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RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Study on the Cooperate Social Responsibility of Mining Companies towards the Environment: A Case Study of Sierra Rutile Mining Company

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Abstract

There is an ongoing debate on the relevance of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and its ability to provide visible development. This study pays close attention to Sierra Rutile Mining Company, because like many other African nations, the inhabitants dwelling around mining companies stays very close to these mining companies; therefore, there should be effective corporate social responsibility plans for these inhabitants. By assessing the current and anticipated future socio-economic and environmental impacts, a company can maximise the positive impacts they can have on a community, whilst minimising any negative impacts. In Sierra Rutile the findings show that the mining industry represents relatively high level of social responsibility. Corporate social responsibility helps in improving the quality of life of the workers and the children of the workers, the community and society as a whole. There is an agreement between Sierra Rutile and the chiefdom that the company exists; the study found out at communities' levels that the company has been responsive to their host community to some extent, by contributing to socioeconomic development at certain level through the use of CSR policies. Their contributions included jobs creation and employees' upgrading and; infrastructural development such as, constructions of housing, schools, clinics, feeder roads and; offer scholarships to school going youths, and support agribusiness in the various communities from the mineral proceeds. On the environment, the study revealed that the company has set up to handle environmental issues in chiefdom. And, there have been some amount of compensation given for resettlements and crops reparations. It came out very clear that the community stakeholders are decision makers directly involved on decisions affecting major environmental issues.

Keywords: Cooperate Social Responsibility, Mining, Environment, Sierra Rutile, Community.

1. Introduction

A lot of mining communities in unindustrialised countries across Africa are comprised of residencies with citizens fully dwelling in those communities for most of their lives. For instance, in Sierra Leone mining communities, with specific reference to Sierra Rutile Mining Company located within the Moyamba and Bonthe districts. As of the 2015 census, the

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Bonthe District that housed the Sierra Rutile Mining Company has an approximate population of 200,730 inhabitants. That makes it a reason for concern about their wellbeing and welfare. In practicality, there is every reason to think that there are lots of threats experienced by inhabitants within mining environments. Consequently, assuming the various environmental effects associated with the extraction and use of minerals, and the social effects on the local communities connected directly to the mining environment, there is every expectation that the mining companies and communities where the mining takes place work together to ensure maintainable extraction of mineral resources. In situations where this is not the case, there are unvaryingly lots of disagreements and hostilities between mining companies and communities people.

Mining in Sierra Leone had existed since independence, and of recent, the mining companies have established deep roots in those communities involve in extraction of minerals, and have significantly contributed to the country's economic growth. According to the (Sierra Leone-Country Commercial Guide, 2021), mining has contributed 0.7% of the country's GDP constituting 65% of export of minerals resources in support of economic and social development, with a contribution of 3% of employment rate (Sierra Leone-Country Commercial Guide, 2021). In recent times, by way of giving back to the communities, Sierra Rutile Mining Company has taken up the mantle of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), with the company's focus on health, education, safety and social investment and development in the following areas:

a. establishment of a local sourcing initiative;
b. implementation of community infrastructure projects;
c. support women in vegetable gardening and upland agriculture;
d. support communities to save funds through the Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) scheme;
e. three-month internship programme for local university graduates;
f. artisan training for community members sent to the Imperial College of Mining in Ghana;
g. sponsoring technical training for local community members in the JADA institute;
h. support of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative;
i. support to Ruby Rose Educational Resource Centre Library for payment of salaries, feeding of schools visiting the library, internet café, day to day running of the centre; and
j. the Sierra Rutile Partnership Programme, aimed at contributing to positive social, environmental and operational outcomes in the communities in which we operate (Community-Sierra Rutile https://sierra-rutile.com).

With all the efforts of the Sierra Rutile Mining Company, and maybe many other mining companies in the country, according to (DanWatch 2011; HDR 2019), the country is very rich in mineral resources; amongst which are diamonds, bauxite, rutile, iron ore etc., but with all these, the country has remained as a very underprivileged country among nations in the world. In the Human Development Index (2010), Sierra Leone was positioned in the 158th of 169 nations, with the country's value for 2018 been 0.438 which positioned her in 181 of 189 countries in terms of territories. In addition, Sierra Leone's support in sustenance of the mining sector in terms of domestic tax base over the years has been very low to date; even when it accounts for 60 percent of exports of minerals in 2010, notwithstanding, the government revenue has only accounted for 8 percent. According to (Mansaray, H.E. 2019), the possible explanation to this huge disproportion is only hinges on lavish tax enticement given to mining companies with the habit of protecting corrupt politicians in control of governance.

