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RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Congolese Mining Giant's Corporate Social Responsibility Stuck Between False Pretense and Bricolage: Going Beyond a Logic of Do No Harm to Materialize Sustainable Development Still at Issue

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Abstract

This study critically evaluates the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives of Tenke Fungurume Mining (TFM) in the Democratic Republic of Congo, focusing on their socioeconomic impact on local communities. Using mixed methods—including a household budget survey and focus group discussions—this research examines the alignment between CSR rhetoric and its practical outcomes. Findings reveal that while TFM's investments have led to selective and incremental benefits, they have failed to significantly improve overall livelihoods or achieve sustainable development. Discrepancies in income distribution, reliance on external supports, and misaligned stakeholder expectations highlight a gap between compensatory and developmental goals. This study underscores the persistent challenges in leveraging resource extraction for equitable and sustainable development, questioning the efficacy of current CSR frameworks. Policy implications call for rethinking CSR implementation through specialized, context-aware frameworks to enhance local engagement and long-term outcomes.

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1. Introduction

Results of reforms implemented in the African ore extraction sector over the past two decades are lackluster, especially with respect to the impact of economic, political, and social changes related to foreign mining investments. The latter contribute little to employment, to the national economy, to GNP and public services. Mining operators frequently resort to unfair labor practices and harm the environment^[1]. This assessment questions the ambition of using mining assets for sustainable development.

Study results are presented in section 1 (Households budget survey) and section 2 (Locals' perceptions of wellbeing).

Developmental impact of the mining project and stakeholders' management strategies exerted by the operator are assessed in section 3 (Discussion): they are framed in recent academic debates, using interview data of executives hired by civil society organizations¹ as well as that from personal observations made previously while I was working for similar projects. The policy implications of inconsistencies between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) discourse and practice are analyzed in the conclusion.

Large-scale industrial mining is often promoted as an opportunity to stimulate economic growth and contribute to sustainable development. *Bonanza, economic booster, multiplying effect, or growth poles* are terms of the neo-liberal rhetoric that frequently appear in the narratives of international development agencies and financial institutions to claim that natural resource extraction is an avenue out of poverty and towards prosperity^{[2][3]}.

Such assertions aim at legitimizing the project-to-be and at offsetting potentially adverse effects that are associated with ore extractive industries; in particular, they contradict arguments about the *Natural Resource Curse*^{2[4]} or the *Enclave Syndrome*^{3[5][6][7][8][9][10]}. This imagined future is critically examined by scholars, which subscribes to the analysis whereby reforms have facilitated extraction for export but have hardly contributed to economic development at the local level^{[1][11][12][13]}.

Sustainable development relies on the principles of do no harm to environment; ensure equal access to resources and opportunities; and provide individuals with a reasonable quality of life^[14]. These principles translate into the concept of *Corporate Social Responsibility* (CSR), a term defined as “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”^[15].

CSR has been described as a set of actions *aimed to further some social good beyond the explicitly pecuniary interest of the firm*^{[16][17]}, in ways that *go above and beyond what companies are legally required to do*^[18]. It is a *positive relationship between the environment and business opportunities*^[19] recommended at the national and international levels through various constraining regulatory processes⁴.

However, harmony between good ethics and good business remains a challenging ambition in the mining sector. Indeed, companies are caught between the obligation to maximize value for its shareholders, but also for stakeholders, in the interest of which they must devote resources^{[20][21][22][23]}.

Beyond public expectations regarding CSR, benefits and services provided by the operator within the context of its CSR policy tend to address the concerns of surrounding communities, a *sine qua non* condition to obtain the indispensable *Social License to operate*. CSR thus leads mining companies to replace the State according to its own rules and logic^{[24][25]}. Indeed, multinationals have often displayed double standards with regards to social and environmental issues, with a short-term approach, while tending to neglect the respect of laws in host countries^[26]. In response to this, G7 leaders established a common understanding among governments and stakeholders on due diligence for responsible business conduct, recognizing the latter as critical to sustainable development and providing enterprises with practical support in implementing principles and standards^[27]. Also, companies often design and implement actions on a trial-and-

error basis as well as from a defensive approach, without being subject to strict control or monitoring. As was also noted in the gas and oil sector, the lack of a standard process and any obligation of follow-up are major shortcomings of the consultation process^[28].

Despite the mining industry's ostensible commitment to CSR (2000-2010), there is surprisingly little information about its real impact^{[29][30]} and in the absence of neutral external audits there is insufficient reliable evidence of either positive or negative benefits^[31]. CSR projects are evaluated primarily in terms of their instrumental benefits to the firm and its shareholders without knowledge of the actual impact on those CSR is intended to benefit: "{W}e are seemingly asked to stay cheerful and trust others' good intentions"^[32]. Furthermore, project impacts are usually assessed based on the measures undertaken (and the amounts spent) by the company, thus assuming that the practical application of such plans is enough as it is to attest that goals are being achieved. This stance blurs the distinction between the goals and the means chosen to attain them and leads one to consider that mastering the instruments constitutes the project *per se*^[33]. Finally, a literature review on CSR in the mining industry reveals that "the research field explored is highly fragmented, lacks replication findings", thus making "difficult a cumulative growth of knowledge"^[34].

Finally, and in addition to withdrawing from their state responsibilities, namely "protect the interest of the people and find more responsible and less destructive ways to harness natural resources"^[24], governments' management of extractive resources might involve risks of dilapidation, clientelism and corruption^[35]. As such, Global Witness^[36] considers mining in DRC as a *regime cash machine* with little to no impact on development. If this suggests that the problem also has to do with governance deficits, it ultimately draws attention to "the multifaceted moral and ethical implications associated with working in resource arenas"^[37].

Though it emerged relatively late^[38], anthropological attention to mining tackles this difficulty by investigating the livelihoods, values, and moralities in which extraction takes place and changes the social landscape. Moreover, ethnographic analysis allows for an unprecedented – but crucial - perspective from the communities themselves^{[39][40][41]}.

A similar approach was adopted in this research. It aimed to disentangle the significance of socioeconomic changes brought by mining investments by giving voice to local people's points of view. The research adopted mixed quantitative and qualitative social science methods. Firstly, through a household (HH) budget study that investigated all sources of income (including those not issued by the project) and which included budget items⁵ that are sometimes underestimated by development economists. Secondly, through the collection of perceptions local people have of their own well-being and of the recent socioeconomic developments of the area. Such changes are assessed in the light of the broad range of benefits provided by the mining project, that differ -but also include- compensations, namely "specific payments made for specific losses, ideally balancing out the damage, deprivation, or loss"^[20]. By focusing on local household as a unit of analysis⁶, this research leads to a shift from the corporate perspective that is symptomatic of most of the studies on sustainability in the mining industry^[34] towards a stakeholders' one that allows a better understanding of their needs, expectations and worldviews and explores how a mining company manages and engages its stakeholders.

