

## **CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN THE MINING SECTOR IN ZIMBABWE**

**Priscilla Musariwa**

pmusariwa@gmail.com  
Durban University of Technology

**Renitha Rampersad**

rampersadr@cput.ac.za  
Cape Peninsula University of Technology

**&**

**Nereshnee Govender**

nereshneeg@dut.ac.za  
Durban University of Technology

### **ABSTRACT**

Zimbabwe like any other developing country, invests funds in supporting the upliftment of communities and in social programmes that enhances community development. The increasing rate of unemployment and low skills level poses a threat to sustainable development. To support a strategic shift towards impactful results, organisations with the help of the government need constructive and efficient Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policy, which is simple and user friendly. This can assist project managers and company managers to improve effectiveness and efficiency of CSR programmes. Using a qualitative approach, this study examined the nature of CSR in the mining sector in Zimbabwe to understand the challenges that are faced by mining companies. This paper can be used to design a CSR policy that lead to the planning and implementation of programmes in the mining sector that yield impactful results. Using purposive sampling, four CSR managers were selected from two Zimbabwean mining companies (Zimplats and Zimbabwe Consolidated Diamond mining Company). Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed using thematic analysis. Findings indicate that mining companies in Zimbabwe are involved in CSR initiatives, but they are faced with a number of challenges including lack of participation from the communities and limited financial resources.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and sustainable development are complex and universally significant concepts that carry substantial relevance for organisations on a global scale. There is a prevalent belief that CSR is predominantly recognised in Western nations, specifically those with globally-oriented firms, democratic political systems, and thriving civil society organisations (Ahmad, Ullah, AIDhaen, Han and Scholz, 2022; Aust, Muller-Camen and Poutsma, 2018). The concept of CSR has attracted considerable interest from individuals worldwide, enabling corporations to attain global prominence and significance by expanding their objectives beyond

financial gains and enhancing the well-being of communities. In recent years, there has been a gradual rise in the level of demand on global businesses to assume and recognise their social and environmental obligations. The aforementioned phenomenon has sparked an increasing scholarly curiosity regarding the potential impact of incorporating CSR disclosure and strategies among firms that actively promote sustainable economic, social, and environmental progress. Specifically, researchers are exploring the extent to which such practises can contribute to the creation of competitive advantage and organisational value. This particular interest has been motivated by the inquiry into the potential role of organisations that actively promote sustainable economic, social, and environmental development in contributing to the business's competitive advantage. The main strategic objective of CSR is to reduce poverty and improve the standards of living for people through different community projects.

There is an emerging tendency observed within corporations to place a higher emphasis on the engagement in CSR initiatives. The scrutiny surrounding the mining industry's contribution to sustainable development stems from its substantial utilisation of natural resources, such as energy and paper, as well as its generation of waste products (Sampong, Song, Boahene and Wadie, 2018). CSR initiatives serve as a mechanism for making both direct and indirect contributions towards the sustainable development of a society. According to Siueia and Wang (2019), the mining industry holds significant importance in the economic progress of a country. They argue that mine managers should prioritise sustainable practises that prioritise environmental conservation rather than focusing solely on shareholder profits. CSR, corporate social investment (CSI), community involvement, community development, and social responsibility are integral elements that play a significant role in augmenting the welfare of individuals and the preservation of the natural environment. Consequently, these entities assume a crucial function in advancing economic growth that is both sustainable and inclusive (Shao, Janssens & Greenwood 2020; Song & Dong 2022). To attain desired results, it is crucial to engage in the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of projects to ascertain their alignment with intended objectives. The focus of this study is around the monitoring and assessment of CSR practises of two mining businesses situated in Zimbabwe. The primary objective is to achieve the desired effects of CSR initiatives.

Theories underpinning the study of CSR include stakeholder theory, institutional theory, and legitimacy theory. The aforementioned theoretical frameworks are not mutually exclusive, but exhibit a high degree of complementarity owing to their interdependence and shared attributes (Ching and Gerab 2017; Freeman and Dmytriiev 2017; Mahmud 2019; Nair and Bhattacharyya 2019; Silva 2021; Waheed, Zhang Rashid and Zaman Khan 2020). The stakeholder theory, institutional theory, and legitimacy theory provide a foundation for empirical research on the implementation of CSR in various contexts and the underlying drivers of the adoption of such practises (Sari and Prihandini 2019). Islam et al. (2021) assert that the utilisation of CSR theory can enhance the understanding of CSR practises and provide a deeper understanding of the CSR concept. The objective of the current investigation is to establish the theoretical basis of CSR by integrating multiple theories and identifying their converging attributes to establish their interrelationships. Within the extensive institutional behavioural forecasts, an organisation may be motivated to engage in CSR practices such as involvement in CSR activities, publishing CSR

disclosures, maintaining a stakeholder dialogue, and/or strategising the organisational behaviour by integrating CSR activities with the organisation's business strategy (Nair & Bhattacharyya 2019). Drawing on these convergent predictions or assumptions of organisational behaviour and organisational CSR behaviour, legitimacy theory, stakeholder theory, and institutional theory predict the possible reasons for an organisation's engaging in CSR activities. These reasons include the need to legitimise the business or organisation, need to perform accountability to the organisation's stakeholders, sometimes based on the extent of the stakeholders' power and need to conform to legitimate norms and beliefs those are largely imposed on an organisation, which ultimately leads to homogeneity in organisations in the same field.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY, CORPORATE REPUTATION AND BRAND EQUITY**

