

FOREWORD

Namibia has 157 registered and probably in excess of 250 abandoned mine sites in total. These mines may pose a serious threat in terms of groundwater and soil contamination, dust pollution, the impending physical impact of hazardous structures, and negative visual impact. There is a variety of types of abandoned mines, both, in terms of size, and in terms of the commodity that was mined. Some are underground mines, while others are open pits and quarries. Associated structures are overburden dumps, tailings facilities, and beneficiation plants in various stages of deterioration and decay.

The Ministry of Mines and Energy has recognized the hazardous potential and the negative environmental impact of these abandoned mines. However, due to the wide variety of types, there is no standard solution for dealing with them, and remediation measures need to be tailor-made for individual cases.

Faced with the same problem in Chile, the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR) of Germany developed a manual to assist with prioritizing old mines sites in terms of the risks that they pose to the health and safety of people and the biophysical environment. This manual was edited, adapted and customized to the Namibian situation with the help of highly recognized specialists in this field in the southern African region, such as Bryony Walmsley of SAIEA, Peter Terbrugge of SRK and Willie van Niekerk of Infotox.

This resulting Namibian manual will assist greatly in the difficult task of dealing with the inherited problem of abandoned mine sites and allocating funding to rehabilitate those mines which pose the greatest risk. As it has been designed to suit the Namibian circumstances, it also forms the basis for dealing with orphan mine sites in the entire southern African region.



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