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Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University Press Office

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P.O. Box 350

Bindura, Zimbabwe

Telephone: ++263 8 677 006 136 | +263 779 279 912

E-mail: zegupress@zegu.ac.zw

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The Nature of Social Commitments Required to Promote Corporate Social Responsibility in the Platinum Mining Sector in Zimbabwe

SITHOLE MUNONEKA¹, SIFILE OBERT² AND MTHOMBENI ADMIRE³

Abstract

The study sought to establish the nature of social commitments required to promote corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the mining sector in Zimbabwe. The study adopted the mixed method approach rooted in the pragmatism paradigm and a cross-sectional descriptive survey design. Stratified random sampling and purposive sampling were used. An interview guide and a questionnaire were used as research instruments. The sample size was 181 respondents, representing 2 400 artisanal platinum miners in Mashonaland West Province, calculated using the Krejcie and Morgan formula. SPSS version 24 was used for analysing quantitative data, while NVivo was used for the analysis of qualitative data. The study indicates that adoption of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) transparency in the form of enhanced disclosures, led to effective CSR in the mining sector, benchmarking to global Reporting leads to effective CSR and consistent adherence and adoption of the International Standards Organisation (ISO). Results show that implementing the EITI could promote accountability to society and lead to effective CSR. The study recommends that the Mines and Minerals Act or the Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act should include a provision requiring any mining firm operating in Zimbabwe to support local communities through CSR.

1 Department of Economics, Marketing and Entrepreneurship, Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University. Orcid ID: 0009-0005-1366-7351, msithole2012@gmail.com

2 Department of Finance and Accounting, Chinhoyi University of Technology. Orcid ID: 0000-0002-4414-6306, osifile@gmail.com

3 Department of Applied Sciences, Manicaland State University of Applied Sciences. Orcid ID: 0009-0000-2439-302X, mthoadmire@gmail.com

Keywords: environmental responsibility, economic responsibility, environmental degradation, corporate philanthropy, ethical responsibility, mineral extraction

INTRODUCTION

According to the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (2014), CRS is the presumption of a continued commitment to support economic progress. In a manner similar to this, Greenfield (2009) describes CSR in terms of the idea that businesses, as legal entities, have two primary obligations: to generate income for owners and to comply with existing laws. The principles and practices of CSR) are gaining ground and receiving a lot of attention from academics, government officials and business leaders alike, as well as in the mining industry (Zutshi, 2014) The amount of academic research on the theoretical and practical applications of CSR is growing and more businesses are incorporating CSR into their business plans (Lantos, 2015; Kramer and Pfitzer, 2016; Secchi and McDonald, 2019). CSR is not entirely new to the mining industry.

The mining sector experienced criticism in the middle of the 1990s over how it engaged with and responded to local host communities. This pressure was made worse by several tragedies that damaged the industry's reputation (Van der Watt and Marais, 2021). As a response, governments and mining firms started introducing several interwoven approaches to improve relationships between mining companies, local government and communities. CSR and the idea of a social licence to operate were two of them (Kemp and Owen 2013; Bice 2014). According to Hamann (2003), CSR refers to the mining company's projects and efforts that are undertaken to achieve social, environmental and economic sustainability.

To meet some of the community's expectations for economic alleviation, mining firms acknowledge a joint duty (Bongwe, 2017). Since mines are located inside or close to these communities and have an impact on, or are influenced by, them. Through their

operations, local communities are frequently seen as the main stakeholder in mining firms (Gibson, 2000). Considering the aforementioned, it is reasonable that local people were exerting increasing pressure on mining companies to act morally. Mining companies realised, as a result, how important it was to win community support and consent before starting any project (Danielson, 2006). CSR in the mining industry has developed into a crucial component of mine-community ties.

Mining firms have come to terms with the fact that the people impacted by their activities require access to basic utilities like electricity, water and sanitary facilities.

These villages have a chance to get better with the development of a mine, but if the community fails to benefit, the mine runs the risk of turning into an enclave. It was anticipated that CSR programmes would start to form a significant part of the compliance package for indigenisation and economic empowerment within the mining sector given the then promulgated indigenisation and empowerment laws in Zimbabwe. The purpose of CSR remained unclear in Zimbabwe.