1.1 Research Questions

i. How has Sierra rutile implemented the Corporate Social Responsibility in the communities surrounding the mine?
ii. Have Sierra Rutile CRS implementation positively impacted sustainable development in the mining communities?

1.2 Research Hypothesis

i. There are no noteworthy sustainable development activities undertaking in the communities around the Rutile mining company.
ii. CSR of the Rutile mining company is not impacted on the lives of the communities around the mining company.

1.3 The Study Area

The research field is the Bonthe and Moyamba Districts which together house the Sierra Rutile

Mining Company. Both districts have populations of 318,064 for Moyamba District and 200,730 for Bonthe Districts respectively as of 2015 Sierra Leone census conducted. These two communities are well known for involvement in mining activities for many years. These two communities were targeted practically based on their geographical locations, as they are part of the retile mining, because these two districts housed the company from their borders.

2. Review of Related Literature

This research will review existing literatures pertaining to subject matter under investigation, with the guide of the research questions, in investigating on Sierra rutile's implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility in the communities surrounding the mine and trying to know how positive has the Sierra Rutile implementation impacted sustainable development in the mining communities. The reviews will be directed towards the following headings:

2.1 Corporate Social Responsibility (CRS) as an Instrument used in support of Mining Community Development

Corporate social responsibility has to do with conveying values to the communities involve in the mining activities, with the aim of creating positive impact. (CSR) hovers around the idea that mining companies are bound by responsibility to play very positive roles in the communities they are engaged in the mining activities, with the consideration of environmental and social impacts of business decisions made on the mining environment. In few decades back, the perception of (CSR) has become an essential idea academics, manufacturers, and even intellectuals. In those days, mining companies never considered themselves as mandatory partners with legal responsibilities on their shoulders on undertaking corporate social responsibilities in their engagement in mining in communities comprised of inhabitants that have their livelihoods dependent on the very communities exploited by the mining activities. Because of globalisation, this awareness has been studiously created in the minds of countries with minerals that the world is desperately indeed of, which has made is mandatory for mining companies to undertake responsibilities on documents to respond to CSR, even before they are mandated to start the process of mineral exploitation.

In his contribution, (Caroll, 1991) indicated that there are corporate social responsibility encompasses four nitty-gritties which is represented in the form of a pyramid; at the top of which are the philanthropists, followed by the legal, economic and social responsibility at the least of the pyramid. With a brief discussion of the pyramid; philanthropist's responsibility assumes that the mining company is a 'good citizen', because that is what it is expected to be as it subsidises the community resources. In its legal obligation, it is monotonous a fact that the company has its mandate to obey the laws signed before licensees were issued to mine in the very community. In its social responsibility, mining companies have it at the back of their minds that they must act in the very best interests of the communities they are engaged in mining. Biggs & Halina (2004) opine that based on (Carol, 1991) pyramid of CSR, that it is the mining company's management's commitment to making choices and decisions, backed by positive actions that subsidize to the wellbeing and interests of the community and the mining company. In its economic responsibility, the companies are basically concerned with business revenues through the fulfillment of the needs and opinions of the customers. This idea was supported by (Uddin et al., 2008) that the economic characteristic of CSR has to do with the comprehension of the economic impacts of the company's processes. As a result, the economic measurement of the sustainability schedule should therefore be well-thought-out in terms of direct and indirect economic imprints that the company's activities have on the mining communities and company stakeholders.

It is not a secret that Sierra Leone is one of the countries in the world, and Africa in particular with tremendous amount of natural resources, but was known about during the colonial period within the (1800s-1912s). When the colonial administration started mining minerals in Sierra Leone, there was nothing like corporate social responsibility on the part of colonialists, though they formed the British corporation in the exploitation of the country's natural resources. According to (Jackson, 2018), the exposure of the illegal operations of British mining companies in the country was as far back as 1816, with mining activities discovered within the Bullom Coastlines, the Great Scarcies River, and in Port Loko illegally undertaken by one very popular British businessman known as John McCormack.

