Mining and community development: problems and possibilities of local-level practice

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Abstract

This article examines local-level community development (CD) facilitated by the mining industry. It moves beyond polarized debates that pit CD in mining as either a front for public relations or a genuine attempt to facilitate development in order to build understanding and critical awareness of problems and possibilities of local-level CD practice. Publicly available information and prior work and research with community practitioners in mining provide a basis for the analysis. The article makes a contribution to literature about the role of business in development and the mining industry’s capacity to contribute to poverty reduction and human development.

Introduction

Despite the global economic crisis and reduced commodity prices, mining companies continue to enter remote communities to search for exploitable mineral reserves. Most of these frontier locations are home to indigenous, poor and vulnerable peoples. Many mining companies now employ community practitioners to interact with local people and facilitate community development (CD) at the operational level. Literature about large-scale mining and development is often dominated by debates about economic, political, legislative and market structures. These perspectives have been important for illuminating enabling conditions of corporate power (Blowfield, 2004) and building understanding of the broader conditions that facilitate, influence and constrain human interactions between mine operations and local people. However, a high-level structural analysis does not necessarily provide insight into problems and possibilities of CD in mining that involves impacted
and affected families, households, small groups and local communities. A practice-based focus has the potential to improve understanding of mining and development at the local level and enrich broader debates.

Many mining companies now use the language of CD and participation as part of sustainable development (SD) and corporate social responsibility (CSR) frameworks. CD discourse invokes poverty reduction and human development goals and infers value-based commitments to social justice, equity and inclusion where benefits flow even to the most vulnerable (Hamann and Kapelus, 2004). CD in mining is being institutionalized and professionalized, as evidenced by the appointment of specialist practitioners at operations, policies, projects and programs with a development orientation, and an increased focus on education and capacity building of community practitioners in mining. However, there continues to be limited knowledge about the extent to which local-level CD practitioners either accommodate, synthesize and/or transform the industry’s dual commercial and development agendas, often considered incompatible (Manteaw, 2007). Scholarly literature, publicly available information and the author’s own observations of community practitioners in mining through prior (Kemp, 2003; Kemp, unpublished Master’s thesis, 2002, unpublished PhD thesis, 2006) and ongoing work and research provide a basis for the discussion.

Focus on local-level practice

Perspectives on mining and CD are relatively polarized, reflecting broader debates about CSR and business contributions to development (Amalric et al., 2004; Blowfield, 2004; Harcourt, 2004; Sayer, 2005). Pro-business literature has, for some time, highlighted the business case and wider benefits of corporate contributions to economic and human development (Nelson, 1999; Holme and Watts, 2000). Multilateral organizations such as the United Nations (UN) through its Global Compact (Leisinger, 2007) and The World Bank affirm the potential for CSR to address poverty (The World Bank and the International Finance Corporation, 2008; see also Hamann, 2003 for the business case for CSR in mining). At the other end of the continuum are critics who see CSR as a branch of public relations (PR) (Christian Aid, 2004) where companies undertake CSR as a form of insurance against disruption and reputational damage and to avoid mandatory regulation, rather than as a genuine attempt to facilitate development that benefits the poor and marginalized.

A project undertaken by the mining industry’s peak body, the International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM), The World Bank and the UN Conference on Trade and Development (ICMM, UNCTAD and The World Bank, 2006) concludes that mining investment provides opportunities for economic
growth, poverty reduction and engagement in the global economy, which is critical for countries at an early stage of development (2006). The study points to specific examples where increased mining investment has coincided with an upturn in national economic growth. Critics see CSR in mining as an inadequate development response because it prioritizes economic growth and corporate profit over the interests of the poor and marginalized (War on Want, 2007). Questions have been raised about whether corporate claims of mining’s positive contributions to human development become nothing more than a ‘tokenistic gesture’ (Manteaw, 2007, p. 10) or a ‘cloak of legitimacy’ (Kapelus, 2002, p. 280). In contrast, the industry sees a ‘win–win’, where mining is ... one of the very few sources of investment in the world’s poorest countries and investment is essential for economic growth and peace (Mitchell, 2007). Some scholars highlight that, while there may be zones of compatibility between business and development, objective and comprehensive evidence demonstrating a positive difference to poverty reduction are inconclusive (Blowfield, 2004, 2007; Hamann, 2007; Newell and Frynas, 2007).

