



# Small mining international – news from SMI

**The International Agency for Small-Scale Mining (SMI) plans to use this periodic insert in the Journal of Mineral Policy, Business and Environment – Raw Materials Report to communicate with the international mining community and to provide information on plans and progress to members. This issue will review the plan for restructuring of SMI based on background papers which were submitted to and discussed at the General and Board Meetings of SMI held in Calcutta, India on 2 and 3 December, 1996. The Calcutta meetings made recommendations on the membership of the new Board and appointment of new officers. These are now being confirmed, and details will be included in the next issue of Journal of Mineral Policy, Business and Environment – Raw Materials Report.**

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At the meetings it was confirmed that SMI must identify a clear, unique and cost-effective role for itself in its relations with the many bodies working in the field of small-scale mining. SMI, as presently constituted, does not have the intention or the capacity to implement projects. Its main functions continue to be promotion, advisory services and co-ordination of activities which are implemented by groups with which it has working links. Within this framework SMI draws heavily upon the volunteer services of its officers and has limited expenses. However, but there is need to generate some support.

SMI will continue to concentrate its efforts in artisanal mining and medium-scale mining, two areas where its advice and support are needed. Large multi-national and state mining companies do not need SMI's direct involvement or assistance, but these large companies often have interaction with artisanal miners, in some cases because their mines started small and have expanded, in some cases because local people work along the edges of large mines, and may intrude upon them. In such situations large mining companies might benefit from help and advice of SMI in working towards mutually acceptable relations with small or medium-scale miners. These companies can be looked upon as a potential source of support for SMI.

In addition to such mining companies (which need to be identified and contacted) possible sources of support include international bodies such as the World Bank, ILO, UNIDO and UNCTAD and bilateral programs of countries such as Austria, Canada, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden and others which traditionally have supported activities related to small-scale mining.

## **Plans for restructuring**

Over recent months, the Board of Small Mining International has discussed the concept of the establishing a consortium linking the many groups which have in-

terest in one or more aspects of small-scale mining. These groups would become partners with SMI, each group working in its area(s) or compartment(s) of interest, with SMI providing a degree of coordination. The several areas or compartments would be linked in a network structure, with a lead agency for each (one possible carve-up into 14 compartments is outlined below). Each compartment would be represented on a restructured Board with additional members drawn from countries with a significant SSM sector (e.g. Brazil, China, India, Zimbabwe), donor groups, etc. Formal action has not yet been taken on this.

A first step is to identify, develop and consolidate relations (links) with potential cooperating bodies on three levels:

1. developing countries which can benefit from the services of SMI
2. countries and organizations (public and private) which might work with and/or provide support to the Agency including groups such as APEC and SEARCA.
- 3 potential partners working in related areas with which programs can be developed, including ngos, regional commissions etc.

Much information on these potential links is already available, but it should be systematically collected and assessed. At least 25 groups with interest in small-scale mining can be identified, but it is believed that there are many more, often operating on the national level. SMI might also promote the sub-network approach to link (a) member institutions in countries where there is a large SSM component (e.g. China, India, Bolivia, Brazil, Zimbabwe) and (b) regional sub-networks where the situation is still developing (e.g. Jamaica for the Caribbean, Indonesia for the ASEAN region, Ghana for West Africa, etc.).

## **Administrative structure**

For some years the secretariat of SMI has been located in Montreal, Canada with the generous support of McGill Universi-

ty. For the future a working secretariat with an administrative secretary should be set up at an institution which has an active program in small-scale mining. The secretariat should have facilities to maintain communications, develop and circulate materials, including a newsletter, and provide a degree of logistical support to the president.

The link between SMI and the host institution would be symbiotic and it should be possible to cover most SMI costs in project overhead budgets. Staff and travel costs would be on project budgets and thus would have to be project related. As noted above, it might be useful to have regional network nodes to promote and support program development.

The division of responsibilities between SMI and cooperating groups (partners) might see SMI cosponsoring major meetings at which issues would be discussed and priorities determined; providing technical advice in initiating, implementing and following up of projects; and linking groups implementing projects on different topics or in different regions.

Project proposals would be prepared, submitted and implemented by partner institutions (national, regional, international, including universities and ngos) which would also handle project management and accounting. SMI should be looked upon as a cooperating partner. A nominal SMI budget might be written into project proposals to help cover secretariat costs. This approach should be welcomed by donor groups, which are sometimes reluctant or unable to cover such overhead costs.

### **The consortium or network structure**

The Board was presented with the accompanying breakdown of small-scale mining into a series of fourteen compartments to serve as the base for discussion of the consortium approach. Groups working in each compartment will be

identified, recognizing that some might operate in more than one area, and that some might have small-scale mining as only one part of their interest. One group will be selected to serve as the lead (coordinating) agency for each compartment. The whole consortium would constitute a network with SMI as the coordinating node. Each compartment would constitute a sub-network with the lead agency as the node.