Currently, we live in a society where consumers are increasingly demanding and expect a brand to be able to offer more than a high-quality product at a low price. CSR is having a direct impact on corporate results and influence several aspects, including corporate reputation, consumer trust and repurchase intention; consumer loyalty; and the perception of corporate performance (Araújo, Pereira, and Santos, 2023). In general, commitment to socially responsible actions lead to positive outcomes for a company. Thus, companies may be able to enhance reputation and corporate image through CSR activities (Huang, 2023). CSR contributes to brand recognition and affects brand performance (Araujo et al., 2023). Based on Jones' (2005) daisy-wheel model of brand equity, there exists a positive correlation between the level of brand equity and the degree to which the expectations of its stakeholders are met. The significance of promoting socially responsible behaviour is well acknowledged. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has been utilised as a strategic tool by many stakeholders, including as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), customers, and the media, in order to achieve their own goals (Wang, Liao, Wu & Le, 2021). Therefore, the corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives and corporate image of an enterprise are crucial in promoting fairness by enhancing stakeholders' perceptions of its exceptional brand. Martínez and Nishiyama (2019) claim that stakeholders are inclined to place higher value on an organisation when its identity demonstrates congruence with their individual viewpoint. In conjunction with their service experience, stakeholders often align themselves with a brand's corporate social responsibility initiatives targeting the broader community. According to Sharma and Jain (2019), stakeholders that demonstrate sensitivity towards social concerns are positively influenced by their opinion of a company's corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives.

CSR activities can be seen as evidence that the company is committed to improving skills to create high-quality products or services. According to the research conducted by Hur et al. (2014), it was found that there exists a favourable correlation between CSR and a company's brand equity. As a result, CSR is held in high regard by organisations of different sizes. The adherence to CSR principles is crucial for organisations in order to maintain competitiveness and keep a positive reputation, especially in a digitally interconnected global environment. CSR has gained significant importance in the corporate realm and among stakeholders, mostly driven by the inherent volatility

of brand equity, which is susceptible to quick fluctuations (Cowan & Guzman, 2020). In the present era, the achievement or downfall of a company is reliant on the level of influence exerted by its consumers, employees, and other stakeholders. Communities are currently seen as a pivotal stakeholder group by all organisations (Diallo, Ben Dahmane Mouelhi, Gadekar, and Schill, 2021). The enhancement of a socially responsible organization's brand value and future financial success, together with its positive reputation, is helped by the strengthening of communities. CSR programmes serve as a mechanism for organisations to augment their reputation, thereby exerting an impact on their brand equity. CSR efforts go beyond the minimum legal requirements, demonstrating the enterprise's commitment to addressing concerns beyond mere financial profitability.

## **CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

According to Amoako (2017) stakeholder engagement refers to the range of measures implemented by an organisation to actively involve interested stakeholders in its operational activities. This section provides a comprehensive analysis of the procedural elements involved in the establishment, improvement, and maintenance of relationships with stakeholders. The stakeholder components may include the recognition, involvement, collaboration, discourse, and participation of pertinent stakeholders (Andrews, Andrews, & Yurova, 2019). In the present period, the ISO 26000 guidelines on social responsibility have acknowledged stakeholder engagement as a comprehensive framework of actions designed to facilitate advantageous conditions for interaction between a company and its relevant parties. The main aim of implementing such measures is to create a strong basis for the decision-making processes inside the organisation (Del Baldo & Aureli, 2019).

The use of the term "engagement" in the literature when discussing the stakeholder idea and CSR serves to underscore the notion that companies should exceed simply contacting stakeholders. The cultivation of a favourable rapport with stakeholders is a fundamental element in the successful execution of business activities (Aggarwal and Singh, 2019). Engagement can be understood as a method that serves several purposes, such as consensus-building, exerting influence, fostering cooperation, promoting openness, and facilitating involvement. It has been argued that it can function both as a mechanism for reinforcing dependence and as a replacement for authentic trust, as well as a platform for advancing fairness or as a structure for organisational governance (Boadi, He, Darko, & Abrokwah 2018; Mensah, Agyapong, & Oteng-Abayie 2017).

In an optimal context, the engagement of stakeholders should be regarded as a mutually beneficial and collaborative arrangement that embodies an ethical alliance of equals (Adongo, Kim, & Elliot, 2019). Multiple economic and behavioural perspectives offer further insights into the examination of autonomy within these partnerships in this particular situation (Rendtorff et al., 2018). According to Ansong (2017), the moral neutrality of stakeholder engagement is supported by an examination of multiple theoretical frameworks, including corporate ethics, social accounting and reporting, and people management. These frameworks present diverse interpretations of stakeholder engagement, indicating its lack of inherent moral value. As a result, the task can be performed in a manner that aligns with ethical norms or in a manner that contravenes moral values.

The ultimate determination of the goal of a pursued engagement in company culture is contingent upon the value attributed to the stakeholder concerned. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that stakeholder participation may not always be congruent with responsible business behaviour (Mohammed, Xiao, & Hilton, 2019). Therefore, it can be argued that the claim equating stakeholder involvement with corporate accountability to stakeholders is excessively reductionist. The main objective of interacting with corporate stakeholders is to establish relationships with them in order to acquire a comprehensive grasp of their perspectives and concerns regarding relevant issues. Following this, the aforementioned viewpoints and apprehensions are duly taken into account, in a prudent and discerning manner, during the formulation of the organization's corporate strategy (The concept of stakeholder engagement pertains to the diverse range of official and informal strategies utilised by a firm to uphold its relationship with its stakeholders (Shnayder, van Rijnsoever, and Hekkert 2016). The existing body of literature presents compelling evidence that stakeholder interaction is of utmost importance in the context of CSR, as exemplified by the findings of Park, Childlow and Choi (2014).

In their study, Boadi, He, Bosompem, Say, and Boadi (2019) investigated the approach, extent, logic, and repercussions of stakeholder engagement in the management of corporate social responsibility (CSR). The results indicate that when CSR operates independently and stakeholders are heavily involved, it may lead to a reduction in both its strategic influence and long-term viability. In order to address this problem, it is crucial to implement a structure that may facilitate the active involvement of pertinent stakeholders and promote the implementation of viable CSR initiatives.