This article follows the footsteps of other scholars seeking a productive and dynamic exchange between conventional CD practitioners and those in the corporate sector, including mining (Muthuri, 2007b). It starts by exploring broader literature about mining and development before discussing the key terms and describing the emerging practice domain of CD in mining. Then it explores four types of local-level practice challenges: conceptual, organizational, political and temporal. In conclusion, it considers possibilities for local-level CD practice in mining. The article accepts the business benefits of CD in mining, but unlike socio-economic convergence theorists (Muthuri, 2007a) openly explores inherent tensions of mining and CD. The article aligns with other scholars who seek to foster a healthy skepticism of business and development (Harcourt, 2004) so that limitations of CSR can be diagnosed and where possible transcended (Reddy, 2004) rather than overlooked. As so eloquently expressed by Sir Geoffrey Chandler (2008), Founder-Chair of Amnesty International’s Business and Human Rights Group, while protest can raise issues, it takes engagement to win the argument. When human rights are abused and the environment is degraded, protest against irresponsible mining companies is vitally important. However, the CD community must also consider direct engagement with mining companies in discussion and debate as a means to further influence corporate development decisions and actions.

**Mining and development**

Mining usually brings with it rapid development and significant change, such as opportunities for employment, a large influx of capital and in some
cases in-migration and resettlement. For some communities, particularly with no history of mining, taking advantage of the benefits while at the same time coping with adverse mining impacts can be daunting. Adding to people’s vulnerability is the fact that the legal frameworks of many mining frontiers fail to adequately protect citizen rights or are ineffective, corrupt or not trusted. The ICMM concludes that governance weakness, particularly at the sub-national level, is the main factor limiting positive development impacts from large-scale mining (McPhail, 2008). Mining may have potential to have positive development impacts, but companies can inadvertently or carelessly exacerbate an already poor situation for some community members, particularly those with the least resources (Sarin et al., 2006).

Along the pro-anti mining continuum, case studies in scholarly literature provide insight into CD activities (or lack thereof) at mining locations around the world (Kapelus, 2002; Mackenzie and Pooley, circa 2003; Muradian et al., 2003; Yakovleva and Alabaster, 2003; Manteaw, 2007; Muthuri, 2007a). Case studies highlight impacts and activities at particular locations or by different companies, but comparative or evaluative research about CD, either by region, commodity, country, or otherwise is rare. One of the few exceptions is a country-wide study of CD and mining commissioned by The World Bank and the Ministry of Mines and Geology in Guinea (Synergy-Global, 2007). Lack of research about local-level CD practice in mining reflects the general trend that business and development remains profoundly under-researched (Visser, 2008). Empirical or grounded practice-based research does not adequately inform conceptual or theoretical understandings of mining and CD.

Mining’s contribution to development has been subject to intense scrutiny through ‘resource curse’ theories (Auty and Warhurst, 1993; Sachs and Warner, 1997; Davis, 1998) a focus on revenue transparency (EITI, 2006), distribution of benefits from national to local levels (Reed, 2002) and disputes about impacts on local communities (Oxfam Australia, 2001–2008; Manteaw, 2007). This attention reflects the complex social, political, economic and physical conditions of mining, its non-renewable, temporary and often short-term nature and the significant challenge of ensuring community benefits, including after mine closure. Garvey and Newell (2005) identify numerous factors relating to governments, companies and communities that influence the inherent value of community-based strategies. Such conditions include government policies, effective legal frameworks and a corporation’s approach to citizen participation. As elaborated in the next section, the mining industry’s operating philosophy has been subject to change, including formalization of commitments to CD. Still, there is a question about the extent to which companies should be judged for their CD performance. Hayes and Walker (2005)
argue that companies should only be judged on core business impacts, rather than their ‘voluntary’ development contributions. Alternative perspectives position CD within a conceptual framework that influences core business (Synergy-Global, 2007). Others observe that CSR has little sway over core business, even where there are significant social impacts (Hamann and Kapelus, 2004). The scope and focus of CD in mining remains ambiguous.

