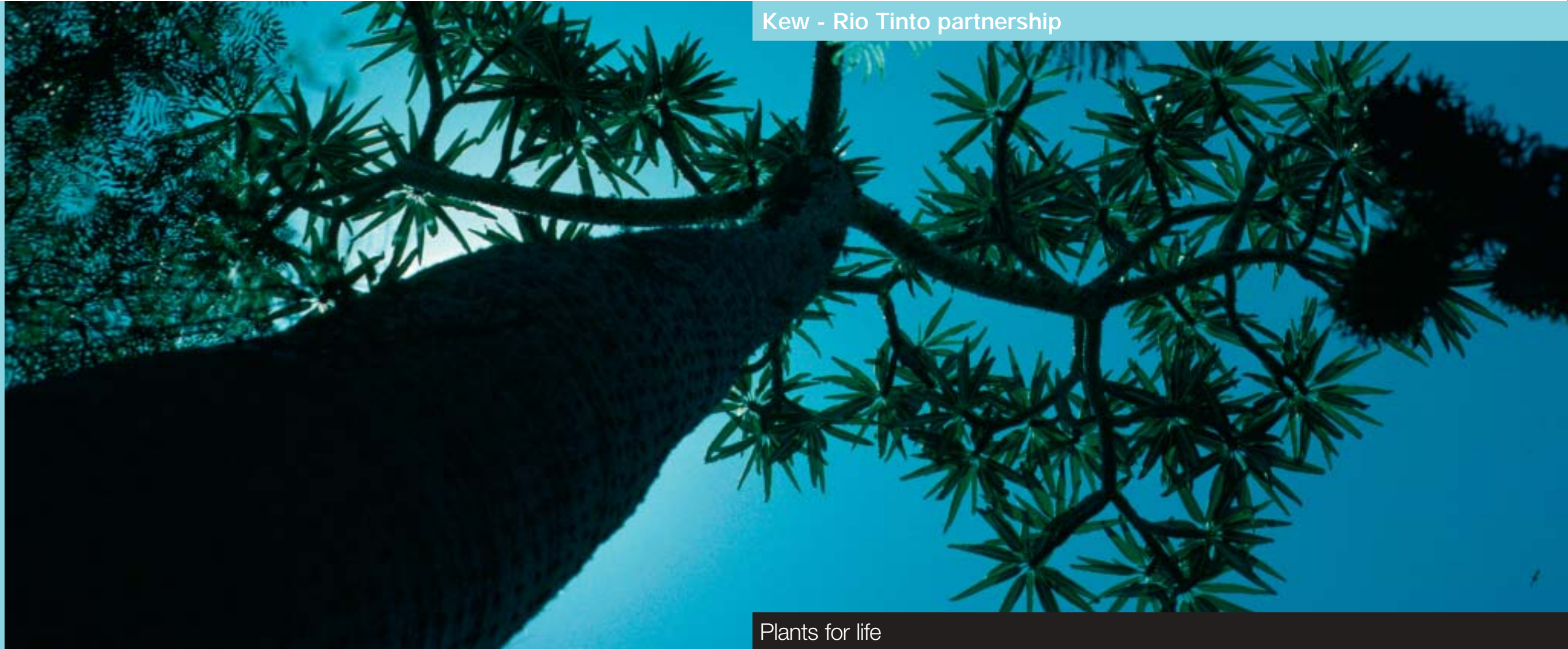


Kew - Rio Tinto partnership



Plants for life

“Rio Tinto and Kew have developed an increasingly close relationship over the past few years. This is based around collaboration on research, capacity building and knowledge transfer. Our partnership is now moving into a new phase, looking to exploit future opportunities which neither partner could take up alone.”

Professor Sir Peter Crane, FRS, director, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

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In 2000, Rio Tinto and Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, signed an agreement committing both organisations to the “Plants for Life” partnership.

Plants for Life goal

To enhance and improve environmental management and conservation through practical scientific work and through increasing awareness with respect to biodiversity and conservation within the context of sustainable development.

Objectives of the partnership programme:

- To acquire and manage scientific data on biodiversity.
- To make data more accessible and transfer knowledge of plant diversity to a wide audience.
- To build capacity for plant conservation, especially in developing countries.
- To improve management of plant biodiversity in the context of sustainable development.