Tenke Fungurume Mining (TFM) was chosen as a case study because of its ostensible commitment to internationally accepted environmental and social standards⁷ as well as CSR requirements. Evidence of commitment includes services,

opportunities, and investments made by the operator in the framework of various programs, between 2006 (construction phase) and 2018 (field surveys). It also draws on partnerships with public agencies (Ministry of Health, Provincial Government, etc.), NGOs (World Vision), Community Based Organizations and foreign funding agencies (USAID, World Bank, Global Fund, UNICEF).

TFM is a Private Public Partnership: its operations are in the Lualaba Province, around 125 miles northwest of the city of Lubumbashi, in the southeastern part of the DRC Copperbelt. It was owned initially by Phelps Dodge (US), that merged in 2007 with Freeport-McMoRan Copper & Gold Inc. and Lundin (US and Canadian transnational corporations) with a 20% public share (Gecamines). In 2016, Freeport-McMoRan sold its 80% share in the mine to China Molybdenum Cy Limited (now CMOC). The TFM concession covers around 600 sq. miles and includes 43 villages and two towns. It is famous for being one of the world's most valuable mining assets and for having heavily invested in the project as well as in local and regional development initiative⁸. This open pit mine has extracted copper and cobalt since 2009 and the extraction period is expected to be far beyond the usual 40 years. TFM has reportedly paid \$ 1,252 billion taxes to the DRC government between 2006 and 2015.

CSR programs are being implemented through two structures:

- The TFM Community Development Dept. (Table 1), which managed the huge Community Resettlement and compensation Program, and keeps handling Livelihoods Restoration Programs and Community Development initiatives (mainly infrastructure building). Its main objective is to ensure that living standards after relocation stay the same or improve. In compliance with DRC legal provision⁹, the Company directly funds these programs from its budgetary allocations: spendings between 1996 and 2015 amount to around \$ 96 million^[42].

Table 1. TFM Community Development Department 2006-2015 figures

Community compensations/resettlement	Physical relocation (2800 HH), economic relocation, land acquisition, Livelihoods Restoration Programs (5606 farmers): basic skills development, yields increase, support to non-farming secondary activities, building granaries, creating cooperatives for water management, community infrastructure development
Infrastructure building	Schools' construction/rehabilitation, equipment, maintenance; Road & bridges construction/rehabilitation /maintenance program
Livelihoods restoration	Maize Credit Program (610 HH): Intensive maize farming: intrants, tractors, tree stumps up stubbing, fight against invasive varieties; Building granaries; Training courses, SME development, creating village savings and credit associations
Health, Hygiene	Clean Water (wells, drills) and Sanitation (sewers construction/maintenance) program; malaria control and HIV/AIDS testing and awareness campaigns
Education	Teachers' capacity strengthening, and pedagogical programs, occupational training
Youth supervision	Sport, leisure, summer camps
Other	Cultural promotion and preservation; Charitable donations

- TFM Social Community Fund, a private foundation created in 2010, which principal objective is to invest in sustainable community development projects “with the aim to improve quality of life” for residents in concession communities (TFM Newsletter, 2012). SCF manages a fund supplied by TFM that corresponds to 0.3% of its net sales revenues per year.

Spending between 2010 and 2017 amount to around \$ 19 million, namely 59% of available funds and concern mainly infrastructure building^[43].

Table 2. TFM Social Community Fund (SCF): 2010-2017 figures

Education (33%)	School building/equipment (10 primary schools, 2 centers for social advancement), higher education grants (10 students/year), secondary education scholarship (394), school supplies,
Infrastructure (32%)	Bridges, sports hall, improvement/extension of electricity grid in Fungurume, roads construction (25 km), tracks rehabilitation (65 km), sewers construction
Health (12%)	Health center construction/rehabilitation (4) and equipment; feasibility study (river clearing); 52 wells repairer training, ambulance, hearse
Other (12%)	Wells (52), capacity reinforcement, training, maintenance
Agriculture (11%)	Farm school, farm service roads maintenance, "integrated village project", fish farming, mechanization

The objective of this paper is to critically analyze the consistency of policies, using information related to their real impacts on community well-being and as experienced and perceived by local people. The initial research questions stem from the coexistence of two competing narratives. The first, held by TFM, the local elite and state representatives, praises the success of relocation and community development measures. The second, held by locals and civil society associations, takes a much more critical look at company achievements. On this basis, the study analyses discourses regarding CSR outcomes by responding to the following questions:

- i. Has the operator restored livelihoods of locals impacted by mining operations?
- ii. Beyond compensation, has it improved quality of life of residents in the concession area?
- iii. Has it inspired new economic actors?
- iv. Can CSR measures implemented in the area be considered as sustainable?

2. Households budget study: marginal gains, unequally distributed

Income and expenditure amounts were recorded every two months for one year (2018-2019) by two Congolese researchers. Only households residing in the mining zone for at least 15 years before the project construction started were considered eligible for the survey. Participation was on a voluntary basis, firstly in the city neighborhoods, then in places devoted by TFM to resettlement or to farming projects. People in the communities surveyed were generally reluctant to provide information on their wealth: theirs is a culture of mutual suspicion driven by competition and the phobia of being subject to malevolence through sorcery. This fear was increased in the extremely tense context prevailing at the time of the survey, where robbers living in illegal diggers' camps used to go down to town and break violently into allegedly well-off homes.

Therefore, all ethical issues and implications in relation to the above research project have been considered by the survey team, notably as far as informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality are concerned.

The longitudinal budget analysis focuses on a sample of 72 households, divided into five sub-samples (SS) according to

three different sources of TFM benefits:

- I. Income from mining jobs (SS C): Skilled and/or graduated natives. Half the sample hires extra labour force to handle the fields; the other half farms by itself.
- II. Compensations and livelihoods restoration incentives (SS D): farmers physically displaced from village Mulumbu and resettled (2007-2009) on the city's outskirts. Despite intensive project backing for five years, most HH heads are full of resentment towards TFM they reproach for not having fulfilled its commitments, and definitively take a wait-and-see approach.
- III. Support from TFM Social Community Fund (SS B): HH settled on the road to Kolwezi that have willingly adhered to a project financed by SCF¹⁰. The lifestyle is totally rural, though farmers take advantage of the neighboring markets to sell off their vegetables.

Table 3. Households Budget Study: Sub-samples content, location, and nature of project support

	Subsample	HH	Location	Project support/Benefits
A	No support	33	City: old neighborhoods	None
B	TFM Social Fund	7	Rural village Zakeo	Community market gardening project/facilities, fertilizers
C	Mining job	8	All places considered	Income from at least 12 months' mining job
D	Compensations	18	Kiloville: resettled village	Cash compensation, replacement land, farming support
E	≥ 2 supports	6	All places considered	HH that benefited from two or more project benefits

To which two additional pole categories have been added:

- IV. No support (SS A): HH that received no project support/benefits at all (yet not free of induced impacts).
- V. ≥ 2 supports (SS E): HH that benefited from at least two of up mentioned springs.

