

Dutch Funding To Scale Up Mineral Trade In The Great Lakes Region

iTSCi and Pact are delighted to welcome confirmation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands (MFA) on funding for a three-year project to achieve “*Scaling up Mineral Trade*” in the Great Lakes region of central Africa. Funding will support activities of Pact, the implementing partner of the iTSCi Programme in the region, in order to bring more miners and their communities back into the responsible international market. This economic opportunity is expected to lead to improved security and governance in the local area. The project will also add social value through provision of training on savings and business skills, improving health and safety in artisanal mines, and addressing various human rights issues in the mining sector such as gender equity.

In 2012, the MFA led action to break the de facto embargo persisting in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) since 2010 by bringing together a range of stakeholders in the Conflict Free Tin Initiative (CFTI). That project encouraged international sourcing of conflict-free minerals from high-risk areas enabled by financing from MFA to launch the iTSCi Programme in the Kivu Provinces of DRC. The Netherlands’ Minister for Development and Cooperation, Lilianne Ploumen, said “A few years ago, we were struggling to balance the need to prevent the fueling of conflict with the need to use mining as a motor for economic and social development. Now I think we are starting to find this balance – thanks to increased security, and thanks to the many stakeholders who refused to give up on the Great Lakes as a provider of minerals to the world.”

The CFTI represented an important milestone towards conflict free mineral trading in the DRC, and the partners have been in discussion since the project ended in May 2014 to follow up on this previous success. Minister Ploumen continued to say that “there is more to be

done: more mines need to become conflict free, so that more communities can benefit from the responsible export that contributes to sustainable development; building local capacity needs to continue; health and safety consciousness, and other aspects of responsible business need to be supported; and communities need to be empowered to benefit from the increasing economic opportunities in and around the mines.” MFA is now demonstrating their continued strong commitment to further assist the mineral sector through this follow-on project which aims to provide economic and social development through production and trade of tin, tantalum and tungsten (the ‘3Ts’) more widely across the region, as well as address issues beyond conflict.

The project will enable iTSCi to achieve important targets, notably increasing the inclusion of 3Ts mines by around 25%, and increasing the number of trained government representatives by roughly 33%. The project will also lead to improved iTSCi data collection and strengthened capacity of local stakeholders to monitor the integrity and effectiveness of the system. Importantly, the project also aims to maximise the benefits available to local participants from the exploitation of mineral resources through training in literacy, savings and business management with a curriculum specifically designed for artisanal miners, as well as raising awareness of safety issues and reducing the number of accidents reported at the mines. The project has a specific focus on supporting women’s representation and opportunities in the mining sector.

While MFA is providing significant funding, some aspects of the social programming on business and safety training will not be able to go ahead without co-funding from other sources, said Karen Hayes, senior director of the Mines to Markets program at Pact. “This project is an exciting opportunity that brings together the private sector with public funding to achieve trade and development aims,” said Hayes. “We hope that other donors and downstream companies using metals produced from these mines will become involved in the iTSCi

Programme, providing more direct contributions to support this important work.”

Kay Nimmo, ITRI representative on the iTSCi Governance Committee, explained “While iTSCi has continued to extend into new geographic areas when possible through funding from local actors, this has been a continual challenge, particularly in the current market environment of low metal prices. The contribution of MFA brings funding that is critical to start-up traceability and due diligence in currently neglected areas and will significantly speed up implementation of this industry programme with a proven track record of success which can finally bring an end to the economic embargo of the region.”

Yves Bawa, Pact’s Regional Director for the DRC, Rwanda and Burundi, praised the continued and generous support of the Dutch government saying, “The MFA’s support for this project goes beyond funding as it is hallmarked by ongoing commitment, thoughtful engagement and close collaboration. *‘Scaling up Mineral Trade’* brings the miners and the market closer together than ever, improves good governance and the capacity of the government to manage the sector, and opens the door to new, positive impacts on the lives of the people we seek to serve.”