Based on the research conducted by Osei-Kojo and Andrews (2020), it can be inferred that the degree of dedication witnessed in CSR endeavours seems to be excessively regulated and deficient in genuineness. Furthermore, it is imperative to enhance the stakeholder engagement process to guarantee that stakeholders are sufficiently informed and engaged in a fair and equitable manner, while also facilitating the continuous advancement of CSR projects.

A quantitative research study was undertaken by Abugre and Anlesinya (2020) to investigate the correlation between CSR and stakeholders of small businesses. The results of this study suggest that small enterprises possess a significant set of stakeholders within the surrounding community, whose engagement with the enterprise is frequently diverse and comprehensive. Based on the research conducted by Khan, Muttakin, and Siddiqui (2013), it was shown that there were no statistically significant disparities in the levels of employee engagement between those who were exposed to external CSR tactics and those who were exposed to internal CSR strategies.

## **CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN ZIMBABWE**

The historical records pertaining to mining in Zimbabwe reveal a substantial prevalence of mining operations that endured over an extended period, albeit predominantly catering to the interests of a limited demographic. Makwara, Mutambara and Magagula-Hlatshwayo (2019) asserts that mining activities in Zimbabwe during the colonial era were devoid of any CSR aims. These mining endeavours were primarily driven by motives such as territorial acquisition, augmenting royal



wealth, and maximising profits. The colonial mining policy conferred upon the state the authority to sell, transfer, or otherwise relinquish mining rights to various entities, including individual prospectors or mining companies (Ndiweni and Sibanda, 2020). However, it should be noted that the transition from colonial rule to independence in Zimbabwe did not lead to an immediate enhancement of the nation's CSR practises in the mining sector. The years 1980 to 1985 witnessed a sluggish rise of Zimbabwe's mining industry, its contribution to the country's gross domestic product, and the activities that yield benefits to the community, as a direct consequence of the aforementioned factors. In contrast, the government has enacted a range of rules, including legislation, to exert control over the mining sector.

### **Nature of CSR in the mining sector in Zimbabwe**

In a study undertaken by Yousefian, Bascompta, Sanmiquel, and Vintró (2023), an examination was carried out to assess the influence of corporate social responsibility (CSR) on the expansion of the minerals sector in Europe. The study's findings indicate that corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes in the mining industry mostly focus on addressing healthcare, education, access to clean drinking water, and enhancements in living conditions. The study's findings reaffirm the significant overall influence of corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes on the local population in proximity to mining operations. Specifically, there has been a considerable improvement in the quality of healthcare services accessible in these communities, and areas near to mining companies now have access to safe drinking water. The aforementioned enhancements have resulted in an overall elevation of the quality of life for the inhabitants. Organisations operating in Zimbabwe frequently engage in a wide range of corporate social responsibility (CSR) endeavours, encompassing activities such as health improvement, educational support and event provision of clean water and sanitation (Walter and Evans, 2022). Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that Zimbabwe currently lacks a clearly defined policy framework that delineates the particular dimensions of corporate social responsibility (CSR) practises.

Nevertheless, it is prevalent for business executives to embrace a corporate social responsibility (CSR) approach that transcends conventional philanthropic endeavours. In contrast, they actively participate in strategic endeavours aimed at meeting the varied requirements of the communities in which their organisations are situated (Huang, 2023). A comprehensive examination of social responsibility endeavours in Zimbabwe focusing on their social responsibility initiatives in several domains, including education, healthcare, climate, tradition/art, sport, history, and community projects was done by (Msosa, 2023). The study conducted by Denhere and Mhlanga (2023) unveiled that education-related initiatives are the predominant manifestation of corporate social responsibility (CSR) involvement in Zimbabwe. The study undertaken by the researchers also revealed that legal duty appeared as the most dominant category, whilst ethical responsibility was classified as the least influential group.

### **POLICIES REGULATING MINING AND CSR IN ZIMBABWE**

The mining sector accounts for about 12 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), and the minister of mines claims the sector has the potential to generate US\$12 billion annually by 2023 if the government addresses challenges such as persistent power shortages, foreign

currency shortages, and policy uncertainties (Zimbabwe, 2022). According to a study published in 2013, the former Minister of Industry and Commerce of Zimbabwe highlighted the insufficiency of regulation in Zimbabwe, which has led to a lack of oversight and assessment of CSR initiatives. Consequently, this has hindered the incorporation of such activities in informal reports. The mining sector in Zimbabwe adheres to a series of regulatory frameworks to regulate CSR. These frameworks include the Environmental Impact Assessment Policy (EIAP) of 1994, the Mines and Minerals Act, the Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act (IEEA), and the Companies Act. While not essential, it is important to acknowledge that EIAP is not a compulsory prerequisite. The IEEA (International Environmental Enforcement Agency) and the EIAP (Environmental Impact Assessment Programme) were repealed at a later date.

The regulatory framework established by the Mines and Minerals Act governs the procedures associated with the extraction of natural resources, with the primary objective of ensuring that such activities are carried out in a manner that is both environmentally and socially responsible. This entails taking measures to prevent any adverse impacts on the surrounding community. The implementation of laws by the Government of Zimbabwe (1961) seeks to regulate corporate social responsibility (CSR) measures undertaken by mining firms, with the primary objective of mitigating the negative effects of mining activities on nearby communities. In accordance with the stipulations of this Act, Rural District Councils are entitled to receive remuneration for their role as proprietors in the common lands. However, there is a dearth of empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of utilising compensation funds for community development, which suggests that the Act may not adequately address the rights and privileges of these groups. According to Kabemba (2013), the Mines and Minerals Act is considered outdated and inadequate in its capacity to incorporate necessary details.