There have been numerous calls for business, including mining companies, to make their approach to CSR more development and social justice-orientated (Fox, 2004; Newell, 2005; Manteaw, 2007; Visser, 2008), particularly those companies headquartered in developed countries with operations in developing countries, although with this comes the critique about exporting Northern values to the South (Kapelus, 2002; Bendell, 2005). Questions have also been asked about the extent to which CSR is ‘rewriting’ development (Harcourt, 2004, p. 1). Considerations driving business to increase its focus on development priorities can be attributed to a ‘constellation of drivers’ (Muthuri, 2007a, p. 179), including civil society’s increased focus on human rights (Utting, 2007) and social justice concerns (Newell and Frynas, 2007), the rise of global communications and associated media campaigns, emergence of voluntary regulation through standardization of social performance expectations (Schiavi and Solomon, 2007), pressure from shareholder activists, lenders and financial institutions though initiatives such as the Equator Principles (2006) and the aforementioned governance gaps.

Mining operations are sometimes the only viable option that remote communities have for social development (IIED, 2002), particularly when governments manage to redistribute some of the revenue stream from mineral taxes and royalties back to the local community level. This scenario raises important issues about the ability of aggrieved groups to oppose company activities for fear that action may threaten much-needed company-funded projects (Newell, 2005) and community dependency on services following mine closure. In many ways, the issue of community dependency on company-funded services goes to the heart of the debate about the mining industry’s ability to facilitate sustainable local legacies.

**CD in mining: definitions and concepts**

Mining industry definitions of ‘community’ usually encompass people in the immediate impact zone. Depending on the context, community can also include landowners not living in the area and people affected by backward and forward linkages along mining production and supply chains,
such as communities living downstream from an operation. The mining industry tends to define communities in geographic and homogenous terms (AccountAbility and BSR, 2004). Leading industry practice acknowledges that communities are complex, evolving, political and heterogeneous entities [Department of Industry Tourism and Resources (DITR), 2006] but the extent to which management responses reflect this is unclear. Mining industry policy encourages operations to build amicable relationships with local communities and recognize their responsibilities (The World Bank and ICMM, 2005). Some responsibilities are clear, such as ensuring equal employment opportunities, safe working conditions and no child or forced labor, but there is less agreement about mining’s development responsibilities, including the extent to which responsibilities should extend beyond and in turn influence operational priorities.

The notion of ‘participation’ is integral to the discourses of CSR and development, both as a process and as an end in itself (Bendell, 2005). There is an enormous literature that considers participation and development that includes critical perspectives (Cooke and Kothari, 2001). However, there is basic agreement that participatory development seeks to promote human rights, equity and decision-making at the local level (Dipholo, 2002). During the last two decades, the participatory ethic has been adopted by grass-roots non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international NGOs as they shifted their focus from aid and relief to tackling the fundamental problems of lack of assets and voice (Korten, 1989). Similarly, bi- and multilateral development organizations, agencies of the UN and The World Bank (1996) have signaled their adoption of participation as both a method and an end in itself (The World Bank, 1996) along with, more recently, the corporate sector, including mining companies. In 2002, a global industry-funded study concluded that while mining companies were ill-equipped to respond to the increasing demand for sustained local benefits, relationships between companies and communities were increasingly based on the concept of community participation in decision-making (IIED, 2002). Since then, the notion of participation has been incorporated into mining industry policy as a method for CD and other domains of mining work, such as social impact assessment and environmental monitoring (Kapoor, 2001), some of which may not necessarily link to a mine’s formal CD processes and programs.

The mining industry tends to use ‘CD’ to describe activities undertaken directly or indirectly with communities in the geographic proximity of operations that aim to achieve positive economic, environmental and/or social outcomes for communities in which operations are located. Some companies also use terms such as ‘community programs’ and ‘community support’. The sphere of activity varies from site to site, depending on the
context, size of the operation, commodity, impact of the operation and various social and political expectations. Reflecting a rapid desktop analysis of 15 recent sustainability reports and websites of the world’s largest mining companies1, activities included under CD tend to include local employment (direct or indirect through the supply of goods and services), training and skills development, provision of infrastructure (such as roads, water and sanitation facilities), service delivery (such as health and education), employee volunteerism, donations as well as non-mining-related opportunities, such as capacity building and empowerment programs. Some scholars categorize such activities as corporate community involvement or investment (Muthuri, 2007b). For site-level initiatives, the mining industry tends to use CD, ostensibly because it infers a potential for providing ‘local’ benefits.