Additionally, a review of the literature reveals that CSR strategies were not uniform. According to Mpofu (2012), there have not been any credible studies on CSR in Zimbabwe. CSR actions and data were not properly documented and centrally kept because it was regarded as voluntary (ISO 26000: 2010, SAZ) and philanthropic. Even in the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Status Reports, data had not been recorded, despite the fact that CSR was essential to sustainable development. Zimbabwe lacked a CSR index. As a result, it was difficult to assess the short-term contribution of such projects to sustainable development because there were no quantifiable metrics of CSR.

The Regional Centre for CSR, based on the Benchmarks Foundation in South Africa, was the first organisation to deal with this when it was

just established in 2011. Research has led to the development of a number of concepts for integrating social and environmental issues into business strategy, but little is known about the kinds of social commitments needed to advance CSR in Zimbabwe's mining industry. In light of this, the study aims to determine the type of corporate social commitments necessary to advance CSR in Zimbabwe's platinum mining industry.

THEORIES UNDERPINNING THE STUDY

The Stakeholders Theory and the Triple Bottom Line serve as the main theoretical foundations for the current research undertaking.

STAKEHOLDER THEORY

According to Freeman *et al.* (2021), stakeholders are widely defined as any recognisable group or person who can influence, or be impacted, by the accomplishment of an organisation's goals (Freeman, 2017). A firm has stakeholders, or organisations and people, who profit from being associated with the corporation's actions, as Freeman noted in his well-known paper "Strategic Management, A Stakeholder Approach" (Freeman, 2017). Therefore, according to the Stakeholder Theory, a corporation can accomplish its goals only by safeguarding and balancing the interests of various stakeholder groups (Freeman *et al.*, 2021).

THE TRIPLE BOTTOMLINE THEORY

Elkington (1998) established the Triple Bottom Line concept (TBL). The TBL can be viewed as a CSR framework that considers the three performance factors of economic, social and environmental. The three components of must produce durable results (Elkington, 1998). The concept's fundamental goal is sustainability. To accomplish ongoing earnings and long-term social and environmental projects, businesses must use the TBL. The TBL sustainability framework has been used by numerous businesses and charity institutions to carry out CSR initiatives (Farooq *et al.*, 2021). The theory states that long-term consistency in profit, rather than huge profits, is what a

corporation should strive for. As a result, commercial organisations start to join the TBL CSR framework and create a strategy by projecting elements which affect the business climate, assessing expenses and taxes, examining market benchmarks and avoiding risks that offer the biggest risk (*ibid.*). A thorough examination of each of these factors will enable long-term financial success.

LITERATURE REVIEW

THE NATURE OF SOCIAL COMMITMENTS REQUIRED TO PROMOTE CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN THE MINING SECTOR IN ZIMBABWE

There is diverse literature on the nature of social commitments required to promote CSR in the mining sector as discussed in this section of the study.

COMPANY CULTURE

A company's corporate culture must enable the successful integration of CSR for it to fully benefit from it (Barin Cruz and Boehe, 2010). It is allegedly crucial to concentrate on four critical variables to foster this support. First, internal motivation comes from the knowledge that CSR benefits the company and probably increases competitiveness (Bansal and Roth, 2000). Second, it is important to establish the CSR programme's legitimacy within the organisation (*ibid.*; Sharma, 2000). Third, CSR activities are thought to be more likely to be implemented if they are supported by the company's values and mission (Marcus and Anderson 2006). Finally, Lyon (2004) asserts that for CSR to be implemented over the long term, businesses need to transition from a culture centred on targets to values. This supports the argument made by Maon, Lindgreen and Swaen (2009) that corporate values are essential conditions for proactive CSR.

Another crucial element for the integration of CSR in a company is the senior management's involvement (Johnson and Greening, 1999). Here, the emphasis is on integrating CSR into strategy and operations in a cost-effective manner (Werther and Chandler 2005). A shift in

the company's culture regarding the financial and career reward systems, according to Werther and Chandler (2005), is essential for a successful integration. Both must be grounded on economically sound objectives and the socially responsible means of achieving those objectives.