A couple of methodological gaps have surfaced, that are characteristic of budget surveys: i) one deals here with declared -not observed- facts: hence, respondents are subject to memory lapses, telescoping¹¹, even intentional misreporting; ii) various HH members manage lucrative, sometimes seasonal, activities of their own and have expenditures of which the household head isn't necessarily aware; iii) it remains optimistic to think that people will talk about money upfront considering their view on economics isn't formatted with categories such as 'income' and 'expenditures' neither with a clear distinction between domestic and business spheres. Consequently, balance sheets are more an indicator of the nature and relative importance of transactions that circulate through and around a household than a faithful record of debits and credits, as would produce accountants.

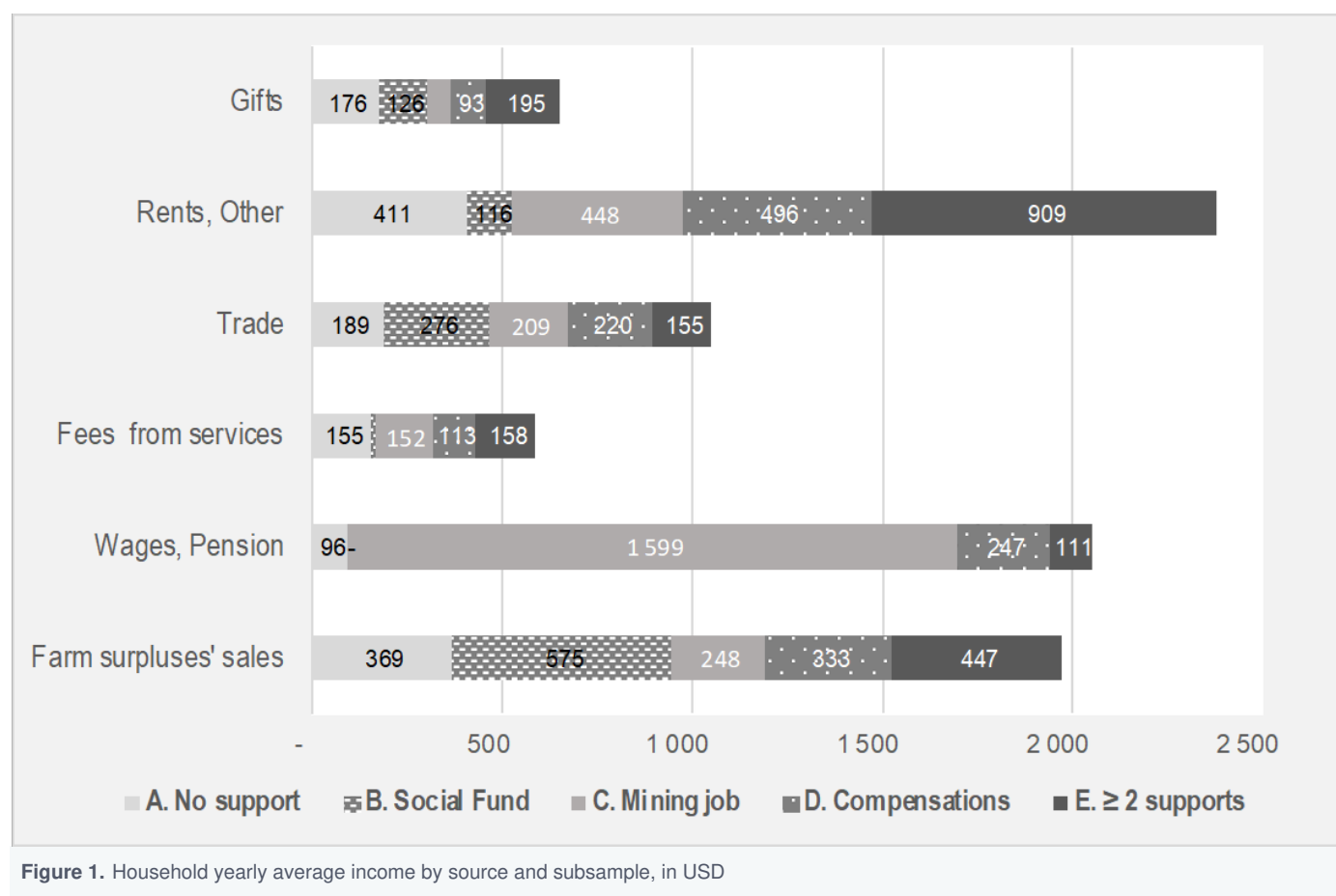
Yet, in a context where no information at all is available on economic behaviors of HH resident in mining areas, such budget data still prove to be invaluable.

As far as earnings are concerned, a local household declares an average income of \$ 1,589 over the course of the year. People make a living from five main sources, which they combine in various ways. Paid jobs, fees, and allowances (27%

of total income); farming surpluses sales (maize, beans, market gardening: 23%); loans and gifts from relatives (21%) rent from tenants (16%); trade (retail sales, selling transformed products: 13%).

The plurality as well as the relative weight of income sources (Fig. 1) are recurrent across sub-samples, except in households with a mining job where wages are a great deal higher (up to twelve times) than income drawn from farming or from civil service salaries.

Income from farm surpluses sales is also on top for beneficiaries of the SCF project (SS B) and second for SS E (≥ 2 supports), where some HH have strongly invested in farm production. Note that, by taking on side jobs entrusted to other HH members, all subsamples tend to multiply income sources, including those with strong project support. 29% of trade revenue is from selling alcoholic drinks, that are prepared and consumed on the spot. Illegal charcoal production (26% of trade revenue) and/or risky ore digging are widespread but are not openly discussed.



Amounts received as gifts, including money orders, are noteworthy (9%): they concern all subsamples, appear all year round and are said to emanate from outside the mining zone. Income in the bar chart 'Rents, Other' is half supplied by borrows which, as explained infra, are taken out from near relations on a regular basis.

As for expenditure, a local household spends on average \$ 1,984 annually: 80% of this amount is devoted to domestic expenditures, and the rest to production costs related to farming (seeds, inputs, extra labor force) and trade (commodities,

ingredients, empty bags, etc.).

Comparing subsamples (Fig. 2) shows that the nature and relative importance of cost items are strikingly equivalent. Yet, having received strong project support makes some difference, as benefits can be invested in trade (SSE), in house renting (SSC and D) and, to a lesser extent, in cash cropping (SS E). Overall, the volume of domestic expenses varies in relative proportion to project benefits: from \$ 826 above averages for ≥ 2 supports to \$ 570 below average for Social Fund).

Analysis of transfers shows that bank savings accounts are few and that amounts deposited are moderate. Conversely, the volume of expenditures related to *Support to kin*, *Family celebrations* and *Gifts to church* (included in “Other domestic costs”) is significant: it shows that the respect to extended family remains strong in the mining area as well as the need to be affiliated to social networks.