Furthermore, with the country plunged into eleven years senseless civil war and catastrophe, as a result of poor governance saw the country's situation deteriorated into thrilling misuse of the country's natural resources by an embedded foreign corporations like DeBeers as contributed by (Smillie et al, 2000). Additionally, (Ballentine and Nitzschke, 2004) added that due to the increasing level of poverty in the country exacerbated the already devastating situation which make room for illegal commercialised industries to exploit what would have made the country self-sufficient, had it not been the civil war. Continuing that illegal mining companies took advantage of the

Moreover, the rising levels of the unpleasant situations around the country and decide not to respond to CSR which would have been the way forward for the mining communities to have developed sustainably by investing into human capital development. Nwagbara and Kamara (2015) opine that there are lots of instances pointing to the fact that due to the appearance of lots of different countries in Sierra Leone to mine the minerals without responding to the CRS amplified the already existing poverty.

2.2 Mining Communities Benefit from CRS

According to (Akanchha Singh, 2018), CRS is a way that the mining companies show concerns of how committed they are to the growth of mining community sustainability and development, and how publicly these companies should be accountable not only to the financial performance, but likewise to their social, ethical, legal and environmental records. Adding that CRS is all about how mining companies need to manage their operations to create a better society and cleaner environment. The scholar further added that the benefit of CRS is of two fronts; to the mining community and to the mining company.

2.2.1 Benefit to the Mining Company

According to (Singh, A. 2018), the company benefits from CRS in the following ways:

- *Business Opportunity:* based on the company's innovativity, skills and resources, they are enabled to turn social problems into opportunities.
- *Better Public Image:* the mining companies need to be seen as partners in development and not otherwise to get more customers, good workers and good profile. They can achieve that if their mission is to support the interest of the mining communities.
- *Prolong Self Interest:* business firm can survive and grow in the long run only in a healthy social environment. Business can develop such environment by discharging its social obligation. We can say that CSR is itself in the self-interest of business companies.
- *Ethical Justification:* business companies have considerable social power. So in order to be commensurate with this power they need to discharge their obligations.
- *Freedom of Enterprise:* If mining companies fails to discharge its social obligation, the government is expected to immediately intervene by way of modifying the company's corporate activities; and that can be very costly in terms of money and time.
- *Customer Loyalty:* Customer loyalty is such an advantage for the mining company's because they will benefit from it for a long period of time.
- *Better Use of Resources:* Mining companies are obliged to use the resources of the community at its best for the benefit of the society. If the resources are wasted for their personal gain, society will counter attack forcefully.

2.2.2 Benefit to the Mining Community

According to (Singh, A. 2018), the company benefits from CRS in the following ways, as the community authorise the company to exist on their soil, they expect the company to do the following:

- *Good Workforce Opportunities:* The value of CRS can lead to good workforce opportunities. CSR creates better atmosphere by providing healthy and free environment to workers.
- *Technology and Infrastructure:* CSR arouse mining companies to improve on novel knowledge, innovation and infrastructure that can be utilised by the community and contributes to the advancement of community.
- *Sense of Security:* When the mining companies show their concern for mining communities, then it generates a sense of security among the members of the communities which helps in reducing corruption.
- *Improved Quality:* CSR does not allow the mining company to make profit on the cost of quality of the product. Improved quality of product results in increased customer satisfaction.
- *High Standard of Living:* CSR spreads awareness among member of the mining community. It helps in educating people which would be affecting factor of a better society.

2.3 Mining Company Sustainable Development Agenda for Communities

According to (McCMahon, 2011), the mining segment has no doubt played a very noteworthy role at global level within the African continent. This would not have been possible if there had not been an increase in prices of minerals globally within the first era of the year 2000, and more to be thanked for is the upsurge in the numerous mining sector reforms in the 80s and 90s respectively. As a reason, lots of countries within the continent acknowledged this as an advantage for sustainable development. Besides, many countries in Africa advertised their mining industries in the 60s and 70, and later at the close of the 80s. During the 80s, the making public of some African countries mining sector changed reform practically due to those countries government losing control of mineral marketisation and underperformance of government control mining enterprises. For governments in these African countries to benefit from the proceeds of their natural resources, they called on the present of global financial institutions like the World Bank, the IMF and others to implement the structural adjustment programmes in the 1980s in support of their mining policies and laws to enable them attractively develop their countries to lure in investors through Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), but these took place at the time of low price in global minerals.