According to Werther and Chandler (*ibid.*), the topic has become an element of a company's brand management, necessitating the transition from modest commitment to strategic CSR (Latap Agudelo, Jóhannsdóttir and Davdsdóttir, 2019). They contend that top-down integration is necessary for CSR to ensure that it is incorporated into all business processes. CEOs, strategists and brand managers must, therefore, rebrand their organisations to become examples of corporate responsibility. In light of its motivating potential, management commitment is a crucial factor to take into account when adopting CSR in the business (Hah and Freeman, 2014). According to Heslin and Ochoa (2008) and Lantos (2001), senior management must identify themselves inside the CSR activities.

STAKEHOLDERS AND MOTIVATION

Corporations are accountable to their stakeholders, claims Freeman (2001). The most significant stakeholders are divided into three layers by (Lantos, 2001). First, is the general environment level, which refers to society as a whole and includes institutions like the legal, political, technological and other institutions. Government regulators are one instance of this (Heslin and Ochoa, 2008). The second level preserves the immediate settings, including suppliers, clients, rival businesses, the neighbourhood and subcontractors (*ibid.*). Actors within the organisation, such as managers and staff, make up the third and final level (Lantos 2001; Heslin and Ochoa, 2008). Pressure from outside stakeholders is essential when examining the motivating factors behind CSR initiatives. These external pressures could result from threats made by certain interest groups or the requirement to live up to societal expectations (Baron, 2001). In general, public demand for sustainable behaviours puts

more pressure on businesses to behave responsibly (Asgary and Li, 2016). The growth of ethical consumerism and the influence of the media have even accelerated this tendency (*ibid.*). Werther and Chandler (2005) identify three primary causes for the rising significance of CSR.

An initial transition from optional considerations to ethical considerations, followed by a shift to legal requirements, mostly as a result of the expansion of the mass media is a factor. Growing affluence, which refers to the fact that consumers are increasingly considering the social repercussions of their choices, is the second factor Werther and Chandler (2005) highlight. Regulations, standards and certifications may be impacted by institutional pressures in terms of the nature and scope of CSR efforts (Aguinis and Glavas, 2012). According to Aguinis and Glavas (*ibid.*), this could result in businesses reaching just the bare minimums, rather than being encouraged to participate in real CSR initiatives.

In addition, corporations can cut expenses through CSR (Asgary and Li, 2016) by lowering the expense of fines and legal proceedings (Lantos, 2001). As a result, proactive CSR choices may result in financial gains through risk reduction (Carroll and Shabana, 2010), particularly when it comes to legal and regulatory requirements (Lee, 2008). Internal stakeholders may exert pressure to include CSR in addition to external stakeholders. This can manifest in the owners' altruistic motive (Dawar and Bhatia, 2023; Hah and Freeman, 2014) or in the demands for change made by employees and management as they become more aware of sustainability challenges (Heslin and Ochoa, 2008). The organisation can increase access to a larger talent pool, foster deeper relationships with internal stakeholders and reduce employee turnover by using CSR (Carroll and Shabana, 2010). Consumer power and the capacity to affect moral corporate behaviour are hotly contested. According to de Regil (2016), consumers have the authority to influence CSR practices because governments cannot impose mandatory CSR. He argues that CSR is

still developing and is guided by voluntary courses of action since people who sponsor their election campaigns have influence over governments. De Regil (2016) observes that important issues like a living wage were commonly overlooked in CSR operations and that "forceful action" and civil society participation are the only ways to achieve the reforms that are legally necessary in global CSR. Customer pressure can be a strong incentive for corporations to perform responsibly. De Regil (*ibid.*), for example, argues that potential boycotts could force companies to comply and end up costing them more money than CSR programmes. Additionally, he argues that wealthy consumers may use CSR data to inform their purchases, limiting the actions of multinational corporations that might otherwise exploit communities and workers in underdeveloped countries.

Although de Regil (2005) supports the notion that consumers can positively impact CSR practices, it could be argued that consumer requirements are not always obvious and that they may occasionally be partially driven by personal needs. For instance, according to Clarkson (1995), it is unclear what consumers expect from businesses in terms of CSR. According to McWilliams *et al.* (2016), this makes CSR planning for businesses challenging. Mohr *et al.* (2017) and Cisneros *et al.* (2019) believe the issue is even more severe because there is insufficient academic research on what customers desire and the level of assistance needed for a community. While Green and Pelozo (2016) said that customers prefer reciprocal value interactions with enterprises through CSR, D'Astous and Legendre (2019) asserted that consumers were motivated by self-interest, rather than social concerns.

