

WHY INVOLVE I&APs WHEN DRAWING UP YOUR EMPR?

by

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By following the integrated environmental management (IEM) process, we have an opportunity to "share". We can not only share our vision, our excitement, our ideals. But we can also share our concerns and uncertainties. We can share these with groups of people who are willing to help make sure that our land is developed to its potential without spoiling it for our children and their offspring. The keyword is sharing. And those with whom we share are called the interested and affected parties, the I&APs.

In the recent past, environmental studies were often carried out by a competent consulting team who may have had in-house multi-disciplinary skills. Alternatively a consultant would co-ordinate a team of sub-consultants. After studying the site and understanding the proposed development and evaluating the positive and negative impacts, a report with recommendations was produced on behalf of the Developer. This report was submitted for approval by the Authorities. It was placed in the already overloaded in-tray of one of many officials. These persons often have very tight time schedules and cannot always give their full attention to such comprehensive reports. An advertisement is placed in the local papers calling for public comment. Now concerned Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's) have to study the report and prepare comments and a response within a fixed, often short time period. They are also under stress and often have their own perceptions, and misconceptions about the proposed project. Furthermore, it is mostly the ill informed concerned institutions that make the largest effort, are extremely vocal and have the ear of the newspapers. Delaying tactics are employed and in the end the whole affair becomes very unpleasant and costs time and money.

The ideal is to ensure that these concerned people obtain first hand knowledge of the site and surrounding environment and the proposed or existing operations prior to submission for approval. This includes enabling I&APs to get to know the people running the operation and to understand the viewpoints of other concerned people. It would also be ideal if the I&APs can be made aware of the opportunities and constraints associated with the proposed or existing development or mining activity. The ultimate goal is for the Authorities, NGO's, local people and the Developer or mining representatives to work together to identify the available information and agree on the key issues and the required management objectives for specific areas and issues.

The solution lies in sharing. By involving the I&APs from the start you obtain a sense of shared responsibility. Everyone is on the same wavelength, you clarify misperceptions, you obtain valuable information, you get a degree of incremental approval. People become involved and their involvement is guided by the IEM process.

The benefits of involving I&APs through the IEM process when drawing up an EMPR, are amongst many others, the following:

- A better understanding of the approach to drawing up the EMPR is obtained.
- An understanding of the proposed and existing mining operations is established.
- Concerns and suggestions are acknowledged early on in the process.
- A sense of shared responsibility is created.
- Incremental "in principle" approval is obtained as the project progresses.
- A yard stick is established against which the EMP can be measured in future.
- Necessary specialist studies can be commissioned early in the process, thereby reducing delays.

Not only is the involvement of I&APs through the IEM process time effective, but it also results in a large return on investment. An investment into the future, into environmentally sound development and an investment in conservation.

Now you may ask who are these I&APs? They are any person or representative of an institution that can enhance, improve or hinder the decision making process. They are people that are often initially hostile, but through being involved and by understanding the project, they become allies when they see their concerns addressed.

A concern may be the perceived cost of involving the I&APs. Experience has shown that up to 20% of the total cost of drawing up a comprehensive EMPR is spent on the scoping phase. It is during this stage that a large amount of the time is spent consulting with the I&APs to make sure that the necessary attention (and money) is directed at the key issues. The scoping phase is typically followed by the commissioning of specialist investigations which use existing information to clarify uncertainties and to fill in the gaps in information identified during the scoping phase. Typically the specialist studies account for up to 65% of the total costs. The remaining 15% of the project costs go into synthesising the available information and writing the EMPR.

The conclusion is, therefore, that we have the opportunity to involve a group of people, the so-called I&APs, from the start of the project. In doing so we can establish a degree of shared responsibility to ensure the development of an asset along sound environmental guidelines. By following the Integrated Environmental Management process, people can become involved. The decision making process is streamlined and sound environmental plans, respected by a majority are drawn up.

Let us seize the opportunity. Let's work together to ensure a better future. When next you have to draw up an EMPR, or when you are invited to be part of the process,

become involved and dare to share!