Walser (2000) noted that the conditions of mining in these African countries still remains thought provoking, because all about sustainable development is not just monetary inflow to national economy; mining activities are expected to be major sponsors to economic development and stability. But that does not seem to be the case, instead, it is contributing to more economic, social and environmental instabilities, leading to numerous doubts and concern in the concept of sustainability in terms of mining activities contributing to the inhabitants benefiting to lasting environmental growth. Therefore, the contribution of mining to enable sustainability has to be measured in relative to economic viability, technology advancement, and ecological viability. To make this happen, governments have to work together on thee above raised concerns from different levels of mining programmes from exploration to operation, and after mining activities as contributed by (Mansaray, 2019).

3. Research Methodology

This investigation concentrates on just one mining company in Sierra Leone, the Sierra Rutile Mining Company which is housed by two districts in the country; the Moyamba and Bonthe districts respectively. This study employs the stratified random sampling and subjective sampling, as justified by (Yin, 2003) that in social science research, multiple case study analysis can be employed to enable researcher access relevant and appropriate data for better analysis and interpretation. The researcher divided the respondents into two phases; the company management staff and employees in one phase and the chiefdom community stakeholders in anther phase. In general there were 45 respondents; 25 respondents from the chiefdom community stakeholders' side and 20 from the mining company side. In the selection of respondents, the researcher practically relied on his judgment because to enable him access the right stakeholders whom he believed will supply the most relevant information needed for the research for easier analysis and interpretation of data collected. Among the stakeholders identified are the chiefs, chiefdom speakers, sections chiefs, youth leaders represented by both genders etc. and from the company's side from the top management to the fore managers and operators of machines etc.

The Stratified Random Sampling Formula

$$n_h = \frac{N_h}{N} n$$

nh =Sample size using proportionate stratified random sampling

Nh = Total stratum population

N = Total population

n = Sample size (calculator results using the slovin formula)

The main research tools utilised by researcher to collect data were the questionnaire prepared and distributed with the help a KoBo Collect Tool Box, and life interview conducted by researcher with some stakeholders within the two stratums (community stakeholders and company management stakeholders). Kombo and Tromp (2006) asserted that a successful questionnaire administered saves time, and supports privacy and its presentation discourages opportunity for the interviewer bias. Responses within scheduled time though all respondents were very busy with their diverse activities.

3.1 Research Findings

3.2 Demographic Data

3.2.1 Age Range

Table 1. *Age range of respondents at Sierra Rutile Mining Company*

Age range	Frequency	Percent
21-25	11	20.4
26-30	19	35.3
31-35	13	24.2
36-43	11	20.6
Total	**54**	**100**

There were 54 respondents that participated in this study, and out of that number, 11 employees were between the ages of 21 to 25 with 20.4% total response rate. 19 respondents were between the ages of 26 to 30 with 35.3% total response rate. 13 respondents were between the ages of 31 to 35 with 24.2% total response rate. 11 respondents were between the ages of 36 to 43 with 20.6% total response rate.

Table 2. *Gender of respondents at Sierra Rutile Mining Company*

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	10	18.5
Male	44	81.5
Total	54	100

In Siera Leone there is a very serious unemployment challenge. As of 2023 December, the unemployment rate is 3.20%. among those employed, men are in the majority, which is just what is witnessed in the demographic data in this study. 10 female employees who responded to the questionnaire with 18.5% total response rate, and 44 male respondents with 81.5% total response rate.

Table 3. *Marital status of respondents at Sierra Rutile Mining Company*

Marital status	Frequency	Percent
Married	31	57.4
Single	23	42.6
Total	54	100

Out of the 54 respondents who participated in this study, 31 were married with 57.4% total response rate, and 23 singles with 42.6% total response rate. It is always very significant to identify marital status in research because it will help the study to provide insights into family structures, social trends, and the well-being of research populations, influencing policy decisions and programme planning related to spousal benefits, healthcare, and social services.

3.3 Research Questions Achieved

3.3.1 Research Question One Achieved

The research tries to answer the questions of the study to enable an informed decision making. In the bit to achieving that, a compatibility model was employed in multiple response tables.