Numerous studies, including those by Newell and Swan (2000) and Doh and Guay (2016), have examined the function of societal drivers of CSR. They have noted pressure from non-governmental organisations (NGOs), media attention, social expectations, business associations, consumers, employees and investors as important

factors coming under the heading of social drivers. CSR is significantly impacted by NGOs, in particular, since they draw attention to unethical and irresponsible behaviour. Furthermore, partnerships between NGOs and mining firms frequently lead to a rise in the social responsibility of corporate behaviour (Newell and Swan, 2000; Doh and Guay, 2016). Hofman *et al.* (2017) emphasizes the significance of media coverage of corporate social irresponsibility and emphasizes how important it is for CSR. Surveys on CSR are regularly ordered by firms themselves because corporate leaders are keenly aware of customer sentiment and the implications of unfavourable attitude. The involvement of employees as a social force has been noted in a number of studies, including those by Grosser and Moon (2005), Muthuri *et al.* (2012) and Singh and Verma (2014). This role has been characterised as an internal corporate force that encourages companies to promote the development of local communities.

Kolk (2005) studied how globalisation affects CSR and came to the conclusion that it gives companies the possibility to take advantage of underdeveloped labour markets, social norms and natural resource management. He argues that the exploitation of transnational firms has driven the push for socially responsible business practices in underdeveloped nations, compelling businesses to establish codes of conduct to include CSR into their ethical standards within global supply chains. According to Chapple and Moon (2007), firms are now becoming members of organisations with standards like the UN Global Compact and the International Business Leaders Forum. Some businesses are also showcasing their CSR through the Global Reporting Initiative.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a mixed research methodology. The sample size was 181 respondents, representing 2 400 artisanal platinum miners in Mashonaland West Province, calculated using Krejcie and Morgan (1970). The sample size for interviews was 10, reached on a

saturation basis. In this view, the study adopts the mixed method approach rooted in the pragmatism paradigm and a cross-sectional descriptive survey. Stratified random sampling is employed for sampling of quantitative data, while purposive sampling is used for qualitative data. An interview guide and a structured questionnaire are used as research instruments. SPSS version 24 is used for analysing descriptive statistics, chi-square tests for association and regression analysis used to analyse the quantitative data while NVivo is used for the analysis of qualitative data to produce themes.

FINDINGS

This section presents results obtained from the study.

RESPONSE RATE

Table 1 shows response rate of respondents. The study managed to achieve an overall response rate of 94% for the questionnaires administered and returned.

Table 1: Response Rate (Researcher,2023)

Instrument administered	Sample size	Questionnaires/ interviews administered and returned	Questionnaires/ interviews administered and not returned	Response rate %
Questionnaire	170	160	10	94

The high response rate in the study increased the reliability of the subject under study (Marshall and Rossman, 2006). Better results were achieved as more respondents took part. This implied that respondents were willing to participate in the issues which concerned their livelihood.

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

This section presented descriptive statistics and qualitative study results on nature of philanthropic (discretionary) commitments required to promote CSR in the platinum mining sector in Zimbabwe.

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS ON THE NATURE OF SOCIAL COMMITMENTS REQUIRED TO PROMOTE CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN THE PLATINUM MINING SECTOR IN ZIMBABWE

The objective of the study was to assess the nature of social commitments required to promote CSR in the mining sector in Zimbabwe. The study findings are described in Table 2.

Table 2: *The nature of corporate social commitments needed to promote corporate social responsibility in the platinum mining sector in Zimbabwe (Researcher, 2023)*

Descriptive Statistics						
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Mean response	Std. Deviation
Culture of CSR	290	2	5	4.54	Strongly agree	.571
Adoption of sustainable reporting	290	2	5	4.51	Strongly agree	.578
All stakeholder engagement	290	3	5	4.56	Strongly agree	.511
Ethical practices	290	1	5	4.57	Strongly agree	.536
Economic responsibility	290	3	5	4.57	Strongly agree	.520
Valid N (listwise)	290					

As presented in Table 2 above, the research also sought to establish the nature of commitment to achieve CSR and four dimensions were presented, namely culture of CSR, adoption of sustainable reporting, all stakeholder engagement, ethical practices and economic responsibility. The mean response for all these items was approximately five (5), which corresponds to strongly agree. This implies that these items are important to realise CSR. The non-zero standard deviation implies that respondents held varied views with regards to issues under study.

