

Community Development and the Mining Industry

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The paper draws on the 30 year experience of a practitioner who, for the last years was managing director of TEBA Development, a not profit organisation associated with TEBA, the industry's migrant labour recruiting arm.

The central thesis is that the industry as a whole has failed to significantly impact on community development, particularly in the labour sending areas. The basic contention is supported by wealth evidence. The paper proposes that the industry has the capacity to impact significantly through targeted programmes, which should be funded at a level commensurate with the contribution of migrant communities to the wealth of the mining industry, but only through coordinated, best practice approaches, that reverse the trend of fragmented approaches based on patronage or slavishly contributing to failed government programmes. This potential is occasionally glimpsed, and the paper gives credit to where this has occurred

Since the 1990, the flow of formal migration to the mines has declined substantially. An estimate of the decline of migrant labour is that in the 1980's 4 out of 5 families in key Eastern Cape Districts had a migrant worker, and by 2,000 the ratio was 1:5

Local people characterise mining industry (and Teba as their recruiter) as people who take away our healthy young men and recruit them sick or dead. TB is endemic for example, as is HIV Aids

For decade mines have had Corporate Social Responsibility Projects, for example building schools for communities who apply, or starting Local economic Development Projects. Since 2005 there has been a formal requirement to have Social and Labour Plans in any District which comprises more than 5% of the workforce. So mines have converted CSI into SLP's. There are some that have been reasonably successful, and others that are fragmented and achieve very little. Although mines talk about the extent of their investment in communities, very little reaches rural areas. Budgets are miniscule, by comparison with the returns to investors achieved from the labour of decades.,

Some interventions in Health care for example, claim to be contributing to universal testing for silicosis through strengthening local health services. In practice, little has been achieved because of the crisis in state hospitals. So the industry has misplaced its funds by hanging onto the coattails of the state. It fails in the objective of ensuring that ex-miners are checked, as it does with employees on mines. Now mines are facing legal action for compensation.

There is also very limited coordination between Government efforts and those of the mining industry. For example, the Governments Community Work Programme provides an income safety net to over 40,000 people in mining sending districts. Yet the mines SLP's do not coordinate with this programme although in Welkom, there have been some partnerships between mines and the CWP. Where mines have near mine programmes one can 50 km from the mine and there is no impact. Communities have no water, poverty and disease are rife.

There are very few communities around Southern Africa who can say that they have benefitted from mining. This is particularly the case of migrant sending communities, who are left impoverished and vulnerable by their participation in the "Resource Curse".