The partners planned to combine their activities on a global basis to enhance their contribution to environmental conservation through jointly planned and managed programmes.

Benefits to Kew

The partnership enables Kew to apply its research and knowledge directly towards conservation results and assist Rio Tinto to manage and minimise its environmental footprint. This has both enhanced Kew's capacity to deliver on the ground benefits and has increased its confidence to move forward in its work with Rio Tinto, the mining sector and the international business community generally.

In addition to providing financial support to the projects Rio Tinto has:

- Provided access to land they manage, providing the opportunity to explore new regions and increase understanding of biodiversity in areas in which Kew has an interest.
- Provided logistical support for field collections, greatly facilitating the range and productivity of plant and seed collecting missions.
- Supported Kew research programmes in several countries.

Benefits to Rio Tinto

In addition to delivering significant biodiversity learning benefits, a number of the projects have assisted Rio Tinto to meet its environmental management objectives:

- Involvement of Rio Tinto personnel in project activities provides Rio Tinto staff with technical capacity training and increased knowledge of the biodiversity of the land they manage.
- Products such as the Chilean technical seed collection manual, Flora Zambesiaca (flora of southern Africa), academic papers and outputs of a workshop on metal tolerant plants facilitate access to information supporting restoration and rehabilitation activities.
- Interaction between mine staff and local conservation organisations provides Rio Tinto operating units in Chile and Madagascar with an opening into conservation networks and encourages dialogue between the mining and scientific sectors.
- Close relationships developed with Rio Tinto's QIT Madagascar Minerals (QMM) in Fort Dauphin and Kew resulted in the international co-ordinator of the Millennium Seed Bank Project regularly participating on the QMM project biodiversity advisory committee.



Seed collections in Chile resulted in a manual for seed collectors published in Spanish for conservationists and Rio Tinto staff in Chile.

Plantas do Nordeste - Brazil

The objective of this project is to identify and promote the sustainable use of plant resources in north east Brazil. The Association Plantas do Nordeste works with academic, government, non-government and community organisations focussing on biodiversity, economic botany and information dissemination and training.

Web-based accessibility of data held in Flora Zambesiaca

Flora Zambesiaca is a large scale taxonomic project to document the flora of southern Africa. Thanks to Plants for Life, Flora Zambesiaca is now available via the internet and accessible to a wide range of non technical users. In addition to its use as an identification tool, this web-based approach will make conservation decisions easier, enabling species that are most at risk to be prioritised for protection.

Plants for Life scholarships for training in conservation

Kew has a strong education programme dedicated to spreading conservation knowledge worldwide. Funding from the Plants for Life scholarship scheme enabled ten students from developing countries to participate in plant conservation and botanic gardens management courses at Kew. This provided them with the relevant skills, techniques and knowledge to implement conservation activities within their own institutes and throughout their regions of operation.

Conservation of threatened plant species in Chile

The Instituto de Investigaciones Agropecuarias (INIA) is working with the Kew Millennium Seed Bank to implement a project on conservation of endemic, vulnerable and endangered plant species from desert and Mediterranean zones in Chile. Rio Tinto Exploration, Santiago, facilitated a joint seed collecting mission to the Tal Tal in Pajonales, an area currently under exploration. This resulted in 12 seed collections including a sample from one of the two remaining populations of *Dalea azurea*, an endangered species restricted to the Pajonales area. Propagation protocols are being developed for this and other threatened species for which wild seed collection is not an option. These plants will be grown away from their natural habitat and their seed harvested for long term conservation efforts. This will ensure that, even if they become extinct in the wild, the plants will be available as a source of material critical for species recovery and rehabilitation in the future.

Conservation, restoration and sustainable utilisation of littoral forest in Madagascar

This project is assisting QIT Madagascar Minerals (QMM), a subsidiary of Rio Tinto, to develop aspects of technical information and expertise on biodiversity conservation in connection with a proposed mining project. Conservation will be achieved by storing seeds and developing strategies for priority plant species for restoration purposes, advising on potential sustainable products from the littoral forest, and producing a field guide to littoral forest trees in the Mandena Conservation Zone, owned by QMM.



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