The main qualitative issues that arose from respondents on the study's second objective are shown in Figure 1 that sought to

establish the nature of corporate commitments needed to achieve CSR by platinum mines in Zimbabwe. The word ‘cloud’ shows that the nature of corporate commitments needed to achieve sustainability of CSR initiatives by platinum mines includes CSR culture, sustainable reporting, stakeholder engagement and economic responsibility.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY CULTURE

The interviewees had this to say with regard to CSR culture themes:

Respondent CU 1:

“To be cognisant of the social and environmental impact of their operations, platinum mining firms must commit to a corporate social responsibility culture that is integrated into their mission statement, values and goals. By integrating the culture of CSR into the values of the platinum mines which some have, will ensure the sustainability of the CSR initiatives.”

Respondent CU3:

“To achieve sustainability of CSR initiatives, by platinum companies, there is need to have the culture of CSR embedded in these organisations. It means the Corporate culture and CSR must coexist in platinum mining companies. Getting CSR aligned with the organisation vision and mission statements is the first step towards incorporating CSR into corporate culture. These are the fundamental components that establish organisation character, objectives and course of action. They should also demonstrate organisation dedication to corporate social responsibility and how it affects stakeholder mainly the community.”

Respondent CU4:

“Culture of the organisation shapes the direction of an organisation. Whether an organisation succeeds or not, depends on what is the culture of an entity. As such, to ensure the sustainability of CSR initiatives, platinum mining companies must always align their values and objectives with CSR culture. Once this is done, the company is perceived [as] ethical in the eyes of the society.”

Respondent CU 5:

“Corporate social responsibility is the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development, while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large. Such culture of CSR must be the first commitment by an organisation.”

Respondent CU6 pointed out that:

“Ethical leaders create an organisational culture that fosters ethical behaviour, which, in turn, promotes responsible business practices. They set clear expectations for ethical conduct, establish ethical guidelines and ensure employees understand CSR’s importance. Thus, leaders must have culture that fosters ethical responsibility.”

Sustainable Reporting

Respondent SR1 opined that:

“Organisations doing platinum mining may need to commit themselves to sustainable reporting to ensure and achieve sustainability of CSR initiatives. Already this is being practised, but there is supposed to be a standard as governed by a policy or an Act, which regulates such sustainable reporting. When I talk of sustainable reporting, I mean the process of disclosing and communicating platinum companies’ progress towards its environmental, social and governance goals.”

Respondent SR2 also came in stating that:

“In this 21st century, entities must commit and provide sustainable reporting. The most successful company reports provide a comprehensive explanation of the overall sustainability strategy in the short, medium as well as long terms, along with an explanation of how it complements the main strategy. It is simple to grasp the logic when sustainability threats and opportunities are emphasized and directly connected to actions of CSR.”

Respondent SR2 also stated that:

“Sustainable reporting for most companies is improved reputation and goodwill. Sustainability reporting actively helps an organisation to be more transparent about its impact, thereby reducing the reputational risks associated with the company’s operations.”

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Respondent SE1 had this to say on stakeholder engagement:

“Stakeholder engagement will enable the affected and concerned society understand and cooperate into CSR initiatives by mining companies. It is easy to participate into CSR initiatives that the organisation was initially consulted of. In other words, there must be no imposition of CSR, rather stakeholders be consulted”.

Respondent SE2 also supported the stance on stakeholder engagement by stating that:

“Stakeholder engagement or engaging in local community work can yield numerous advantages. Local communities, for instance, are a significant source of revenue for numerous companies. Being involved in the community can also help a platinum mining company’s reputation, which can facilitate hiring and staff retention. Such engagement will subsequently yield sustainability of all CSR initiatives.”

Economic Responsibility

Respondent SE3 opined that:

“... platinum companies may need to act basing financial decisions on a dedication to doing good, commonly referred to as economic responsibility. In this view, platinum mining companies must heavily invest through CSR in education initiatives, utilising alternative energy sources and supporting neighbourhood charities to further their goals are a few instances of common economic responsibility.”