The Government of Zimbabwe (2008) implemented the IEEA with the objective of giving indigenous Zimbabweans with power by allocating 51% ownership of all firms to them (Mandevere 2020). The enactment of this legislation permitted the establishment of Community Share Ownership Trusts (CSOTs), which entailed the transfer of a 10% equity stake to indigenous groups. Community-based organisations known as CSOTs do not possess legal status as formal entities. However, it is important to note that there is no legal obligation for enterprises to provide financial donations to CSOTs, except for the provision outlined in section 16, which suggests that firms should engage in social contributions to the communities they operate in. The transparency of CSOTs' management is called into question due to instances where certain corporations have refused to provide compensation, while others have been accused of diverting funds to ministers instead of the intended communities (Mambo, 2014). In light of the enactment of the Investment and Export Promotion and Protection Act (IEEA), the level of risk associated with conducting commercial activities in Zimbabwe has escalated significantly. Consequently, this heightened risk aversion among investors has posed challenges to the implementation of CSR initiatives. Investors tend to consider the IEEA (Indigenization and Economic Empowerment Act) as a manifestation of nationalisation, given its requirement for Zimbabwean citizens to maintain a minimum ownership stake of 51% in all enterprises (Mandevere, 2022).

The historical record of Zimbabwe demonstrates that mining has played a significant role in fostering the growth and advancement of rural communities, as seen by the establishment of numerous towns that emerged as a result of mining activities inside the country (Makwara et al., 2019). Anwana (2018) maintains that mining corporations tend to prioritise corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives in areas where they possess a competitive edge. However, these CSR efforts mostly appear to benefit their employees rather than the local communities in which they operate. According to Nhavira (2019), it has been disclosed that the company provides support to the local community by engaging in initiatives such as the construction of schools, procurement of books, and the establishment of clinics with electricity in the vicinity of their mining operations. These efforts are undertaken with the aim of enhancing the company's corporate image, rather than solely focusing on improving the living conditions of the communities. According to the findings of Kabemba and Madzwamuse (2010), the research conducted on Zimplats and Mimosa revealed that these corporations lack a well-defined CSR strategy. The aforementioned projects exhibit a lack of incorporation of feedback from key demographic categories within the communities, specifically women, children, and youth. Based on the findings of Kabemba and Madzwamuse's (2010) study it is evident that CSR initiatives undertaken by Implats in South Africa exhibit notable disparities when compared to the CSR initiatives implemented by its subsidiaries in Zimbabwe. This discrepancy can be attributed to the utilisation of separate CSR legislation and variations in the prevailing governmental stance towards CSR activities. Many mining firms engage in CSR practises primarily for the purpose of managing their public image, as CSR initiatives are largely voluntary and lack legal obligations (Hira & Busumtwi-Sam, 2021). Based on the findings of Dziro's (2014) research it may be argued that the absence of clear delineation pertaining to the beneficiaries of the 51% equity allocation to Zimbabweans undermines the efficacy of the Indigenization and Economic Empowerment Act (IEEA) in conferring authority to local communities.

Issues have arisen in relation to the legislation surrounding corporate social responsibility CSR, specifically in relation to the claim of Share Ownership Trust (Mambo, 2014). The fundamental concern pertains to the unequal distribution of benefits, whereby those from affluent backgrounds are receiving a disproportionately larger share compared to those residing in impoverished neighbourhoods. The lack of explicit directives within legislative frameworks pertaining to the advancement of impacted communities frequently leads to CSR initiatives being predominantly undertaken to bolster public image (Mining Zimbabwe, 2022). However, the lack of legal frameworks presents a significant challenge since it allows firms to prioritise CSR projects largely for promotional reasons, sometimes disregarding the well-being of local populations. The introduction of implementing legislation pertaining to CSR would prove advantageous in effectively tackling concerns related to insufficient corporate governance (Amoako, 2017). Therefore, it is crucial to evaluate the consequences of an insufficient legal framework on the execution of CSR in Zimbabwe.

Hence, it is imperative for mining enterprises operating in Zimbabwe to critically assess their CSR initiatives in order to ascertain their efficacy in fostering community development. In order to accomplish this, mining companies must cultivate an enduring and favourable rapport with the



people residing within the surrounding communities, while also ensuring that the company's CSR initiatives are duly acknowledged and evaluated from a communal perspective (Mandevere, 2020). The essential stakeholders of a business encompass several entities such as employees, customers, investors, suppliers, public and political authorities, activists, and communities. Corporations are anticipated to formulate sustainable strategies that address the convergence of societal demands, the natural environment, and associated commercial imperatives, thereby assuming accountability for what D'Amato et al. (2009) refer to as the "three dimensions of the triple bottom line (TBL)." It is important to shift the perception of CSR away from being solely philanthropic in nature or mere acts of charity (Masocha and Fatoki, 2018). Instead, CSR should be understood as the execution of initiatives that extend beyond philanthropy, aiming to bring about transformative changes and foster community development. Frequently, terms such as social investment, corporate citizenship, corporate conscience, and responsible business are employed synonymously with the concept of CSR. In the context of Zimbabwe, there is a prevalent misconception wherein CSR is often conflated with acts of charitable giving. Charitable efforts typically exhibit random patterns and often lack long-term sustainability, but CSR initiatives are explicitly designed to promote sustainable development. It is imperative to acknowledge that the definitions of CSR are contingent upon the specific context and are subject to the influence of ideological and political goals. CSR is commonly perceived as a philanthropic endeavour undertaken by firms operating in Zimbabwe. The eradication of poverty in Zimbabwe would have the potential to yield positive health outcomes among its people, hence leading to a reduction in social welfare expenditures for both governments and the donor community (Mandevere, 2020). According to Makwara et al. (2019), there is a possibility that governments may be motivated to decrease taxes imposed on large corporations operating in Zimbabwe. Nonetheless, Zimbabwe lacks a comprehensive regulatory and policy framework to govern CSR, resulting in variations in CSR practises across different companies.

