



Contents

- Introduction
- Energy Manager of the Year
- Sustainable Packaging
- Employee Engagement & Behaviour Change
- Sustainable Supply Chains**
- Sustainability Reporting
- Energy Management
- Waste & Resource Management
- Carbon Management
- Sustainability Product Innovation - Energy
- Sustainability Product Innovation - Resource Efficiency
- Sustainable Building
- Sustainable Transport and Travel
- CSR Charity & Community
- Sustainability/CSR Manager of the Year
- Water Management
- SME Consultancy of the Year
- Large Consultancy of the Year
- Sustainable Business of the Year
- Sustainability Leader

Sustainable Supply Chains

WINNER
ITRI



For sustainability and CSR professionals, supply chains can be highly complex beasts filled with risk, so enhancing the transparency of supply links that commonly appear hand-in-hand with human rights discrepancies and the financing of war is no small feat. Yet this is precisely what ITRI has been able to achieve through an initiative aimed at reducing links between tin mining in the Democratic of Congo (DRC) and the funding of rebel armed forces in the region.

ITRI's innovative Tin Supply Chain Initiative (ITSCI) has grown from a one-mine pilot in DRC in 2011 to encompass conflict areas across four countries and enable trading prosperity for hundreds of thousands of small-scale miners today. ITSCI works on the ground with local miners in remote areas of Africa, and implores and assists them in meeting international standards for conflict free minerals.

ITSCI has enabled these African communities to stay in business and reap economic benefits, free from the looming presence of armed forces, and the initiative now covers an estimated 95% of tin supply in the region.

Through the initiative, communities have been able to build new infrastructure, while local companies have been able to invest in schools and education. Child labour has fallen considerably and the involvement of armed rebel groups, a common theme in conflict minerals, has been reduced dramatically. ITSCI has essentially made the source of the materials wholly- transparent to big manufacturers now engaged in the projects.



L-R: Presenter Helistrat md Martyn Oakton, winners ITRI and compere Mark Watson

Acting as an industry project, ITSCI includes more than 350 companies, located in the supply chain, across more than 38 countries and provides a great example of how one company can demonstrate leadership across an entire supply chain and pass the emphasis onto others. ITSCI has changed the procurement process across the sector through continuous monitoring across the trading chain that provides the data and metrics that highlight what progress has been shown.

As an industry project, ITSCI has engaged all players in the supply chain and a priority target to maximise the number of companies benefitting from the initiative has reached more than 1,500 across DRC, Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda. Following the successful implementation for the tin sector, tantalum and tungsten metals are now covered in the project to spread its influence and benefits further.



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- Carbon Management
- Sustainability Product Innovation - Energy
- Sustainability Product Innovation - Resource Efficiency
- Sustainable Building
- Sustainable Transport and Travel
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ITSCI generates reports on any human rights abuses, such as forced or child labour, and has the monitoring and data capabilities to show details of current risks anywhere across the implementation area at any given time. The monitoring is also tailored to ensure that minerals produced from the mines aren't benefitting armed groups; this is enforced with regular visits to ground-level mines. ITSCI is also working with local governments to build capacity and training standards so that work currently performed by members of the initiative can be handed over to the local authorities.

The project has been designed in accordance with the recommendations of the OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas, guidance which representatives from ITRI also assisted in drafting through a multi-stakeholder process. Commonly, companies that stray from these recommendations are no longer viewed as reliable suppliers and therefore fall from the markets. When necessary, ITSCI will enforce sanctions in order to retain 'conflict free' status.

Companies are able to participate in ITSCI if they commit to the OECD guidance, and they will be helped with improving visibility and traceability in conflict mineral supply chains

and encourage stakeholders to perform upstream audits all the way through to metal smelters, ultimately capturing the entire value chain as a result.

An array of information, including the accomplishments of the project and its members, are all publicly available and the information is designed so that companies within the supply chain are gifted with the framework, and past examples, to perform to a desired level of due diligence. With supply chains for conflict minerals being as complex as they are, ITSCI uses periodic audits to not only check up on the mines, but also offer flexibility through an adjustment of expectations to companies both large and small to account for different complexities.

Whereas individual business-to-business non-compliance can be difficult to manage, ITSCI's role as an overarching monitoring organisation, free from commercial influence, has provided significant benefits for compliance issues. Through adapting the supply chains rather than imposing stringent requirements, the ITSCI has achieved all of the aforementioned results and more, and ITRI is now using what it has learned to devise a new Code of Conduct to set global industry standards for wider environmental and social issues.



WHAT THE JUDGES SAID:

"In just a few years, ITRI's innovative and wide-reaching Tin Supply Chain Initiative has delivered fantastic results, and it has tremendous potential to go even further, tackling a range of social and environmental issues in supply chains across the world."