Sustainability reports and websites largely describe what companies do and how much they spend, rather than processes they use to facilitate CD (e.g. types of participation), outcomes achieved, challenges faced (e.g. where freedom of speech is not guaranteed), or contradictions in practice (e.g. where development may have resulted in both positive outcomes at one level and mal-development at another). This reflects a broader trend that outcomes and impacts on the lives of those that CSR is meant to improve do not receive adequate attention (Muthuri, 2007b). Rather, the focus is on establishing the ‘business case’ for CD and the link between social performance and business viability (Blowfield, 2004; Blowfield, 2007; Hamann, 2007). While it is easy to dismiss corporate documentation as pure PR, it does not automatically mean that CD work is good or bad. What it does confirm is an absence of information about local-level processes used to facilitate human development and poverty reduction and the outcomes and impacts they have.

**CD as a distinct domain of practice in mining**

The mining industry presents CD as a mature form of stakeholder engagement practice (DITR, 2006). Referenced against Arnstein’s (1969) ladders of participation or the popular IAP2 (2005), CD is ‘high-end’ participation compared with PR, which focuses on corporate reputation through formal communication and information dissemination, or community relations (CR), which is based on the notion of building amicable relationships for

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business benefit (Humphreys, 2000). Against Fraser’s (2007) four different approaches to community participation, mining’s approach to CD would be ‘low-end’ economic conservative or managerial. CR in mining focuses on building relationships in order to meet business objectives, which is first and foremost, secure access to land and mineral resources (Render, 2005). CR seeks to be inclusive of marginalized groups but does not necessarily address power imbalances between stakeholders and the corporation, or other entities. In fact, mining companies are often criticized for their orientation towards the powerful and elite. For example, research indicates that the mining industry has a gender bias which has privileged men’s perspectives over women’s (Lahiri-Dutt and Macintyre, 2006; Gibson and Kemp, 2008).

The mining industry has moved to institutionalize CR and CD in mining through corporate commitments, policies, standards, guidelines, systems and processes, and the appointment of specialist community practitioners (Harvey and Brereton, 2005; D. Kemp, unpublished work). Professionalization includes formal representation within organizational structures and hierarchies, emerging career paths and the availability of professional development and formal qualifications, the latter of which is now available, for example, in Australia (MCA, 2008). Blowfield (2004) suggests that an indicator of a company’s approach to CSR is its organizational structure but arrangements for positioning CR or CD within organizational hierarchies have not been formally documented.

Hamann and Kapelus (2004) observe changes to the way CR and CD are represented within organizational structures in mining. Public documentation and anecdotal evidence indicate that some larger mine sites, particularly those located in developing countries or where there is a large Indigenous population, position CD within the core organizational structure, for example through a dedicated department. Other operations situate CD as a sub-department under CR or external affairs/PR departments. There is limited evidence that CD responsibilities have been formalized in job descriptions of production-orientated managers. Beyond core organizational structures, responsibility for CD work can be shared with other parties, such as NGOs or governments, or both through what has become known as tri-sector partnerships (BPD, 2001) or the triad stakeholder model (Ballard and Banks, 2003). CD work can also be ‘outsourced’ to contractors, foundations or trusts, with different levels of independence from the operation. These arrangements vary in terms of their focus on impacted communities and/or broader development goals. Whatever the structural arrangement – core, shared or outsourced – practitioners often take on multiple responsibilities for PR, CR and CD (D. Kemp, unpublished work). The consequences this has for practice are not yet well understood.
However, such lack of clarity continues to leave the question open as to whether CD in mining is being used as a ‘Trojan horse’ (Kenny, 2002) by being co-opted for corporate advantage or whether it is being used to benefit the poorest and most marginalized.

**Industry and corporate policy**

The industry’s peak organization has an SD framework comprising 10 core principles (ICMM, 2003). Ninth principle states that member companies will contribute to the social economic and institutional development of the communities in which we operate. Further guidance requires that ICMM member companies contribute to community development from project development through closure in collaboration with host communities and their representatives and enhance social and economic development by seeking opportunities to address poverty (ICMM, 2003). In conjunction with The World Bank, the ICMM produced a CD Toolkit for the industry, which serves as the peak reference document for CD policy and practice in mining. The toolkit defines CD as: the process of increasing the strength and effectiveness of communities, improving people’s quality of life, enabling people to participate in decision-making to achieve greater long-term control over their lives. Sustainable community development programs are those that contribute to the long-term strengthening of community viability (The World Bank and ICMM, 2005, p. 7). Policies of all member companies largely reflect these commitments. Some non-member companies and mid-tier firms and exploration companies are also formalizing their commitments and profiling their CD work in the public domain.