Despite the abundance of natural riches, Zimbabwe's populace remains entrenched in poverty, surviving on less than US\$1 per day. The prevalence of poverty in Africa is seeing a significant surge, which is mostly attributed to the failure of governing regimes to prioritise the well-being of their populace (Kibukho, 2021). Foreign-owned enterprises are not subjected to scrutiny for their promotion of non-local development while exploiting resources, thereby depriving the host country of the associated advantages (Sachs et al., 2019). Historically, corporations have made investments in CSR initiatives; nevertheless, these endeavours appear to be very inconsequential when contrasted to the substantial revenues generated and externalised by these companies. The implementation of the Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act No. 14 of 2007, which introduced Community Share Ownership Schemes/Trust (CSOT), may have been a response to the need for corporations to contribute to the communities from whom they extract natural resources (Fuso et al., 2019).

The primary objective of the economic indigenisation legislation is to facilitate the empowerment of indigenous Zimbabweans, thereby allowing local communities and workers to derive benefits from natural resources by means of shareholding and managerial involvement in foreign-owned enterprises. According to Contini et al. (2020), this legislation imposes a compulsory requirement

on foreign-owned enterprises with a value of US\$500,000 or more to allocate their revenues towards reinvestment in the broader public. The ambiguity surrounding these communal trusts, though, prompts inquiry into the true beneficiaries of this initiative. The principal function of the state has predominantly centred on the formulation and implementation of diverse legal frameworks, as elucidated earlier. The Standard Association of Zimbabwe (SAZ) administers the ISO 26000: 2010, which is a significant regulatory document that now governs CSR in Zimbabwe (Mawowa, 2016). The endorsement of the 2009 effort by the Institute of Directors, the SAZ, and the Zimbabwean Leadership Forum by the government of Zimbabwe aimed to establish a corporate governance code that prioritises the advancement and advocacy of CSR as a fundamental principle for conducting company operations (Mawowa, 2016). The "Investing in Zimbabwe's Future" Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Awards were initiated in 2010 by the US Embassy in Zimbabwe and the American Business Association of Zimbabwe. The objective of this initiative was to promote the engagement of Zimbabwean enterprises in community development endeavours that provide societal benefits in the present as well as the future. In order to optimise outcomes, it is imperative for these corporate social responsibility CSR initiatives to undergo rigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures. These processes enable project managers to effectively steer the projects towards the attainment of predetermined targets. Therefore, this study concludes by proposing the development of a monitoring and evaluation framework intended to offer Zimbabwean enterprises a set of principles for effectively monitoring and evaluating CSR programmes.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The researchers employed a qualitative approach to gather data for this study. Cresswell, Hinch, and Cage (2019) assert that qualitative research is a form of social science inquiry that involves the collection and analysis of non-numerical data. The primary objective of this research approach is to interpret the significance of such data, thereby facilitating a deeper understanding of social phenomena within specific populations or geographic locations. In the context of a qualitative framework, the utilisation of the case study approach was deemed suitable for the present study, given its interpretive nature. This study employed a case study research methodology, with Zimplats and ZCDC serving as the topics of investigation. The selection of these companies was based on their recognition as mining corporations and their extensive CSR initiatives (Mining Zimbabwe, 2022). The researchers employed purposive sampling to strategically select four participants (two from Zimplats and two from ZCDC) from the CSR management departments of these case study organisations. Interviews were carried out in the company premises with the managerial personnel within the CSR departments who were directly engaged in the implementation of CSR initiatives. The utilisation of a qualitative methodology allowed the researchers to pose open-ended inquiries in order to acquire comprehensive insights on the status of CSR within the mining industry in Zimbabwe. The research was authorised by the public relations departments of the mining companies. Pseudonyms were used to ensure protection of participants. The data underwent thematic analysis for the purpose of analysis. The data was coded followed by categorization into distinct thematic categories.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The practice of CSR has been increasingly incorporated into the strategic movement of business operations (Ahn and Lu, 2021). In addition to CSR initiatives, successful CSR engagement requires the company to effectively communicate their CSR activities with their stakeholders through various platforms (Fatima and Elbanna, 2022). In this regard, management from the CSR department was asked to provide an overview of CSR activities that the company is involved in. Findings revealed that the company is involved in a number of CSR activities including health programmes, sports promotion, improved sanitation, scholarships, provision of clean energy and agriculture. Participants indicated that the organisation promotes health programmes in the community such as HIV/AIDS awareness, and malaria prevention programmes. One of the participants eluded that, *“The Group’s indoor residual mosquito spraying programme has been an effective way of preventing the spread of malaria in the communities where our employees and community members reside. As a result, there were no locally transmitted malaria cases recorded at all the Group’s operations during the year.”* Another participant added that *“We have a private clinic that attends to at least 100 patients from the community monthly. ZCDC has refurbished a local clinic in the Community 1 area which serves a population of over 4000 people from 11 districts. In order to stop the spread of the Coronavirus, we provide the community with sanitizers, face-masks and conducts regular awareness campaigns about the pandemic”*. These results are consistent with the literature which emphasises the importance of operating in societies with healthier populations with higher levels of human capital and a greater capacity to generate wealth (Doke and Dadas, 2019). In addition, higher quality of care for the individual increases society's human capital by reducing both the number of premature deaths (thus increasing the labour force) and the amount of temporary or permanent disability (thus improving worker productivity) (Kala, 2020). Thus, both the organisation and society benefit from better health and lower public expenditures for treatment, which can then be reallocated to other development programmes. The findings are consistent with the views of Molefe (2018), who asserts that several attempts have been made to estimate the correlation between health outcomes and long-term economic growth. For example, the high prevalence of diseases such as malaria has been linked in some studies to a slowing of economic growth by one to two percentage points per year. The views of Molefe, further confirm the reasons for investing in health care as part of CSR programmes in mining companies in Zimbabwe.