Table 4. *Cooperate Social Responsibility Factors*

Cooperate Social Responsibility Factors		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Implementation of cooperate social responsibility	Do you agree that Sierra Rutile Mining Company has a Social Sustainability responsible management person?	32	15.5%	59.3%
	Do you agree that this company has an Environmental Sustainability responsible management person?	54	26.2%	100.0%
	Does this company publish a CSR/Sustainability Report to the government of Sierra Leone and the community stakeholder?	33	16.0%	61.1%
	Does your most recent report assure the third party (community people) of a safe environment?	33	16.0%	61.1%
	Does the report include all the company operation sites to guarantee third party their safety?	54	26.2%	100.0%
	Total	206	100.0%	381.5%

The above table explains the features used by Sierra Rutile mining company in the implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility within the environment. In trying to know whether the company has a Social Sustainability responsible management person, 32 employees responded with 15.5% total response rate, and with a 59.3% of case value. Further enquiries on an environmental sustainability responsible management person, 54 respondents participated with 26.2% total response rate, and a 100% case value. In trying to know if the company has published a CSR/Sustainability Report to the government of Sierra Leone and the community stakeholder, 33 respondents participated positively with a 16.0% total response rate, and a 61.1% case value. In trying to know if the company's recent report assures the third party (community people) of a safe environment, 33 respondents positively responded with a 50.0% total response rate and a 60.1% case value. Finally, with an attempt to know if the report includes all the company's operation centres to guarantee their party their safety, 54 responses were made with 26.2% total response rate and 100% case value.

Table 5. *Corporate Social Responsibility Factors*

Sustainable development Factors		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Positive impact in sustainable development	Do you agree that this company conducts training sessions for employees to enhance the understanding of CSR/ Sustainability?	47	26.9%	88.7%
	Do you agree that this company invests in employee career growth on CSR/ Sustainability training?	29	16.6%	54.7%
	Does this company participate in any voluntary CSR/sustainability initiatives?	42	24.0%	79.2%
	Does this company have a formal environmental policy, which includes a commitment to legal compliance, continuous measurement and continuous improvements in environmental performance?	29	16.6%	54.7%
	Does this company have a certified environmental management system in place?	28	16.0%	52.8%
	Total	175	100.0%	330.2%

In trying to know if there is a positive impact in sustainable development, by way of asking if the company conducts training sessions for employees to enhance the understanding of CSR/ Sustainability, 47 respondents participated with a 26.0% total response rate with 88.7% case value. Trying to know if the company invests in employee career growth on CSR/ Sustainability training, 29 employees participated with 16.6% total response rate and 54.7% case value. In enquiring if the company participate in any voluntary CSR/sustainability initiatives, 42 respondents participated with a 24.0% total response rate, and 79.2% case value. Trying to know if the company has a formal environmental policy, which includes a commitment to legal compliance, continuous measurement and continuous improvements in environmental performance, 28 participants responded positively with a 16.6% and 54.7% case value. Finally, when the study tried to know if the company has a certified environmental management system in place, 28 participants positively responded with a 16.9% total response rate and 52.8% case value.

Table 6. *no noteworthy sustainable development activities undertaking in the communities around the Rutile mining company*

Correlations			
		Sustainable development in managing the community	Sierra Rutile/ CRS
Pearson Correlation	Sustainable development in managing the community	1	.197
	Sierra Rutile/CRS	.197	1
Sig. (1-tailed)	Sustainable development in managing the community	.	.076
	Sierra Rutile/CRS	.076	.
N	Sustainable development in managing the community	54	54
	Sierra Rutile/CRS	54	54

3.4 Research Hypothesis Achieved

3.4.1 Hypothesis One Achieved

Hypothesis one which is a null hypothesis was achieved which says 'there are no noteworthy sustainable development activities undertaking in the communities around the Rutile mining company', and the table below elaborated further.

The research wanted to know if there is any sustainable development in the mining company at all, and the finding came out that, **Cor** = .197, which is positive, with a P – Value = .076, since it is greater than 0.05 it shows that it is not significant. The table above shows that there is a positive no significant relation between Sierra Rutile Corporate Social Responsibility and the sustainable development in managing the community.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study discovered at communities' levels that the mining companies have been friendly to their host communities to some extent, by contributing to socioeconomic development at certain level through the use of CSR policies. There are also signals that developmental projects across the three mining communities are in some way benefiting some locals as part of the mining companies' contributions towards attaining sustainable development in the affected communities. Yet, communities were not totally involved on decisions affecting key environmental matters. Consequently, there is need to progress on the mining governance in order to improve on the living standards of the communities as well as local employees for better socio-economic livelihood that can lead to sustainable development.

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