Leading mining companies now have a focus on poverty reduction and human development at the level of policy. Major global mining companies, such as BHP Billiton, for example, now report against headline development indicators, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and allocate 1 per cent of pre-tax profits to community programs (BHP Billiton, 2006). These commitments suggest that these companies see themselves as agents of development, at least in the countries and communities in which they operate. However, global progress towards achievement of the MDGs by 2015 is not positive (Sayer, 2005). Despite the lack of focus on evaluating outcomes, mining company sustainability reports and websites give a sense of the vast nature of CD work being undertaken by the mining industry around the globe, from partnerships to fight the spread of HIV, to improved service delivery and local-level capacity building programs. In fact, a senior mining specialist from The World Bank observed a convergence between the goals and aspirations of official development organizations and the mining industry, citing similarities between policy
frameworks and high-level commitments to poverty reduction and human development (Bulmer, 2008).

There are other notable initiatives relevant to CD in mining. The World Bank’s Extractive Industry Review (EIR) (Salim, 2004), which critiqued the extent to which the Bank’s support of the industry was consistent with its overarching mission to fight poverty. Following the EIR, the Bank established the Oil, Gas and Mining Sustainable Community Development Fund as a mechanism to fund practical capacity building, training, technical assistance, implementation support and awareness-training and tool development, largely for IFC-funded extractive industries projects (CommDev, 2008). Another notable example is the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI, 2006), which sets a global standard for extractive companies to ‘publish what they pay’ and for governments to disclose what they receive. This initiative supports improved governance in resource-rich countries, which might mean government revenues fund development rather than fuelling corruption.

**Local-level practice challenges**

So far the nature of CD in mining has been described and background provided through a discussion of broader considerations of business, CSR and development. Next, four types of practice challenges in mining and CD are explored: conceptual, organizational, political and temporal. These challenges have been named to facilitate explanation, but there is no neat separation in reality. The purpose of this section is to open discussion about practice challenges of CD in mining, rather than provide a definitive analysis and encourage space for further research.

**Conceptual**

As discussed, CD practitioners in mining work within a conceptual framework that blends commercial/production and developmental agendas. Blended conceptual frameworks with a range of inherent contradictions and dilemmas are not uncommon within CD practice more broadly (Kenny, 2002). Mining managers, whether in exploration, construction, operations or closure, have a pragmatic and pre-determined set of drivers informing their work, such as daily production goals and quarterly/annual planning and budgeting cycles. This reality can inadvertently undermine corporate policy commitments and development efforts. In situations where the cost of being socially responsible does not immediately align with production goals *it is not easy to facilely state that good ethics is good business* (Kapelus, 2002, p. 283). Perhaps CD is possible when projects
do not infringe on production goals, but what happens when those priorities collide?

The author has observed a situation where a CD worker from a large mine works with women’s groups on economic empowerment initiatives. Many participate in the local economy and a gender focus means men are supportive. When the mine seeks to expand its pit, which requires resettlement of several families, some of the women involved in the economic empowerment program mobilize to block the proposal. The mine manager asks why the women in this particular area are so strong and he is told that one of the mine’s CD workers works with them. The value of the economic empowerment program is called into question. It is here that the tension emerges between the commercial/production and developmental agendas. How realistic then is participatory or people-centred CD in a mining context? To what degree can a CD practitioner privilege the interests of the poor and marginalized over or as well as the company’s own interests? Some scholars observe that when it comes to providing a rationale for CSR the business reason invariably comes before any other reason (Manteaw, 2007, p. 6). So, if companies cannot put people first, why has participatory CD been so actively embraced in industry policy? Should it be wound back or are CD practitioners in mining able to work around or through this tension in their work? What strategies do they use to influence corporate decision-makers who are more embedded in the profit and production paradigm?

Within CD there are conceptual differences between service delivery and people-centred development. Mining companies demonstrate a heavy orientation towards service-delivery at the community level, even though policy emphasizes participation. Services are central to quality of life, but the poorest often miss out on the benefits for a variety of reasons, including structural disadvantage (Ife, 1995). Early development sector approaches positioned ‘community’ as the main arena of CD work because the community was considered small enough to be inclusive, but large enough to face wider societal issues (Kelly and Burkett, 2008). It is now acknowledged that while community is an important platform for CD, it is not necessarily the best platform for participation because communities cannot always avoid the age-old structural inequalities of gender, race, class and caste that are so often embedded within it. Kelly and Burkett (2008) find that …in communities and even in the sub-community level, interest groups are often too large to facilitate participation (p. 19). Participatory development requires engagement with individuals, families, households and small groups rather than only engaging at the level of the ‘community’.

