



Activity brief (March 2014)

Vocational Training and Secondment Activity (Infrastructure Planning for Mining Development) May 2012 – December 2013



Background: Poor infrastructure is a key constraint to economic and social development across Africa. Not only is high-quality infrastructure a pre-condition for the success of extractive industries, it also helps to enable community and multi-sectoral economic development. The establishment of a sustainable infrastructure platform, upon which Africa's development can be built, remains a critical developmental challenge.

Objective: The purpose of the Vocational Training and Secondment Activity was to deliver a vocational action-learning program for key financial and technical professionals in service agencies from a range of countries. The activity aimed to achieve a substantial improvement in the quality of project preparation for large-scale mining-related infrastructure projects in Africa.

Activity description: The activity – an innovative collaboration between the Australian Government and the private sector in South Africa – had three components:

- *A vocational action-learning program:* This program covered public infrastructure delivery and maintenance in the mining sector. The action-learning program aimed to expose senior- and middle-level management practitioners to all stages of infrastructure project development through a structured learning experience.
- *Establishment of a peer-to-peer learning network:* Participants engaged with other participants from diverse backgrounds. A website, online forum and quarterly newsletter were developed to further facilitate networking and support.
- *An evaluation to determine the impact of the pilot:* This component involved the competence assessment of individual participants. The evaluation team used standard competency assessment tools, including reports on work undertaken, knowledge tests and observation. The evaluation also assessed the performance of the pilot project, in terms of the outputs and immediate outcomes of the activity.

Outcomes: During the course of the program, common challenges among participants became evident, in particular:

- widespread weak public sector institutional milieu and policy weakness that mitigates against constructing mutually beneficial infrastructure solutions with mining projects; and
- frustration with prohibitive regulations within which public sector managers function, resulting in chronic under-funding and poor infrastructure management practices.

However, participants also shared enthusiasm to explore solutions that overcame these barriers. This enthusiasm was shared by their institutions, supervisors and peers.

The program successfully capitalised on this collective passion, and contributed to establishing a network of technically capable officials in Africa's infrastructure sector. In turn, it helped to improve the quality of project planning.

The Australian Government has also helped to establish professional relationships that can be leveraged for future development activities.

Participation: Twenty-five public officials from Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia participated in the activity. The participants, working for government agencies, had been involved in the planning and implementation of significant resource-sector infrastructure development projects in their own countries.

Participant feedback: Assa Nkundwe Mwakilembe, from the Tanzanian Ministry of Energy and Minerals, said the course exposed him to "a number of techniques that can assist me with infrastructure planning and, in particular, linking it with natural resources as a driver for development". "I learned a lot, such as the concepts of financial modelling, PPP (public-private partnerships), project financing models, contracts and contract evaluation, and negotiation," he added.

Activity number:	140/01
Date approved:	24/05/2012
Date commenced:	01/05/2012
Date completed:	31/12/2013
Implementation partner:	Bigen Africa coordinated the project on behalf of the Australian Government and the AAPF. SkillsDMC was an implementation partner.
Total cost:	AUD 1 047 811
- Australian Government:	AUD 970 888
- Bigen Africa:	AUD 76 923