Finally, and noteworthy enough, 74% of HH heads declare having contracted debts over the course of the year, including 39% who have simultaneously loaned money to a third party, over the same survey period. As such, the bar chart “Other domestic costs” is the mirror image of that in figure 1, namely half supplied with loans made to tierce.

What is striking at first look is the discrepancy between declared expenses and profits, the figures of the former being higher than those of the latter. This partly relates to methodological gaps mentioned earlier, but also to the fact it is difficult for self-sufficient farmers to record profits from cash crops sold bit by bit outside harvest time, along the year.

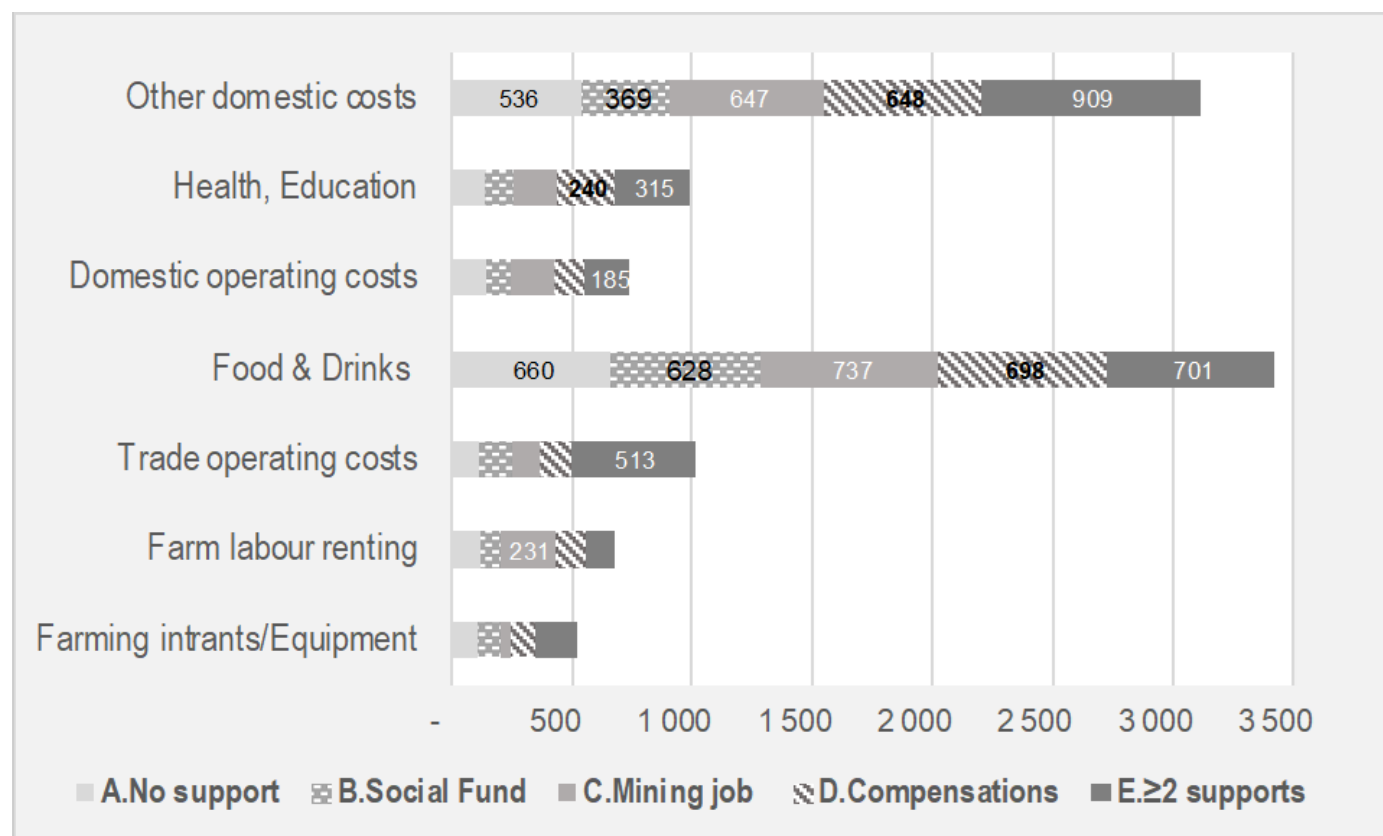


Figure 2. Household yearly average expenditure by cost item and subsample, in USD

The same happens -yet the other way round- with the value of self-produced foods that are consumed by the household as well as with opportunity costs, that are totally ignored¹².

Correlations between project support and improvements in local households' material conditions are tangible through wages and through farming support. Firstly, income drawn from a mining job is a definite vector of financial health as well as a potential opportunity to invest in additional lucrative activities. This asset might dwindle, given the increase in dependents that usually goes along with the enrichment of a household head. Secondly, income from farming surplus sales is higher in HH that participate in the market gardening project (SS Social Fund) than in other ones. Yet, sustained support from the Social Fund may raise withdrawal issues in the future. Finally, if we narrow the scope to "successful households," it appears that private investment (in farming and in business) remains very low, but that project support nevertheless translates into improvements in health and education standards: expenses in these fields are higher in SS ≥ 2 supports, Compensations and Mining job.

Budget figures (Cf. figure 3) post a negative balance sheet in all the subsamples except for SS Mining job, while, overall, 24% of HH annual accounts are positive. Yet, if disposable cash flow often does not meet household needs, the delta between income and expenditure remain relatively balanced when comparing subsamples over the course of the year¹³. In addition to gifts from outside, the analysis of money transfers (dotted line) demonstrates the extent to which, for HH in the mining zone, the latter serve the purpose of helping each other out punctually and repeatedly, a strategy that contributes to alleviate the risk of running low on money, particularly in cases of emergency.

Similarly, credit purchase (in particular, to invest in a new farming season) and its reimbursement in kind at harvest attest to the presence of balancing mechanisms that align with the pre-project economic pattern.

In addition (and irrespective of the subsample), survey results more often point to resemblances in economic behaviors than to the contrary, thus minimizing project impact, be it positive or negative. At worst, while intensive support provided by TFM to resettled HH in Kiloville hasn't resulted in improving living standards, it seems that it hasn't harmed them either: indeed, the budget figures relative to SS 'Compensations' (formerly peasants) are often equivalent to those of SS 'No support' SS (urbanites).

