

# Digital to speed up change in mining industry

Technological evolution is nothing new in mining, but the coming wave of changes, such as incorporating digitisation, big data, automation, ubiquitous sensors, machine learning, artificial intelligence, and more, is faster and stronger than anything ever seen before.



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This raises how new mining technologies will affect communities, governments, and operators and how should policy-makers respond to promote sustainable development through mining in the future.

To answer these important questions, the Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals and Sustainable Development (IGF) has published a new report, *New Tech, New Deal: Mining Policy Options in the Face of New Technology*.

“In recent years, we’ve seen an acceleration of investment in disruptive technologies in the large-scale mining sector,” says Isabelle Ramdoo, the report’s co-author and deputy director of the IGF.

“These technologies will alter the traditional relationships between mining companies, communities, and governments,” she adds.

## Major impact on labour

Labour is one area where the report authors anticipate major impacts as new technologies will mean fewer jobs overall but also provide for new, high-paying positions.

Skills training programmes may be part of the answer to equip local workers to fill these new mining roles and support the industry’s social licence to operate. “In many ways, mining jobs are seen as payment from operators to local communities,” says Ramdoo.

## Increased productivity

According to the report, new technologies may bring increased productivity to mine operators, while key variables will determine how these changes play out for women in mining and the artisanal and small-scale mining sector. In addition,

some new technologies may provide for benefits extending beyond the mining sector.

The report also examines how new technologies will affect supply chains and local procurement as well as taxation and government revenue from the sector. “If new technologies reduce the flow of benefits from mining operations to local communities and governments, good policies can go a long way to rebalance the traditional deal between these important stakeholders and large-scale mining companies.”

The authors outline four broad categories for “new deal” mining policies.

*These should:*

- Ensure any new jobs are contestable by locals.
- Use mining to drive economic diversification outside the mining sector.
- Rethink tax mechanisms to account for the new realities.
- Find solutions in the new technologies themselves.

Read the full report [here](#)

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