAC in Toronto (see below) had sessions dealing with "Mining and the Community" that were closely related to small-scale mining. In this it is recognized that small-scale mining is one

critical component in a series of systems which are of broad interest (community relations, environmental impact, technology transfer, etc.). Support may well be more readily available under the name of these systems rather than under the name of small-scale mining. It is the same pie but it is being sliced in a different direction. SMI has a useful role to play, possibly as a joint organizer, but we should make sure that we don't end up with just the crust.

### **Artisanal gold mining discussed at international meetings**

SMI members provided information on artisanal gold mining at the UNIDO Expert Group Meeting on "Introducing New Technologies for Abatement of Global Mercury Pollution Deriving From Artisanal Gold Mining" in Vienna in July 1997, and at the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada (PDAC), March 1998.

At the UNIDO meeting, which formulated concepts and strategies for global abatement of mercury pollution, emphasis was placed on introducing new appropriate equipment and ensuring equal participation and benefits for women. This was the last in a series of meetings on small-scale mining during this decade, including the World Bank International Roundtable on Artisanal Mining in Ecuador in 1996.

The following guidelines were recommended:

- a) to create a formalized structure for artisanal gold miners;
- b) to communicate to governments that alternative approaches are available and;
- c) to address the complex problems related to artisanal gold mining.

It was also agreed that a training workshop for appropriate government officials is essential and that, initially at least, emphasis should be on the African continent.

At the UNIDO meeting it was noted that although most gold production is still done manually with panning and

sluicing, the transition to mechanized mining is underway. The challenge is to avoid the severe environmental damage experienced in some countries. Legalization should focus on institutional building, illegality and the competitive aspects of gold marketing. Acquisition of a full transferable mining title to the discoverer of a deposit should be a simple, quick and transparent process

Regional small-scale miners organizations are important building blocks in the abatement of mercury pollution. Country and site-specific organization and confidence building are important requirements. More study is required on the appropriate organizational formats.

Training of artisanal and small-scale miners is considered a cornerstone among the building blocks for the abatement of mercury pollution. Institutional building with training centers is advocated, starting with the experience of countries with good results, building on successes and learning from failures. Management of these centers, ought to be based on sound business practices. Equity funding and rotating funds are considered viable options for small-scale miners.

The ultimate establishment of mechanisms for formal collaborative relationships is a critical part of the process. This will include the establishment of a network – informal or formal as appropriate – to exchange information and consult on small-scale mining activities of common interest. Programs and projects need to be identified which can be used as a testing ground for collaboration. Yearly meetings of donor agencies are proposed to coordinate programs.

The guidelines formulated by the Expert Group will be used by the governments to design their locally applicable road map. The challenge is to get the process started and to keep it moving forward. In particular, need was recognized for:

- a) R&D on mercury clean up of tailings and recovery of gold and other valuable byproducts;
- b) definition of research topics on mercury in the environment;

c) R&D on how to best effectuate training of artisanal miners;

d) R&D on measures to encourage artisanal and small-scale miners to develop responsible environmental practices.

At the PDAC meeting implementation of these concepts were further discussed with members of the international mineral industry at a 'Short Course on Community Relations in Developing Countries'. Here artisanal and small-scale

miners were recognized as a special form of community and at a presentation in the Open Forum on the Socio-economic, Environmental and Mineral Development Aspects of Artisanal Gold Mining. Case histories were presented.

Meantime, coordination and the evolution of coexistence of artisanal gold miners and the mineral industry in Suriname, Nicaragua and Venezuela highlighted the formalizing process. The process evolves

from conflicts through accommodation followed by constructive engagement to partnerships. It is interesting to note that at both meetings this question of formalization was discussed. ■

## Get in touch with SMI

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### Other countries

Other country contacts are also invited. Those interested should forward their names and details to Edmund Bugnosen at the above address.