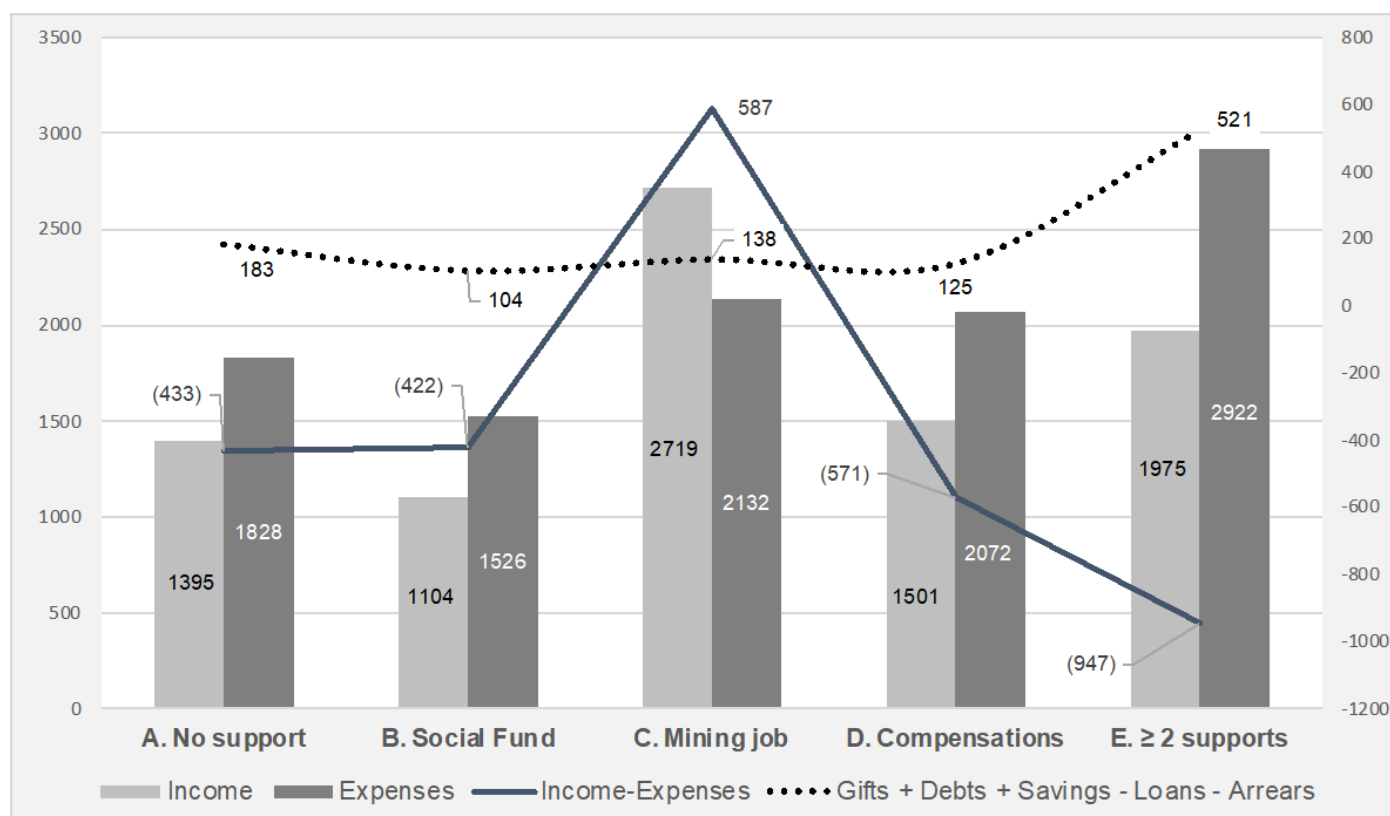


Figure 3. Average Budget balance sheets by subsample, in USD

In the wake of the mining project, and for lack of having access to bank loans, local people have developed the niches they were already exploiting in pre-project times. In rural farming areas, where thoughts and schemes result from the collective, there is no incentive for individual profitable logics. This doesn't mean they don't target enrichment (all tend in this direction, as will be showed in section 2), but rather that individual success is socially perceived as resulting from black magic, and thus both feared and longed for. Added to the fact that people seek out pragmatic solutions rather than being specialists, it might explain why most of them are not motivated by entrepreneurship. Consequently, they rather provide unskilled services to households (hauling drinking water, random items, or commodities by bike) or to diggers (washing ore, handling bags) and are most often exploited by business intermediaries who buy their ore at a flat rate without weighing or assessing its content.

Yet, the myth of Eldorado can put kinship solidarity to the test: bluffed by a sudden enrichment and giving in to solicitations from kin¹⁴ and/or opportunists, some project workers adopt ostentatious consumption behaviors and come to neglect, see altogether abandon wife and children. In consequence and, except for few local elites, the city's economic boom is more specifically due to foreign-born inhabitants: a core of big names (traders and TFM workers) who have invested in top-end businesses¹⁵ and a wealth of multifaceted storekeepers who handle small shops, handicraft, maize mills and develop cash crop farming.

Finally, taken at face value, the average income declared by surveyed household in 2018, equates to \$ 1.43 per day and per adult, which is below the then international poverty line, established at \$ 1,9 a day. We are aware of the extreme caution that is called for when interpreting synchronic budget data, especially when they come from divergent data

collection protocols¹⁶. It nevertheless stands out that, namely, native residents in the TFM mining area are still grouped under the headcount of Congolese (60 million people) who live in extreme poverty^[44], an outcome that is extremely worrying in relation to the initial ambition to convert mineral wealth into SE wellbeing.

3. Local perceptions of well-being: a blatant lack of means

Eight focus-groups were organized in August 2019 to investigate natives' perceptions of well-being as well as the social representations built upon the latter. In Kisanga language (L35), this notion refers both to “being well” (*kwikala biya*) and to “being at ease” (*kwikala muteende*) and is in contradiction with that of poverty. Discussions were conducted with samples¹⁷ and structured around seven pre-defined well-being dimensions¹⁸:

Table 4. Well-being dimensions and content, after participants' ranking ¹⁹

#	Wellbeing dimension	Tackled subjects
1	Education	Schooling, Training, Knowledge, Education strategies
2	Work, Wealth, Assets	Income, Subsistence, Enrichment, Material possessions, Fame
3	Health	Physical/mental wellbeing, Handicap, Quality of diet
4	Social sphere	Affection, Care, Privacy, Mutual aid, Raising, Renown, Security, Solidarity
5	Leisure and Information	Rest, Sport, Cultural life, Associations, Radio/tv broadcast, Social networks
6	Living Environment	Landscape, Soil fertility, Waste management, Urbanization, Development
7	Politics	State's role/outputs, Job market, Mining policy, Law enforcement, Justice

Speech analysis demonstrate that, overall, people have a clear idea of what ‘a good life’ consists of. Having educated children, having a job, preferably salaried, and ideally with TFM are spontaneously mentioned as priority goals. In men’s view, a good life is also associated with investing in *projects*; in women’s one, with managing daily reality, i.e. having enough money at one’s disposal to pay for basic family expenditures and to face mishaps.

Wealth is a very sensitive issue, for material assets and individual prestige are intrinsically linked: “If we become rich, we will escape contempt” asserts a poor urban woman. Yet, a good life doesn’t boil down to it: “One can be rich in wisdom, in children, in social relationships”, point out educated urban women, while grown men rather correlate it with intelligence: “You can be rich, but without cleverness, you don’t know how to look after money, how to make it multiply”.