The mining industry has embraced participation as part of its CD framework, but there is a limited focus on ‘on-the-ground’ CD practice in mining
industry discourse and publicly available documentation. This raises several questions that warrant sustained research and attention at both theoretical and practical level. How do practitioners combine service delivery and participatory development within the mining industry framework of CD? How are these approaches differentiated in practice? Do practitioners apply CD processes within the organizational structures to achieve change?

Organizational
In mining, CR and CD are theoretically different in emphasis and orientation, although both have an interactive and relational quality that requires practitioners to have highly developed dialog skills (Kelly and Burkett, 2008). In their study of CD and mining in Guinea, Synergy-Global (2007) finds that *almost all problems that had arisen relating to [social] performance issues were a result of poor communication* (p. 11). However, dialog does not automatically guarantee participation and a full recognition of human rights. If the lines between PR, CR and CD are conceptually blurred, what challenges does this raise for community practitioners? Practitioners working across CR and CD for example may be required to engage in dialog with community representatives (legitimate or not) in discussions central to the company’s agenda (such as permission to enter land or seek approval for pit expansions) only to return on the basis that they are there to facilitate community-controlled development with members of the community who may not have had a voice at the negotiating table? Further to this, community practitioners in mining, whether working in CR or CD, often work in a hostile organizational culture and structure, where they are a minority profession working on the periphery of the organization with few professional support mechanisms. What outcomes, if any, are being achieved in these circumstances? Mathuri (2007) suggests that a research agenda should seek to understand the conditions that support and limit community participation in development. It is argued here that this should include deeper understanding of organizational cultures, structures and environments where community practitioners in mining work.

Political
CSR is an inherently political process (Garvey and Newell, 2005; Fraser, 2007). However, the role of power and politics in CSR is often downplayed (Hamann and Kapelus, 2004) where *issues of inequity and power struggles lurk in the shadows* (Harcourt, 2004, p. 2). Mining industry discourse on CD at the company-level is almost devoid of a discussion of power, almost as if political considerations are unproblematically addressed through practical
management techniques. However, Newell (2005) and Muthuri (2007b) remind us that power inequities between companies and communities have important implications for corporate–community interaction and should be further investigated. Technical aspects of facilitating CD need to be balanced with political aspects, beyond generic reference to empowerment. Technocratic and depoliticized CD may have practical value to a mining company seeking access to land in the short term; however, it will have limited value to either companies or communities in the long term. In mining, the concept of control is pervasive, including control over production processes and also in relation to managing social and environmental impacts. The need to control sees retention of power, and this raises the question of whether and how far companies are prepared to move from an orientation of control in the core business of mining, to participation in CD where corporate willingness to surrender power is in short supply (Hamann, 2007, p. 26). What role do CD practitioners play in influencing this situation?

The issue of control over resources underlies much of the mining and development debate. The two intersect on the issue of participation and therefore power to control mining development. Jennings (2000) highlights that . . . to believe in and promote participatory development is to believe in the intrinsic importance of self-determination (p. 2). Thus, if companies support participatory development, to what extent do they also accept the notion that a community can refuse entry of a mining company into their community? The notion of free prior and informed consent (FPIC) and its application in practice is a contested concept insofar as the industry and rights-based advocacy groups and communities that oppose mining (or certain approaches to mining) are concerned. For example, how is FPIC negotiated, with whom, at what stage of development process and for what period of time? These debates speak to the very complex tensions tied up with resource extraction, CD, participation and a community’s right to determine what type of mining development they want, if any, and a company’s need to secure access to land. For practitioners on the ground who are interacting and engaging in dialog, the boundaries are not yet clear. What are the implications for local-level CD practice in mining? To what extent are CD practitioners able to influence company and community attitudes and approaches to development through their work?

