

Developing Sustainable Tourism Practices in Communities Adjacent to Mines: An Exploratory Study in South Africa

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Abstract : There has always been a disparity between mining and tourism mainly due to the socio-economic and environmental impacts of mines on both the adjacent resident communities and the areas taken up by the mining operation. Although heritage mining tourism has been actively and successfully pursued and developed in the UK, largely Wales, and Scandinavian countries, the debate whether active mining and tourism can have a mutually beneficial relationship remains imminent. This pilot study explores the relationship between the 'to be developed' future Nokeng Mine and its adjacent community, the rural community of Moloto, will be investigated in terms of whether sustainable tourism and livelihood activities can potentially be developed with the support of the mine. Concepts such as social entrepreneur, corporate social responsibility, sustainable development and triple bottom line are discussed. Within the South African context as a mineral rich developing country, the government has a statutory obligation to empower disenfranchised communities through social and labour plans and policies. All South African mines must preside over a Social and Labour Plan according to the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act, No 28 of 2002. The 'social' component refers to the 'social upliftment' of communities within or adjacent to any mine; whereas the 'labour' component refers to the mine workers sourced from the specific community. A qualitative methodology is followed using the case study as research instrument for the Nokeng Mine and Moloto community with interviews and focus group discussions. The target population comprised of the Moloto Tribal Council members (8 in-depth interviews), the Moloto community members (17: focus groups); and the Nokeng Mine representatives (4 in-depth interviews). In this pilot study two disparate 'worlds' are potentially linked: on the one hand, the mine as social entrepreneur that is searching for feasible and sustainable ideas; and on the other hand, the community adjacent to the mine, with potentially sustainable tourism entrepreneurs that can tap into the resources of the mine should their ideas be feasible to build their businesses. Being an exploratory study the findings are limited but indicate that the possible success of tourism and sustainable livelihood activities lies in the fact that both the Mine and Community are keen to work together - the mine in terms of obtaining labour and profit; and the community in terms of improved and sustainable social and economic conditions; with both parties realizing the importance to mitigate negative environmental impacts. In conclusion, a relationship of trust is imperative between a mine and a community before a long term liaison is possible. However whether tourism is a viable solution for the community to engage in is debatable. The community could initially rather pursue the sustainable livelihoods approach and focus on life-supporting activities such as building, gardening, etc. that once established could feed into possible sustainable tourism activities.

Keywords : community development, mining tourism, sustainability, South Africa

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