The global vision of well-being is thus highly influenced by gender as well as by age, and heavily revolves around the expected returns of individual *projects*. Having many children and making the most gifted ones to graduate is strategy number one: it aims to acquire prestige, but also to ensure that the elites-to-be will take care of their parents in old age. Building extra accommodations and investing the money from rents to achieve the dreamed-off *villa* in town comes next. As we shall see, increasing cash crop yields is perceived as the only way to fund such projects. Yet, educated young men plan differently from their fathers. To them, farming yields limited results despite the efforts it requires, whereas business

is seen as a quicker way to turn a profit from *projects*: ore digging is often held up as an example.

Beyond these aspirations, reality is otherwise. When asked to self-evaluate their wellbeing, most participants point to the fact that their own living standards are insufficient: “We live in poverty” complain adult women: “We have no television, no chairs, we sit on plastic containers.” School fees are considered unaffordable, and for modest households their payment is conditioned by the volume of food surplus or cereal excess sales of the previous agricultural season. The difficulties farmers face to make ends meet is worsened by the decrease in farm productivity, hence the emphasis placed on inputs, which are perceived as their lifeline: “My wife grows tomatoes, if she doesn’t put in fertilizers, she will suffer failure. One cannot produce without that”. On their end, young respondents mention the lack of employment which forces them to do petty jobs. Even state agents, who farm in addition to their paid job, complain that wages fall short of their needs due to the rising cost of living and the diminishing value of the Congolese franc compared to the US dollar. Finally, some family heads feel helpless, even ashamed, about the roles being switched within the household: “Now, it is youngsters who handle things in order to support their parents.”

Roughly, men and women’s perception of the various dimensions of well-being are similar. Yet, both correlate their well-being to the resources (*means*, in their lexicon) they do or do not dispose of. Conversely, young people’s opinions tend to differ from that of adults on various points: the emphasis put on mental health and leisure and, for educated ones, on environmental and political issues.

Participants asked to assess their own well-being tend to refer to aspirations rather than to achievements, to attempts rather than to results or, in Sen’s words, to capabilities rather than to achieved functionings^[45]. Of course, respondents’ *projects* do materialize: some rent a few rooms or manage to increase maize production, for instance. But their private objective is to reach prestigious positions, like having a villa or an office in the city to rent out, in the image of the few successful local entrepreneurs or non-native TFM employees. Spouses agree with their husbands, though beyond “escaping misery”, they aspire to a form of recognition: “If we are rich, people will stop making fun of us.” Locals are thus caught between aspirations and contingencies, which explains why each capability that is expressed is closely followed by what usually prevents its achievement. Most statements revolve around this narrative: “I want to send the kids to school, the problem is there’s no money”; “You can be in good health but, because you lack means, it destroys your health too”; “Your household will be at peace only if the husband makes his living”.

Achieved functionings reflects women’s priorities more than men’s ones. Indeed, adult women rely on whatever resourcefulness they can find to help face ongoing expenses or simply make do without: “We keep ill kids at home; we see a doctor only if it becomes serious”. They nevertheless mention that they are proud of their life despite the difficulties, and that they keep trying to improve. As far as adult men are concerned, the lack of means merely puts a break on their ambitions. Yet, contrary to women, they prefer to conjure up gaps that are imputable to other parties to justify their shortcomings, even if it means cultivating a sense of entitlement: “TFM should keep giving inputs for free”. Resettled people even see themselves as victims, placing the blame on the mining project: “In Mulumbu, we used to eat to our fill; in Kiloville, we don’t get our bearings”. Or on the State, which “makes our lives get worse” and “is responsible for our sufferings”. More straightforward than their fathers, young men don’t keep quiet about the informal and illegal activities

they practice “for lack of employment” and openly blame the civil government for falling short of its obligations:

“Responsibility is the state’s job: it’s up to it to see that the company honors its commitments”. Even though the state is perceived as absent, it is deeply feared for its capacity to jeopardize the job market: “The state can put a stop to an entire mining project, like it happened in Kakanda, where all the people are now jobless.”

Finally, only few are torn between ecological conscience and material contingencies. As mentioned by household heads in Zakeo “The grandfathers advised us to use nature appropriately, not to cut any trees. We know we destroy nature, but we have no choice: what could we rely upon, if not on charcoal?”

In the end, the fulfilment of people’s hopes depends above all upon God’s will. If this wasn’t explicitly mentioned, the central place occupied by religion nevertheless shows through in the interviews. Surveyed about leisure time, adult respondents (but not youngsters) stress how important it is to them to attend church on Sundays (women do it also daily at dawn) and to join in group discussion where the preaching is discussed, and news exchanged between believers. Surveyed on the sphere of health and diet, a woman mentions the importance of worship: “Feeling good is when you forget about everything, like when you attend church”. As for men, they hold the important posts in the church hierarchy (deacon, treasurer, etc.) and enjoy their position: “The church is a place where one feels fine, where one is respected”.

4. Discussion

Status quo in a changing context

Survey results confirm the initial assumptions that TFM’s presence has positively impacted livelihoods to a certain extent, be it through livelihood restoration schemes, through SE development programs, see indirectly. Yet, this betterment is both slight and selective. Selective here means that improvements are substantial and sustainable merely for a minority of local people. Those are the happy few who, endowed with appropriate social assets, have managed to translate the project’s financial inputs into long-term investments. Those natives appear to be elites or traders who were already promoting projects before the company came and for whom projects incentives were a mere opportunity to accelerate the achievement.

In the same way, the impact of mining jobs must get some perspective. In fact, many native mining jobbers couldn’t give way to TFM’s rigor and working rhythms, while those who managed didn’t capitalize on earnings: they rather squandered them shortly, invoking later that they viewed the mining manna as “a spring that would never cease running”. A same analysis applies to compensations: our data show that ten years after relocation, declared income of resettled HH is only slightly higher than that of HH deprived of project support. This is corroborated by an assessment of TFM’s resettlement program which reports that “most relocated households in Kiloville demonstrate little inclination to use the income for investing in the future and have difficulties regaining a sustainable livelihood”^[46]. Noteworthy, local people’s agency sometimes proves to work against project objectives. Some resettled household heads are indeed said to have switched the finality of compensations by turning the house built by the project into rental property, or by selling fertilizers they had

been provided by TFM.

As far as project indirect impacts are concerned, natives have overall missed the project resulting business opportunities to the benefit of more business-savvy and solvent migrants, making do with operating niches that are within easy reach and replicating well-known strategies. What the study indeed reveals are recurring logics of personal action that refer to the pre-project regime: improvisation and the preeminence of fend-for-yourself strategies that are typical of an informal economy; a sustained tendency to live off credit, which conflicts with the possibility of forward-looking endeavors.

In fact, instead of developing across all value chains, including transformation and commercialization, TFM has granted loans to entrepreneurs²⁰. According to Kadima Nzuji^[47], the latter are acting as if they were intermediaries, profiting from the indirect benefits of TFM presence at the expense of natives and most often exploiting its personnel.