This proposal has been discussed by SMI members, but will not be put into effect until the new Board has had the opportunity to review it. Readers interested in this approach to small-scale mining are invited to comment on the plans as outlined. Please address remarks to Board Member Magnus Ericsson at the Raw Materials Group in Stockholm.

### **Network for small mines, subject areas**

1. *SSM policy, laws and regulations.* In many countries small-scale mining is not dealt with officially, or is handled on the provincial level or by government agencies concerned with rural development rather than mining.

2. *Prospecting, assaying, surveying.* Techniques are usually quite simple, but there are many new, low-cost techniques which can be applied on a small-scale. Local prospecting is important since it often leads to large scale development.

3. *Surface development and workings (alluvial).* Most small-scale mining involves surface or near surface development. Many small-scale mining methods have evolved over time which can be transferred to other countries.

4. *Underground development and workings.* Much of the technology used in small-scale underground mining goes back to the early days of mining and involves manual labour. Research and training programs can help to improve this situation.

5. *Mineral processing.* Here also many of the techniques go back to earlier times, but as is true with prospecting, there are

many low-cost applications of new technology which can up-grade the level of small-scale operations.

6. *Haulage, handling and transport.* The scale of mining dictates the type of machinery which can be used, so there is limited use of heavy equipment. Small mines which are often in remote areas, rely on hand sorting to minimize the need for transport.

7. *Equipment.* Special equipment has been developed for use in small mines, much of it in countries like India and China where there are many small scale operations. ITDG has published a guide to small-scale mining equipment in cooperation with SMI.

8. *Safety and health.* Many small-scale operations are carried out by rural part-time miners with little regulation and little regard for safety and often involving women and children. ILO has done useful work in this area.

9. *Support services (advisory, consultancy).* Small-scale miners have limited access to technical support and look mainly to government sources for this. This needs to be improved at all stages. Cooperative, extension type approaches have been followed which need to be evaluated and transferred)

10. *Environmental considerations.* Another critical area since small mine operators may have limited awareness and concern for environmental impact and limited capacity to follow environmental guidelines. Here the training aspect will be very important.

11. *Information and database services.* Preparation and circulation of information to small-scale miners is an important step in upgrading all compartments within the field. SMI has made a start in this area with the IDRC project carried out by the National Institute of Small Mines in India.

12. *Relations with the international and multinational mineral industry.* An area in which SMI can make a special contribution by identifying and promoting the role and involvement of large



## BOOK REVIEW

# Mining on disc

*World-wide mining on disc*, 1981–1996, published by the Mining Journal (London), tel. +44 171 216 60 60, CD-ROM 275L.

The Mining Journal is the oldest and best known industry journal for the world's mining industries. It is published weekly and is accompanied by the Mining Magazine (monthly) and Metals&Minerals, all valuable documentation, reference and industry intelligence services for the mining industry.

This CD-ROM contains all text of these journals from 1981 to end 1996. It uses an in-built search engine which allows much more sophisticated searches than a pure word-processor would allow. It is very useful for legal research relevant to the mining industry in the following ways: It allows very rapid access (much more rapid than by going through 16 yearly indexes and then looking up the relevant pages) to information that is relevant for mining lawyer by using the effective search/query system. While the mining journal is mainly geared to mining engineers and geologists, it had always had a practice of reporting on legal issues relevant to the industry: New legislation, problems with the existing regulatory and tax framework of the mining business, events associated with significant contracts, corporate intelligence (results take-over, disputes), issues of government policy corporate strategy and, more recently, environmental regulation are regularly reported. It was always a tedious – though for professional legal research essential – business to go through indexes and find the desired references. This is made appreciably easier by the CD-ROM. In addition, one does not need to have volumes of the Mining Journal and its associated magazines physically available.

The search results are rarely sufficient: The mining journal reports very briefly on "legal events", but, not being a lawyers' journal, does not provide detailed legal analysis and access to primary documentation. However, it is an excellent starting point if one needs to find out, for example, about the mining law reform status in Vietnam, mining companies investing in Kazakhstan, take-over battles, relevant subjects (and speakers, i.e. sources of more in-depth intelligence) of recent industry conferences or developments associates with a particular company, country or mineral.

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companies in small-scale mining, recognizing that very many of the large mines of the world have been based on local small operations.

13. *Training*. Training will be carried out within each of the compartments, one group being identified to inventory and coordinate training activities. It is felt that this should be a key area for SMI attention and initiative, and that it is an area in which good project support can be generated.

14. *Research*. As with training one group will be asked to take a degree of responsibility for coordinating research. There is a need here for promotion of research since small-scale mining has received limited attention. The possibility of cooperative, inter-group activities should be considered.

### Notes

1. Topics 2-7 cover various aspects of appropriate technology and their lead agencies might be coordinated within the SMI Secretariat.
2. One appropriate task of the consortium would be to prepare a handbook on small-scale mining with chapters to be provided by the lead agencies. ■