



Social risk analysis and resource governance

Applying social sciences to unpack complex resource sector challenges

The social aspects of resource development are becoming increasingly complex as governments, industry, investors, and communities navigate evolving Environmental, Social and Governance expectations and more rigorous standards.

The current and future impacts experienced by mining communities require sophisticated, evidence-based approaches to understanding social risk and strengthening resource governance.

Researchers at The University of Queensland's Sustainable Minerals Institute (SMI) lead and deliver independent, evidence-based social research and policy analysis—engaging collaboratively with multi-stakeholder groups to assess and address the risks, costs, and benefits associated with resource extraction.

They aim to improve resource governance across the extractive supply chain; protect and respect human rights, encourage due diligence, and work to achieve just and fair outcomes in resource and energy-related transitions.

SMI is also the world's only university-based institution offering public and bespoke professional development courses for people engaged in the social aspects of the extractive industries.

About The Sustainable Minerals Institute (SMI)

SMI is the world's largest co-located interdisciplinary research institute focused on minerals and resources. Through its seven specialist research centres, international centre SMI Chile and technology transfer company JKTech, SMI works to have a positive impact on global mining and sustainability challenges.

SMI delivers:

- Integrated, research driven solutions to advance industry best practice
- Research driven training and higher degrees by research
- Innovation for a sustainable future



Top 5

UQ is consistently ranked in top 5 in the world for mining and mineral research.



300+

SMI has over 300 researchers working to solve mining and mineral related challenges.



600+

SMI has partnered with over 600 industry, government and civil society organisations.



5+

SMI delivers research and training in South America, Europe, Africa, Asia and Australia.

Our approach

SMI's Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining (CSRM) brings together anthropologists, sociologists, political scientists, geographers, environmental scientists and engineers with social science expertise to:

- Study ways to advance social equity in local communities during energy transitions.
- Develop rights holder and stakeholder engagement frameworks for different stages of mine life.
- Undertake projects that support Indigenous rights and cultural heritage management and protection.
- Perform advisory work for governments and industry on social impacts and resource governance.
- Partner with Indigenous organisations to undertake independent research supporting self-determination.
- Help embed social requirements into technical planning for mining projects.
- Build and deliver social performance-focused professional development for industry leaders.

Impact highlights



Cultural Heritage Risk Management

- The destruction of an ancient and sacred cultural site at Juukan Gorge in 2020 showed how mining can impact Indigenous sites, creating trauma within the Traditional Owner community, and reputational and legal risks for industry.
- CSRM convenes a professional development course and leads research on cultural heritage risk mapping and consultation frameworks to safeguard Indigenous rights and heritage management, working with representative bodies, mining companies and other organisations.
- This has led to frameworks being adopted by major mining companies, supporting conformance with international standards and national legislation and building capacity for culturally sensitive decision-making.



Social aspects of mine closure

- For local communities, mine closure is an important transition to a post-mining future in which social change continues long after a mine closes.
- CSRM researchers have developed frameworks and case studies to evaluate the social dimensions of closure.
- These frameworks aim to help mining companies and other stakeholders assess social impacts in a specific location.



Towards a just transition and advancing social equity in decarbonisation

- The global energy transition risks aggravating inequities for mining-dependent communities, particularly in developing economies.
- SMI researchers are designing frameworks to ensure fair and inclusive outcomes during decarbonisation, focusing on employment, community resilience, and policy alignment.
- This work provides policy recommendations for governments, industry and multilateral organisations; informs social performance strategies for major mining companies and supports the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and just transition principles.



Global Industry Standard on Tailings Management—Social Performance Training

- After the catastrophic failure of a tailings dam in Brumadinho, Brazil, CSRM contributed to drafting the Global Industry Standard on Tailings Management.
- CSRM developed and delivers capability building training for tailings specialists, social performance and other industry professionals to meet the standard.



Learn more

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