Agriculture promotion within the community is another CSR activity that the organisation is involved with in the community. Interviewees revealed that the organisation has livestock farming projects in the community. One of the participants indicated that *“The company uses local farmers to supply poultry, veggies, and other garden products for its canteens. Public Relations and Community Development coordinates farmer mobilization. Farmers have supplied poultry, leaf vegetables, tomatoes, and onions through these collaborations. Monthly farmer payments pump RTGS \$100,000.00 into the local economy. The income-generating prospect excites the community and boost agriculture productivity. To fight hunger, the mining company bought fertilizer and seed maize worth RTGS \$2 370 000.00 for evacuated communities at, Chimanimani, and less privileged or child-headed families in Community.”* These results are consistent to recent studies by Sharma (2019) who estimated that around 75% of the world’s poor live in rural areas and most are

dependent on agriculture and/or related activities in the rural economy. In addition, the researcher agrees that agriculture can be important for developing countries in several ways; where food security is weak it can be a vital source of nutrition, it provides income for farmers and farm workers and thus revenues for rural areas, job opportunities in related areas such as processing and in some cases export revenue and thus foreign exchange for governments.

Sport is another area that the mining companies invests in. Interviews with the management disclosed that the organisation sponsors sports programmes for both their employees and the community. One of the participants pointed out that *“Zimplats has built a top-notch football and netball stadium. However, employees and the community have complained that Turf town has few sports facilities. Zimplats has built a basketball and volleyball pitch to promote social and competitive sports and broaden the sport codes offered to employees and the community. Employees and community members can play more sports on the new court.”* The results are consistent with ZCDC CSR policy which indicates that the organisation is committed to developing and promoting sport for its employees and local communities in order to harness the spirit of unity and teamwork within the group and between the group and the community while promoting wellness (ZCDC Annual Report, 2019). Kloppers and Kloppers (2018), agree that by sponsoring sports, organisations have achieved milestones in building a mutually beneficial relationship between the organisation and the community.

All managers interviewed revealed that the mining companies are involved in providing clean water to the surrounding communities. One of the participants said, *“The company has managed to drill 18 boreholes around the community which saves our women from traveling long distance to fetch water from the river.”* Another participant added that *“We have rehabilitated 12 boreholes in Ward 29 and 10 in Ward 30 in the Community to afford the community access to unpolluted water.”* These results are consistent with literature which indicates that the first stage of engaging in CSR is providing sanitation facilities like clean water to the community and employees to ensure their human rights (Arrive and Feng, 2018). In addition, research reveals that by maintaining proper sanitation and ensuring good hygiene, the organisation is creating the perfect environment for communities by improving the standard of living (Cox 2018). Access to clean water and sanitation not only improves quality of life, but also brings tangible health and economic benefits and contributes to poverty reduction.

The provision of scholarships to deserving students in the community was another CSR activity that the organisation was engaged with. All the respondents noted that the organisation offers scholarships to students studying in mining-related programmes at the University of Zimbabwe and high school children. One of the participants highlighted that *“The company offers scholarships to a number of children. Namatai Chisaenyerwa was the best student in 2020 Form four (4) public examinations at Gandauta Secondary School in Mine 2 area resulting in the mining company funding her High School education. She got enrolled at Marange High school where she is doing her “A” Level studies. In addition, the mine funded a full scholarship for Nyasha Razawo who has a prosthetic leg. The company also funds for Tinovimbanashe Marange’s education at King George Memorial School in Bulawayo, Matabeleland Province. She is a disabled girl child”*

Thus, the organisation is at the forefront in providing as well as improving the community education level through scholarship provisions. Many companies provide support to schools through donation of infrastructure and learning material and a similar proportion provide scholarships in cash or kind (Wallman 2021). This is backed by the views of Singh and Misra (2021) who note that CSR strives to enhance people's lives via community service such as education. In this case, scholarships provide an opportunity for mining communities to earn an education. Without assistance from an outside source, students may have trouble paying for the education they need in order to enter the workforce and become contributing members of society (Sharma 2019). Providing scholarships to community members increases the availability of skilled labour to be utilised by the mining companies.

According to the testimony of the respondents interviewed, the organisation provides clean energy in the form of the solar systems to the local clinic. Renewable energy is being championed as a potentially significant new source of jobs and rural growth in developing countries, and a means of addressing environmental and energy security concerns. In most countries, governments have invested large amounts of public money to support renewable energy development and are requiring significant quantities of it to be sold by energy providers (Dragu 2018). Making a positive connection between renewable energy development and local economic growth will require more coherent strategies, the right set of local conditions, and a place-based approach to deployment.

## **CHALLENGES FACED WHEN IMPLEMENTING CSR**

The interviews with the CSR management uncovered that despite the relevance and importance of CSR activities in respect of the corporate image, the organisation still faced challenges in such implementation, particularly with financial resources and disruption of projects. Interviews with management indicated that the company does not have sufficient resources to execute as many meaningful projects as they would like. This is in line with previous studies that reported that the lack of resources, including finances, human capital, knowledge, and expertise constitute a common barrier to CSR implementation (Yuen and Lim, 2016). From the interviews, there was consensus among the respondents about the lack of financial resources to effectively carry out the companies CSR activities.