Finally, local people are since long trapped in a production logic oriented towards intensive cash crop farming. Yet, by replicating this method, through supply of chemical inputs and mechanization, TFM has reinforced this dependency and indirectly encouraged unfriendly soil use practices²¹. In this respect, it is surprising that the firm hasn't expanded its concern for environmental issues to its social programs.

In one ear...

The study also reveals a gap between the natives' infinite expectations of the mining project and their finite benefits. This gap proves the extent to which stakeholders are at cross-purposes, a situation that alleviates the developmental input.

A series of obstacles relates to the opacity of firm guidelines. Despite TFM allegations that hiring local workers is prioritized, the latter claim that mining jobs have mainly benefited foreigners, that is "domestic strangers with higher education levels"^[2] who are reproached for investing their money in their home place "at the cost of the city's development".

As for farmers, they simply perceive TFM fertilizer policy as incomprehensible: indeed, while the latter are distributed freely in the context of the Resettlement Action Plan, they are provided with reimbursement in kind at harvest in that of the Community Development Program.

Similarly, members of the civil society report that the company has double standards, clearly disregarding its own principles: "TFM has imposed its own rules while aligning with international good practices: basically, it does whatever it pleases" (CS). For instance, the company is suspected of following non-transparent management procedures and of not involving locals in decision making. According to Umpula Nkumba et al.^[48], project definition and selection at the Social Fund are put to the majority vote by the Board of Directors, ... that counts a majority of members affiliated to TFM. The BoD is further reported to limit the role of local representatives²² to backing decisions already made by the executive secretary.

Such grievances towards the firm reveal that its legitimacy is contested: In 2007, TFM refused to have his initial mining contract signed with former President Mobutu revised by a Senate Commission^[49], and opted for an under-the-table

negotiation with the government. According to Maria & Devuyst, this strategy seriously keeps affecting its social license to operate, some TFM employees being “[...] convinced that the CSR policies are only charity that distracts the population from a major robbery: the legal contract’s unacceptable conditions”^[50].

A second area of disagreement relates to differing perceptions of development. Though people view the recent infrastructures built by TFM²³ as assets regarding development, they nevertheless consider that such accomplishments are insufficient. In this respect, people are set up for disappointment since prominent views and expectations among them are that “resource extraction can and should provide the kind of social development that the state has singularly failed to deliver”^[20]. Conversely, most natives are satisfied with the exponential growth of the city, embodied by the multiplication of people and buildings and, most of all, with the ‘leisure ambiance’ which they closely associate with development. The hectic atmosphere of the city looks indeed far more attractive to most of them than the well-thought-out and sustainable endeavors promoted by development agencies or human rights NGOs²⁴. Yet, all that stands on fragile ground, considering that what people fear most is the city’s downfall that would inevitably follow the mine closure.

TFM is repeatedly caught between two world views. For it pays taxes that should also contribute to development, the company insists that its role is to support, not to replace the State²⁵. The latter is hence considered responsible for assuring the provision of services and maintenance of infrastructures built by the former. But when local authorities sneak off, TFM “always accepts to pay the bill to secure local community support”^[51]. Equally, TFM advocates an ‘enlightened approach of development’, i.e. one that elicits cooperation from stakeholders and promotes individual responsibilities, while it justifies the decision to maintain the voting power at the Social Fund (Cf. *supra*) as a precaution measure, aimed at reducing corruption between community groups and members and at ensuring that the funds are appropriately directed^[51].

In this respect, the development model followed by TFM has rather to do with bricolage. Following Cleaver^[52], it reminds of institutional *Do it Yourself* rather than engineering or design, which leads us to consider the ambiguity issue at the upper floor, that is at policy level.

Connection between CSR discourse and practices

The fact that strategies adopted by the operator and their justification are not consistent is evidence of an ambivalence which is at the core of CSR policy. The ethic of responsibility takes for granted the harmonious coexistence of two logics that, ultimately, prove to be at odds: a compensatory logic (balancing out the losses) and a developmental one (addressing people’s needs). By prescribing a single remedy for two distinct goals, policy makers have created ambiguous buzzwords, such as ‘compensation’, ‘benefit’, or ‘incentive’ of which the real meaning has become blurred.

Indeed, the term ‘compensation’ enters the field of development as soon as, beyond aiming at restoring project impacted people quality of life, it considers improving them. Yet, CSR programs are being implemented in Tenke Fungurume through two structures that are independent yet dealing in the same areas of interest (Cf. Tables 1-2). In this respect, nothing distinguishes a social infrastructure built by TFM Community Development Dept. (hence, in the frame of community compensations) from another one, achieved by the Social Community Fund, *a fortiori* because both are

labelled ‘development projects’ (hence resorting to benefits). Such a confusion also results in blurring the limits between legal/contractual obligations ruling the mining sector in DRC and the voluntary commitments made by mining operators. While TFM^[53] has issued a detailed overview of implementations scheduled for the period 2020-2024 in the frame of the Social Community Fund it has total freedom to handle social investments in the frame of community development programs.

In addition, such an opaqueness has counterproductive effects. Indeed, systematically paying people for any task (compensatory logic) doesn’t appropriately prepare them to risk-taking and entrepreneurship (developmental logic), but rather creates a sense of entitlement. As such, payment of compensation for lost assets, at replacement costs continues to be viewed at policy level as a panacea, while the practice has extensively been proven structurally unable to restore or improve the prior livelihoods of those displaced. Relying upon his own works²⁶, Cernea sums up that goals and means are poorly matched within resettlement policies themselves^[54]; as for Karsenty, he stresses that locals’ pre-project livelihoods to be restored are in fact poverty levels^[55].

Finally, the blurring of standards also has an impact on behaviors. As they switch from the role of operator to that of developer, company managers tend to act in an opportunistic way: they might, for instance, play the social responsibility card to defend company reputation while using it in the first place as a tool aimed at lessening social disturbances risks. As data show, heralded development objectives (like asking customers to pay utilities in infrastructures built by the firm or creating farming cooperatives²⁷) are dropped to secure local community support as soon as the latter is challenged.

In sum, the use of words that are synonymous and/or with double meaning adds confusion in a lexical field that is already crowded with terms (allocations, allowances, income, rents, ...) of which definition overlap and for the intelligibility of which resorting to the notion of *developmental income*^[56] would definitively be an asset.

Study results also corroborate the fact that CSR more often leads to exclusion or disempowerment for people living in extractive zones^[40]. Exclusion is apparent in the employment policy, which is the cause of local tensions between those who have jobs and those who don’t and “may be struggling to maintain their prior standard of living in the face of rising costs”^[28]. Exclusion also hits women, who are culturally excluded from land ownership. By removing the latter from negotiations, compensation policy also tends to increase gender inequalities. Finally, disempowerment also results from TFM’s posture of indulgence, which tends to favor the control of elites and officials over the people. In this respect, the analysis shows that extraction-led development can be highly ambiguous. This characteristic stems from a contradiction between good ethics and good business that is inherent to CSR discourse and, in Dolan & Rajak’s words “ {...} enables corporations to simultaneously assert and displace responsibility”^[40]. For instance, TFM tends to consider stakeholders solely as counterparts of externally oriented social development initiatives rather than as primary (potential) facilitators of internal change processes aimed at sustainability^[50].

