

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES ON  
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN A  
MINING AREA IN SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

Community development programs (CDPs) conducted by mining companies have become an essential component for building and maintaining an amiable relationship with communities in mining areas and for sustainable community development, especially in developing countries. CDPs provide social and economic benefits to communities such as direct and indirect employment, schools and education, health care centers, and road infrastructure. CDPs are broadly expected to continue benefiting communities socially and economically. Previous literature only discusses the role of CDPs in the context of a corporate obligation to sustainable development and as one activity of Corporate Social Responsibility. Yet, little research exists that describes how local people view CDPs and how they actually become involved. Thus, this research aims to investigate community perspectives on community development programs conducted by mining companies. To achieve this aim, this research takes the form of an empirical study, carried out in a mining community in South Africa, with three main research questions, as follows;

1. What types of community development programs do mining companies undertake for mining communities – for what purpose and by what means?
2. How do the communities view the community development programs conducted by the mining companies in their communities?
3. What explain the gaps between the company intention and the view of the communities about the community development programs?

Fieldwork was conducted in the Royal Bafokeng Nation, an indigenous Setswana-speaking community in South Africa that located on the world's largest platinum deposits. The total of four RBN villages was selected. The fieldwork was mainly composed of semi-structured interviews with local residents. In addition, one key informant interview was conducted. The number of valid respondents was 34 out of 36. The intentions of the mining companies underlying CDPs are represented by the statements and achievements obtained from sustainability reports of the mining companies in the study villages. Comparison was made between the intentions of the mining companies and the awareness of the respondents about the CDPs in order to discover whether the respondents' views match the companies' views.

In this study, CDPs were categorized into two types. Type One includes the CDPs for capacity building, emphasizing enterprise development and procurement in the communities. Type Two includes the CDPs for socioeconomic development emphasizing infrastructure development, and education and health support. From this comparison, of capacity building CDPs, results reveal that only a few respondents are aware of the programs that have been implemented, and have negative perceptions. On the other hand, even though more than half of the respondents were unaware of socio-economic CDPs, relatively more respondents were aware of the programs and they had positive views. The factors explaining the perception gap are (1) insufficient promotion of the programs in the communities; (2) differences in expectations between the mining companies and communities, especially regarding procurement; (3) insufficient qualifications of community members; and (4) attitudes of the mining companies regarding CDPs, especially for capacity building. The results also suggest that socio-economic CDPs, focusing on infrastructure development and education and health support, impact communities more than capacity building CDPs, which specifically focus on local enterprises. However, results of analysis of perceptions concerning post-mining

community situations indicated that people feel that they would be able to continue living in their communities provided alternative sources of income are available. This result suggests the importance of investment in improving the capacity of local enterprises by the mining companies and its necessity for the sustainable development of post-mining communities.

This research investigates community perspectives regarding CDPs conducted by mining companies through the awareness of communities about capacity building and socio-economic CDPs. The South African government has established a strong legislative system governing mining companies in the favor of community development in mining areas. The Royal Bafokeng Nation also has an independent administrative system and established communication channels with mining companies in addition to those with local municipality, and has much invested effort into sustaining and managing the communities. Nevertheless, rather weak and negative community perspectives concerning CDPs was discovered. This result seems to indicate general difficulties in investigating and formulating community perspectives in mining areas from which two perspectives can be discussed, that of the mining companies and that of the communities. From the mining companies' side, there are three possible causes: (1) conduct CDPs as a 'façade' to give the semblance of sincerity in order to obtain approval for a mining license, (2) conducting inadequate needs assessment or consultation with communities, and (3) setting the priority as low among their key stakeholders. From the communities' side, there are five possible causes: (1) vulnerability and weak capacity of the communities, (2) embedded mistrust of mining companies in the communities, (3) seemingly endless dissatisfaction with company promises, (4) passive attitude that mining companies should help and provide for the community, and (5) mistrust and little engagement among community members.

This research has made three academic contributions. Firstly, it has identified the gaps between company intentions and the views of the communities regarding CDPs.

Secondly, this research has identified the factors explaining the gaps, which represents the major contribution of this research. The discussion of sustainable community development has heretofore been argued mainly based from mining company perspectives. Thirdly, this research pointed out the difficulties of investigating and formulating a community perspective in a mining area. Empirical contribution of this research show how local people in the mining community actually think about CDPs conducted by mining companies, their efforts to engage mining companies, and their future perception regarding their communities. In addition, this research also suggests the importance of the investment in capacity building of the communities by the mining companies.