These results are consistent with previous literature which reported that there is non-availability of well-organised nongovernmental organisations in remote and rural areas that can assess and identify real needs of the community and work along with companies to ensure successful implementation of CSR activities in developing countries (Flôres 2019). Like other developing countries, non-governmental organisations in Zimbabwe usually partner with mining companies, providing financial resources and capital to execute relevant CSR projects for mining communities. Companies acquire their human resources and other resources from the mining companies, which builds the case for investing in local communities by way of building their capacities to undertake development projects at local levels. In fact, Lamm and Lamm (2016) found that for effective implementation of CSR in the mining sector, large amounts of resources are required. However, budgets for implementing CSR are often inadequate and outcompeted by other projects which guarantee higher return on investments. In addition, most mining companies



do not have a dedicated department that manages CSR. Another identified challenge faced by the organisation in implementing CSR in the community is the disruption of projects. Respondents indicated that in some cases community members may disrupt the smooth transition of the projects. The results are consistent with literature which indicated that lack of partnership between the company, the employees and the community when planning and implementing CSR leads to project disruption.

## **CSR POLICY/STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE FOR THE ORGANISATION**

Respondents were asked to provide an overview of CSR policy/strategic objectives within the organisation. Literature indicates that most companies with thriving CSR initiatives use strategy to build and monitor their programmes; a few of these companies also share their strategy publicly. CSR management interviewed stated that the organisation is at the forefront of providing as well as improving the community education level. These results are consistent with literature which indicated that access to high-quality education in rural areas can be one of the contributing factors to local economic development and help rural communities adapt to a fast-changing environment, while a lack of access risks widening the rural-urban divide with regard to the level and relevance of skills through multiple channels (Bhatia and Makkar 2019). These results are also consistent with the study by Makwara, Mutambara, and Magagula-Hlatjwako (2019) which highlighted the gap between rural-urban education which is becoming more visible when analysing rural students' educational expectations. Based on a survey among 15-year-old students carried out in 2018, students in rural schools are half as likely to expect completing a university degree as those in city schools (Echazarra and Radinger 2019). This ultimately feeds into lower educational attainment and achievement in rural areas, lower geographical mobility and higher territorial inequalities. Thus, by improving education, the mining companies are pacing towards their policy of alleviating poverty in mining areas and improving the standards of living in mining communities.

Singh and Misra (2021) note that CSR strives to enhance people's lives via community service. Part of this enhancement through CSR uncovered in this study is entrepreneurship provision. Findings from management interviews revealed that the mining has set up livestock farming projects within the community as part of youth employment development and skills for the youth in the community. Some of the responses listed below reveal that mining companies invest in developing entrepreneurial skills in communities in which they operate. As management indicated, *“To avoid community members from depending on the provisions of the mining company's donations, the company has introduced livestock farming projects where community members are trained on livestock farming then they are given capital to start the projects. We started the project with five people. This project started in 2019 and then it was disturbed by covid19.”* These results are consistent with literature which indicates that the economic growth of a country depends largely on the progress of rural areas and the standard of people living in this area and a rural entrepreneur is one of the vital contributors in the economic development of a country (Katekhaye & Magda 2017). Thus, it is important for mining companies to invest in developing entrepreneurial skills to local community members. This emanates from the fact that rural entrepreneurs are faced with more challenges including non-availability of essential amenities in the rural parts the

country, mainly attributable to the remoteness of the areas and the lack of support, infrastructure and access to finance, preventing them from becoming valuable producers and service providers. Apart from entrepreneurship skills and education provision in the community, it was found that the organisation also works towards uplifting the community. This they achieved by renovating local roads, and provision of alternative energy such as solar systems. These results are consistent with previous researchers who found that entrepreneurial education and funding is considered central to the economic development of nations as it increases entrepreneurial self-efficacy, self-employment, and risk-taking attitude of the entrepreneur (Bester and Groenewald 2021). Entrepreneurship education and funding creates enormous business opportunities and trains people with innovative enterprise skills to grasp the opportunities for starting new entrepreneurial activities as a way of addressing poverty reduction, as there is strong empirical evidence suggesting that economic growth over time is necessary for poverty reduction (Ackers and Grobbelaar 2021). The provision of entrepreneurial skills to the community will no doubt have a positive effect on people's quality of life. This is also evident in the statement shared by some of the management where it is revealed that the organisation strives to eradicate and improve the standards of living for the local communities through their CSR activities. This has been revealed by one of the participants who is part of management that: *"Giving opportunities and support to local people is one strategy that can help us to reduce poverty uplift these people since most of the are unemployed old age and children. It also avoids the community members from depending on CSR benefits from the mining company."* Apart from entrepreneurship skills and education provision in the community, it was found that the organisation also works towards uplifting the community.

## **GOVERNMENT-SPECIFIC GUIDELINES ON CSR**

Kloppers & Kloppers (2018) posit that the government is widely acknowledged as a significant catalyst for advancing the corporate social responsibility (CSR) agenda, with a particularly crucial responsibility in fostering a conducive climate for CSR initiatives. Therefore, it can be readily inferred that the government implements regulations pertaining to corporate social responsibility (CSR) practises. Nevertheless, all the individuals affiliated with the organisation said that there is a lack of explicit governmental requirements pertaining to corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives specific to the mining sector which makes it difficult for mining companies to plan and implement impactful CSR projects. However, the participants acknowledged the existence of the company's corporate social responsibility (CSR) requirements.

The findings presented in this study are incongruous with the existing body of research, which advocates for the government's role in establishing a regulatory framework and implementing mechanisms to oversee adherence to CSR norms. This approach aims to foster improvements in the performance of both large and small enterprises, as highlighted by Shackleton (2020). The involvement of the government in standard-setting is crucial, since it facilitates the establishment of regulatory frameworks that incentivize enterprises to enhance their performance beyond the bare minimum legal requirements. The study conducted by Arrive and Feng (2018) provides empirical evidence supporting the significance of government involvement in policy-making for the promotion of CSR among various businesses at the national level. Furthermore, their research highlights the importance of government intervention in fostering the adoption of stricter standards