5. Conclusion

As the study shows, the company's massive financial investment in the framework of CSR has not translated into meaningful returns for impacted populations. The picture rather exhibits characteristics that have been widely observed in other places: that companies rarely comply with policies and regulations; that indigenous economies remain peripheral to mainstream economies; that cultures remain resilient in the face of development opportunities and economic transition, and that indigenous people are rarely involved in decision making processes^[41]. In the—rather rare—scenario in which a development agent is present in an area for decades, TFM accomplishments continue to appear frail and precarious.

Surprisingly, TFM's concern with surrounding itself with top-level subcontractors for the management of its mining operations tends to lessen when social specifications are at issue. By endorsing the role of development planner (a domain in which it is not specialized), TFM misses multiple opportunities to instigate and later capitalize on forms of sustainable development that address both social and environmental issues. Moreover, in keeping with the mainstream trend, TFM deprives the area of the possible benefits from recent farming innovations²⁸, from sustainable practices²⁹, and from changes in attitudes³⁰.

Instead of resorting to a series of local NGOs to handle development tasks under its supervision, TFM could put them in the hands of an umbrella body specialized in social, economic, and cultural development that is aware of the local context and ready to rethink CSR from another angle and with other partners³¹. In doing so, the planner's role would be entrusted to a genuine professional, who would coordinate stakeholders' expectations and supervise subcontractors' activities on behalf of the company. Treating business and development issues on an equal footing and with equal rigor also means, on the part of policy makers, rethinking the community development strategy. As stressed by Dolan & Rajak^[40], this should be done with the aim of reframing the interest of corporations to fit the priorities of communities and governments rather than the other way around.

Statements and Declarations

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Competing Interests and funding

I declare that I have not known competing financial interests or personal relationships to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

Data Availability Statement (DAS)

The data upon which my manuscript's claims lie are located in the Zenodo data repository:

DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.10957035](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10957035).

A "Guide to users" is displayed besides the big file containing data (ZEN files). Focus group content as well as interview reviews are written in French. All quantitative data (Excel files) are labelled in English.

Informed consent

All ethical issues and implications in relation to the above research project have been considered by the survey team, notably as far as informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality are concerned.

Footnotes

¹ Quotations are referred as 'CS', for civil society.

² According to which mineral wealth brings about a series of economic and political distortions that results in weakening the mining industry's contribution to development. Though this issue has been widely studied, there is no consensus around Auty's initial assessment.

³ Develops when a mineral industry operates in an enclave-type fashion, building a nearly artificialized and hermetic space with weak production linkages, freeing itself from the conditions of the surrounding host state.

⁴ Reformed national mining codes, Initiative for Transparency in Extractive Industries, the Equator Principles, Dodd-Frank Act (2016), online publication of contracts by governments and platforms such as "Publish What You Pay". Also refer to the extensive CSR literature review by Rodrigues and Mendes^[34].

⁵ Such as gifts, sharing, support to kin members, contributions to social events, etc.

⁶ A household is a small group of persons who share the same living accommodation, who pool some, or all, of their income and wealth and who consume certain types of goods and services collectively, mainly housing and food (UN data source: System of National Accounts 1993 Glossary).

⁷ Equator Principles, Voluntary principles of Security and Human Rights, World Bank/International Finance Corporation standards, OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, Global Reporting Initiative.

⁸ In 2013, TFM reported a total investment in the project of more than \$ 3 billion^[57].

⁹ Mining code, Art 212-214, 242, 285, Annexe XVIII du Règlement Minier.

¹⁰ Project financed by SCF and implemented (since 2017) by the NGO “Bureau Diocésain de Développement”.

¹¹ Respondents tend to compress consumption that occurred over a longer time into the reference period asked^[58]

¹² No farmer has the slightest idea of how much time and energy he invests in the frame of his production activities in the same way as there is no point, for a Westerner, to keep count of the time he spends working in his private vegetable garden.

¹³ Exception made of SS ≥ 2 supports, of which one HH has contracted for a strong loan to purchase land.

¹⁴ In 10% of resettled households, husbands have dismissed their spouse or the recently widowed has been thrown out of the house by her family-in-law^[46].

¹⁵ Hotel trade, catering, bars, clothing, electrical appliance shops or hardware stores

¹⁶ Comparison at constant prices of 2018 data with those collected during the baseline studies^[59] shows a notable increase in income (+139%) and an even stronger one in expenditures (+180%). Yet, 2005 data have been collected over the last 30 days and figures multiplied by 12 to obtain an annual scope, thus ignoring seasonal variation and introducing a strong bias.

¹⁷ Using sex, age, location, and education level as representativeness criteria

¹⁸ From a list of 8 dimensions built on the base of wellbeing indexes and indicators by Bauler T. & al.^[60].

¹⁹ Participants in the focus group were firstly asked to score individually each wellbeing dimension. Later, scores have been discussed (and frequently reviewed) in plenary session, to obtain the final ranking.

²⁰ Transport firms, subcontractors, wholesale buyers, settled in the neighboring towns.

²¹ In TFM defense, mining operators and breweries are required by provincial government to devote 500 ha of land to maize cultivation as a measure to fight shortages: Arrêté Provincial 2008/008/Katanga du 22 mars 2008.

²² Those are elected by the Stakeholders forum. According to the same author, members of the latter are suspected to be mostly under Congolese authorities' control.

²³ Drinking water network, tarmac road, covered market, schools, auditorium.

²⁴ PACT Congo, BDD, ASADHO/Katanga, ASIDH, CRONGD/Katanga, PREMICONGO

²⁵ Since 2018, holders of mining titles are required to retrocede 15% of royalties directly to Provincial and Local Governments to fund development initiatives.

²⁶ Cernea, 2000; 1999;1988; 1997 but relying as well as on a huge body of empirical findings from social research published between 1980 and 2002, including by sociologists from developing countries.

²⁷ SCF supervisors put a stop to the cooperative that had been created initially in the frame of the SCF funded market gardening project in Zakeo, following grievances made by participants that some farmers worked less than others or were suspected of stealing foodstuffs in the community field. Since then, each member farms his own plot.

²⁸ Such as biological agriculture, agroforestry, reforestation.

²⁹ Such as organic fertilizers, species diversification, including the restoration of local species.

³⁰ A concern with the quality—versus the quantity—of foodstuffs; an emphasis on community compensation rather than on individual ones; a consideration of women's' interests in negotiations over land replacement and resettlement.

³¹ Including freelance researchers hired by civil society organizations, who have the merit of adopting a critical stance (but whose works are of a very uneven quality), but also academics who, conversely, produce decent work, but rarely take a stance.

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