

Power Asymmetry and Major Corporate Social Responsibility Projects in Mhondoro-Ngezi District, Zimbabwe

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Abstract : Empirical studies of the current CSR agenda have been dominated by literature from the North at the expense of the nations from the South where most TNCs are located. Therefore, owing to the limitations of the current discourse that is dominated by Western ideas such as voluntarism, philanthropy, business case and economic gains, scholars have been calling for a new CSR agenda that is South-centred and addresses the needs of developing nations. The development theme has dominated in the recent literature as scholars concerned with the relationship between business and society have tried to understand its relationship with CSR. Despite a plethora of literature on the roles of corporations in local communities and the impact of CSR initiatives, there is lack of adequate empirical evidence to help us understand the nexus between CSR and development. For all the claims made about the positive and negative consequences of CSR, there is surprisingly little information about the outcomes it delivers. This study is a response to these claims made about the developmental aspect of CSR in developing countries. It offers some empirical bases for assessing the major CSR projects that have been fulfilled by a major mining company, Zimplats in Mhondoro-Ngezi Zimbabwe. The neo-liberal idea of capitalism and market dominations has empowered TNCs to stamp their authority in the developing countries. TNCs have made their mark in developing nations as they stamp their global private authority, rivalling or implicitly challenging the state in many functions. This dominance of corporate power raises great concerns over their tendencies of abuses in terms of environmental, social and human rights concerns as well as how to make them increasingly accountable. The hegemonic power of TNCs in the developing countries has had a tremendous impact on the overall CSR practices. While TNCs are key drivers of globalization they may be acting responsibly in their Global Northern home countries where there is a combination of legal mechanisms and the fear of civil society activism associated with corporate scandals. Using a triangulated approach in which both qualitative and quantitative methods were used the study found out that most CSR projects in Zimbabwe are dominated and directed by Zimplats because of the power it possesses. Most of the major CSR projects are beneficial to the mining company as they serve the business plans of the mining company. What was deduced from the study is that the infrastructural development initiatives by Zimplats confirm that CSR is a tool to advance business obligations. This shows that although proponents of CSR might claim that business has a mandate for social obligations to society, we need not to forget the dominant idea that the primary function of CSR is to enhance the firm's profitability.

Keywords : hegemonic power, projects, reciprocity, stakeholders

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