across all sectors. Research has also demonstrated that the capacity of the government to enhance the disclosure and openness of frequently concealed social responsibility practises, as well as regulate the monitoring and reporting thereof, often leads to corporations engaging in CSR efforts being subjected to measures of accountability (Shackleton, 2020). These quality assurance systems incentivize firms to fulfil their pledges by publicly disclosing their company practises. Consequently, this fosters an enhancement in CSR standards within the sector, as companies are more inclined to strive to outperform their competitors and obtain acknowledgement for their achievements in this domain. The potential integration of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative principle into Zimbabwe's policy regulatory structure is worth considering. Murombo (2022) highlights the significance of employing natural resource wealth in a conscientious manner to promote sustainable economic growth and development. Despite the presence of certain shortcomings, the mining sector in Zimbabwe has potential in its ability to align with the principles outlined by the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. These principles acknowledge the capacity of both entities and governments to utilise mining as a means to achieve sustainable development and mitigate poverty. Ensuring the disclosure of mining corporations' revenues and activities, as well as holding them accountable for their behaviour in specific mining areas, is crucial for promoting transparency and accountability within mining communities (Oppong & Andrews, 2020).

## **MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF CSR**

Yuen and Lim (2016) assert that the utilisation of measurement methods is necessary in order to quantitatively assess the advantages derived from the implementation of CSR initiatives. The authors additionally observe that the system functions as a valuable instrument for assessing and managing CSR achievements, and as a foundation for incentivizing positive outcomes. During the interview, it was revealed that the organisation lacks formal performance measurement measures. However, it was noted that they do conduct project visitations.

Although the majority of CSR managers indicated that their organization's visits to the project served as a means of performance monitoring, it was recognised that there is currently no established protocol for assessing the project's development. Organisations can assess the progress made towards the established targets by conducting visits to the CSR project sites and communities. The findings align with existing literature that suggests CSR managers proactively develop a plan to assess the progress of CSR activities, rather than simply allowing them to unfold naturally. According to Tanimoto (2019), during the initial stages of these programmes, the outcomes may not align perfectly. However, the regular availability of a performance curve for data comparison every few weeks will provide a distinct assessment of the overall effectiveness of the project. It is important to acknowledge that CSR managers ought to not only conduct visits to the project site, but also evaluate and document any deviations that may have occurred. Subsequently, they should implement corrective actions to guarantee that the project aligns with the fulfilment of CSR objectives.

The current inquiry pertains to the evaluation of the impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the absence of a standardised evaluation procedure. The findings presented in this study align

with existing literature, suggesting that individuals working in the field of CSR should possess a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between strategy, actions, impact, and outcomes (Doke and Dadas 2019). One of the primary obstacles encountered by businesses is the establishment of a standardised procedure aimed at effectively acquiring the necessary data for the purpose of measuring outcomes, reporting on achievements, and reinforcing the viability of the enterprise. Therefore, it is imperative for organisations to devise strategies to get the fundamental data required for monitoring any CSR initiative. The greater the extent to which a company simplifies, centralises, and streamlines its data gathering and management processes, the more available time it will have to allocate towards programmatic efforts, validating the company's achievements, and commemorating accomplishments. In accordance with the findings of King Report IV in 2016, it is of utmost importance for the board to ensure that the reports and disclosures furnished serve the purpose of enabling stakeholders to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the organization's performance and its ability to build enduring value.

Active engagement plays a crucial role in mitigating the community's unfavourable perceptions of CSR initiatives, as it fosters a sense of ownership and inclusion among community members within the project. The findings align with existing literature that suggest community engagement has the potential to provide beneficial and quantifiable outcomes for both the communities in which businesses operate and the businesses themselves (Sharma, 2019). Community involvement encompasses several forms of engagement, such as in-kind and financial contributions, employee volunteer initiatives, and long-term collaborations with non-profit organisations. Furthermore, the incorporation of diversity and inclusion into CSR initiatives contributes to the cultivation of a favourable brand image, hence fostering the establishment of an improved reputation and the formation of productive commercial alliances (Arrive and Feng, 2018). By implementing a comprehensive CSR programme, a firm has the ability to establish and sustain favourable and interactive partnerships. According to Espinoza-Ramos (2020), community inclusion is facilitated by involving community members in the decision-making process about project implementation, as well as determining the institutions and beneficiaries that will be impacted by these initiatives. The effectiveness of CSR programmes implemented in this manner is significantly enhanced due to the dual role of the authors and contributors as brand advocates. The significance of mining firms in Zimbabwe seeking help from local communities to enhance the effectiveness of their CSR initiatives is a matter of importance.

Findings highlighted the need of aligning CSR projects with the specific needs of the communities. Therefore, it was comprehensible that they suggested the involvement of community members in decision-making processes regarding CSR programmes that have an impact on them. The findings align with existing literature, suggesting that a crucial element of conducting business in Zimbabwe involves promoting the growth and empowerment of marginalised communities who depend on the investment products offered by the organisation to bring about positive changes in their lives (Ndiweni and Sibanda, 2020). Ndiweni and Sibanda (2020) highlighted health and education as significant factors in the process of community development and upliftment, following an internal process of participation, debate, and consideration of external influences.

The consideration of these inputs is of significant importance as they provide individuals residing at the periphery a heightened feeling of human dignity.

## CONCLUSION

Mining companies in Zimbabwe are involved in a number of CSR projects to improve and empower the communities they operate in. These projects focus on improving health services, providing clean water and sanitation, entrepreneurship and creating employment. These projects have improved the standards of living for the local communities. However, in the process of implementing these CSR projects, the mining companies are faced with a number of challenges including the lack of financial resources, lack of participation from the local community members and lack of government policies to govern CSR implementation. The impact of resources spent on CSR, is a requirement for organisations and CSR should be measured in order to determine the social impact of such initiatives on businesses and society. In addition, companies should analyse their CSR programmes and analyse the impact they have on society and the company. Efforts were made over the years to establish tools and models that can help measure the impact of CSR on a company's triple bottom line.

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