Temporal
Broadly speaking, when does CD become important? Jennings (2000) explains that participatory development programs usually cost less overall and are consistently more effective in fostering sustainability, strengthening self-help capacities and improving the status of women
and youth. However, participatory programs require greater investment in staff training and expenditure to begin with. Following this logic, CD would commence at the earliest stage of mining, but with mining’s high set up costs, this becomes problematic. UNCTAD (Prospecting to Sustainability, unpublished work, 2006) outlines the Prospector’s Dilemma for minerals exploration companies: The dilemma for the junior explorer is that it doesn’t have the resources to . . . nurture and support a long term development project (p. 4). What then does this mean for exploration companies attempting to work developmentally? To what extent can practitioners introduce CD once operations are established? There are also numerous questions that relate to CD’s long-term goals and the at-times short-term nature of some mining operations.

Mine closure is another key temporal issue. The industry is increasingly attuned to the need to consider socio-economic dimensions of mine closure (ICMM, 2008). However, once a company is no longer operating or no longer has a presence in a particular location, responsibilities for CD are not always clear. Planned closure may include provision for resources and staff, or a transition to a community-managed fund or entity to enable continuation of CD work. However, unplanned closure, which can occur in times of economic downturn and market volatility, may not have included contingency for ongoing CD. This raises additional questions about the limitations of CD work in mining and the industry’s overall approach to SD.

**Future possibilities?**

Mining companies explore and operate within and nearby some of the poor and most vulnerable communities in the world. Leading companies have made strong commitments to community engagement, poverty reduction and human development, a discourse which echoes the development sector and responds to calls from local people for meaningful participation in development. Despite the global economic crisis, the industry is relatively well resourced and many mines will continue to employ CR and CD practitioners at the local level. These workers operate within a technical organizational culture that does not naturally align with conventional frameworks of CD. As with many other domains of CD, practitioners can work to influence change, both within the organizational sphere and in the community. Change is taking place, but mining companies are nevertheless constrained not only by their commercial and production orientation but also broader conditions, such as market and governance structures. Would mining companies be better off concentrating on standard contributions to development through taxes, royalties and other such payments, local employment and business development, service
delivery and infrastructure rather than capacity building and participatory development? Should they only ever partner with or delegate to development organizations whose traditional domain is CD? Or should they continue to build their capacity and push the boundaries on what they themselves can do in terms of their development contributions?

Despite the complexity of the work, there are some clear paths forward. Companies should understand where and how they make a difference to the lives of the most vulnerable, but comprehensive monitoring and evaluation is rare. More effort must be put into outcome and impact evaluation so that companies, governments and communities are clearer about how local-level CD practice in mining might contribute to poverty reduction and human development. It is also clear that companies must retain a development focus in order that operations remain sensitive to local contexts, concerns and aspirations – companies cannot simply outsource this responsibility. Companies must also continue to clarify the complex inter-relationships between engagement, consent and empowerment, and what this means for CD in mining and mine development.

The industry has already embarked on a path towards building capacity for CD practice and partnering will help in this regard. Research indicates that partnering is vitally important for achieving development outcomes (Loza, 2004) and mining operations must fulfill their commitments to CD through work that is connected to local realities. Boundaries need to be pushed in terms of building industry capacity and skills required for dialog and development. As part of this, the industry must continue to refine its own conceptual frameworks for development, at the local through to regional and global levels, rather than simply echoing traditional development frameworks. Practitioners must also be supported in their practice, both within the organization and by professional networks beyond mining. Limitations of practice, including mal-development as a result of CD in mining, should be better understood and frameworks for CD in mining must reflect some of the tensions discussed above. Instances where positive development outcomes are being experienced at the level of practice should be independently documented. Finally, more opportunity must be created for practitioners in all domains of CD work to exchange ideas, refine frameworks, challenge mindsets and harness the experience of others in order that people affected by mining are not worse off than before the mine arrived and that any opportunities for poverty reduction and human development are harnessed.

Fox (2004, p. 34) argues that further efforts are necessary to create a truly developmental-orientated CSR agenda and advocates an enlarged conception of CSR and development. This article has sought to encourage a deeper understanding of the mining industry’s commitments to CD, recognizing that the
mining industry discourse is ambiguous in several key areas. CD practice in mining at the local and context-specific level has not received sustained scholarly attention, and thus empirical and grounded research is not yet building a broader theoretical understanding of CD in mining. Questions that warrant further research have been highlighted. A practice-based focus has the potential to improve understanding of mining and development and surface ideas about improved outcomes for local communities and mine-affected people, particularly the poor and marginalized.

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