In support of the economic responsibility, Respondent SE4 stated that:

“Economic responsibility! Economic responsibility! Economic responsibility! This is very fundamental if platinum mining companies are to achieve sustainability in their CSR initiatives. Contributing to economic development efforts to invest in local communities is one example of economic responsibility. This may entail supplying goods and services locally to assist small and local enterprises.”

DISCUSSION

The findings from the respondents were consistent with the literature. However, the activities of mining companies that involve communities came under heavy fire. Swift and Zadek (2018) point out that while CSR had a great potential to help meet the needs of under-served areas, there were ways that it could inadvertently or purposefully harm such populations. First, there was a lack of openness regarding how much money was spent on corporate community projects and how much went to mining communities. According to Auty (2017), this knowledge is essential to set the groundwork for creating the social capital required to reduce conflict and support development. These quantitative and qualitative results

corroborate with a study by Ansu-Mensah *et al*, (2021), which investigated the CSR process of an extractive company and examines how stakeholders are engaged in CSR. Using purposive and snowball sampling in identifying its respondents, data was gathered through interviewing 21 selected respondents from various stakeholder groups and documents such as sustainability annual reports were analysed. It was discovered that Newmont Ahafo Mines has consistently had a prominent CSR drive in Ghana for several years and stakeholder involvement in CSR is important for implementing relevant CSR programmes. The impacts of legal and economic CSR on the connection between the organisation and its employees are only noticeable when there is a strong perceived fit between the two. This shows that for better CSR performance, an organisation must have stakeholder engagement that includes employees and the community (Lopatta, Jaeschke and Chen, 2017).

The CSR strategies used by the businesses examined above have, in various ways, aided in the spread of a dependency mentality. Future community development efforts by all businesses should be centred on reducing dependency links and emphasizing community sustainability.

This will be a very challenging process, not least because businesses will have to face and correct past errors that led to a reliance mentality in the first place.

A number of studies, such as those by Newell and Swan (2000) and Doh and Guay (2016), highlight the role of social drivers of CSR. The pressure from various sources, media attention, social expectations, business associations, customers, employees and investors are some of the social drivers that they underline. CSR is significantly impacted by NGOs, in particular, since they draw attention to unethical and irresponsible behaviour. The study's findings are consistent with the Carroll Pyramid-based theoretical foundation. Carroll Pyramid's

fundamental concept is to incorporate CSR initiatives within the order form.

Businesses should exercise social responsibility by accomplishing their initial financial goals, while retaining their viability and profitability (Crane & Martin, 2016). Only after that, would they be able to advance to the next phase, which is the decision to acknowledge regionally and internationally binding laws and obligations. The Stakeholder Theory is consistent with the study's conclusions. Therefore, according to this theory, a corporation can accomplish its goals only by safeguarding and balancing the interests of various stakeholder groups. The Stakeholder Theory has been employed as a descriptive theory to define the nature of the business, corporate management and how board directors consider the interests of corporate constituencies (Brenner, 2018). From an instrumental standpoint, the theory is applied to show how the CSR approach and stakeholder management are related (*ibid.*).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the study illustrate the type of social commitments needed to advance CSR in Zimbabwe's platinum mining industry. The results presented lead to the conclusion that corporate commitments needed to achieve sustainability of CSR initiatives by platinum mines in Zimbabwe are: adoption of a culture of CSR in platinum mines, the adoption of sustainable reporting, commitment to an all stakeholder engagement in the CSR process, commitment to ethical practices and commitment to undertake an economic responsibility. To ensure that platinum mines undertake these commitments without seeing it as an alternative or means to buy community support, it is thus recommended that there is to be a CSR Act that governs CSR activities of platinum mining companies.

- The Zimbabwean government could start paying royalties through rural district councils so that mining companies can better meet the requirements of the local communities in which they operate.

- The Mines and Minerals Act or the Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act should include a provision requiring any mining firm operating in Zimbabwe to support local communities through CSR.

Future studies on CSR by mining companies can concentrate on restoring the ecosystem to its pre-mining state and how to enhance regulations and laws to safeguard both society and the environment.

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