Corporate Social Responsibilities: A Comparative Study of the DRC, Zimbabwe and South Africa

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1 Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is relatively a new concept especially in Africa because the culture and the enabling institutional infrastructure has not been as fully developed as in the industrialized economies of the north. In the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, current CSR debate is focused on how policy and practice would be enhanced and enforced to benefit the populace. The SADC countries share a similar history of colonialism, racism and the accompanying economic imbalances. The development of CSR in the respective countries share similarities in post-colonial interventions to address historical economic imbalances. The emerging debate is premised on the issues of political freedom and economic liberation. Large businesses are dominated by multinational corporations (MNCs) whilst the indigenous locals have been advocating for affirmative action. In South Africa one opposition political party, Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), holds a philosophy and ideology based on fighting for locals to benefit through participation in an economy previously dominated by the white minority.

The Zimbabwean government in trying to address colonial imbalances adopted the radical policy of indigenization meant to empower locals. Unfortunately, this well-intended policy caused capital flight and low foreign direct investment. The local communities in mining areas such as Marange in the Eastern province of Zimbabwe did not benefit from the diamond resources in their area. The policy of part-ownership of the diamond mines through Community Share Ownership Trust Schemes (CSOTS) were not successful. Foreign firms were required to cede 51

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percent of their shareholding to indigenous Zimbabweans with 10% of the 51 percent reserved for the community. The community trusts were supposed to spearhead developmental projects in the community and represent the community's interests on the board of directors of the mining firms. Though the indigenization laws in respect to other sectors of the economy were repealed in 2018, in the mining sector the indigenization laws remain in two resources platinum and diamonds.

Botswana, a country neighboring Zimbabwe and South Africa and belonging to SADC region, has benefited from its diamond resources and has gained political stability, democratic government, and remarkable economic growth which has eluded Zimbabwe. In South Africa mining companies contribute about eight percent to the country's GDP, but in both Zimbabwe and the DRC, owing to corruption, maladministration, and lack of transparency the contribution of mining activities to the betterment of the economy and lives of ordinary citizens is insignificant.

The three countries DRC, Zimbabwe and SA were chosen for examination here because they all have important deposits of mineral resources including strategic resources such as platinum, diamond and gold. The three countries are all members of the SADC which in Africa is one of the most powerful international and developmental umbrella organizations. The three countries maintain favorable diplomatic and economic relations with China, which within the BRICS group remains the main power shaping the world as far as international trade and cooperation are concerned. South Africa is actually also a BRICS member.

These countries present important similarities and dissimilarities about the state of affairs of CSR. All three countries have own struggles in terms of implementing evaluating and innovating CSR for the benefits of many. Because of their geo-political and geo-strategic importance, it is believed by the researchers that they can serve as a model in studying CSR issues in the direct area of influence, the region and the continent. The present study examines CSR in DRC and Zimbabwe overall, before further analyzing the challenges of economic transformation in SA and the role of CSR in addressing the socio-economic imbalances. The methodology for this paper is qualitative in nature. A systematic review of CSR literature in the three countries was done. A comparative approach was followed to elucidate the key challenges. Policies and factors in the countries influencing CSR are analyzed reflecting their contextual occurrence. The literature review and analysis is used to document and deepen understanding of CSR in the respective countries.

CSR debate focuses on the context of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) a regional bloc consisting of DRC, Zimbabwe and South Africa and other countries in Southern Africa. Within this community countries possess historical and current challenges affecting their inhabitants which are different amongst them but could allow a fair comparison to be undertaken. While South Africa has a diversified economy and organized CSR in accordance with the legislation, DRC has a long way to go on the issue. Zimbabwe has weak institutions which require development and a change of the governance culture from the system of patronage and corruption. The Zimbabwean currency crisis adds to firms' difficult economic environment making implementation of CSR policies especially challenging (Table 1).

Table 1 Comparative data on countries of focus

Name	South Africa	Zimbabwe	Democratic Republic of Congo
Date of independence	27 April 1994	18 April 1980	30 June 1960
Area	1221,037 km^2	390,308 km^2	2,345,000 km^2
Population	48,832,000	14,009,000	81, 331, 050
GDP per capita	6160.73 USD	1079.61 USD	457.85 USD (2017)
Industries	Metallurgy, mechanical, chemistry, automobile, textile and agriculture/food & beverage	Agriculture, mining and manufacturing	Agriculture, mining and service industry
Minerals	Gold, platinum, diamond, chrome, copper, etc.	Gold, chrome, coal, nickel, steel, silver, tin, cobalt and platinum	Copper, cobalt, diamond, uranium, coltan, gold, petrol, etc.
Mining as a percentage of the economy (%)	8	5	4.6
Corruption perception index rank	71	157	161
Ease of doing business rank	82	155	184

2 Corporate Social Responsibility in the DRC

The DRC was once known as the Independent State of Congo (Etat Indépendant du Congo). In 1885 during the Berlin conference, Congo became a private property of King Leopold II of Belgium. In 1908, because of international condemnation of royal brutality, "genocide of Congolese by the Belgian administrators" and exploitation of natural resources, the King decided to donate Congo to the Kingdom of Belgium, hence the country became known as Belgian Congo as opposed to the neighbouring Congo-Brazaville (a French colony).

Already by 1916, after Congo fought in the World War I in (1914–1918) and conquered the German-dominated Burundi and Rwanda, then called Ruanda-Urundi, Congo was supplying natural resources to imperialist countries as "*effort de guerre*" (Dixel, 2010). This supplying was also the case during the World War II in 1945–1949. As the country is a "geological scandal" owing to numerous mineral deposits, it is not surprising that foreign invasions in search of minerals became the currency of the day such as the Franco-Belgian and Rwanda-Ugandan invasions, forcing the late President Laurent Desire Kabila to call upon Namibia, Zimbabwe and Angola to support his war of "liberation" against Rwanda and Uganda (Dixel, 2010) backed by the imperialists are understood in that light.

There is still limited research on CSR in Africa (Muthuri, 2010; Muthuri & Gilbert, 2011), much less on CSR in the key resource extractive industries of the countries in focus here. According to Musendu (2017), CSR is not only a new concept in the DRC but it is also an ambiguous one, due to the lack of clarity on the matter as it is defined in the current mining code. This situation is a missed opportunity. CSR is a concept that would lead to better management of mineral resources if fully implemented, particularly in a country endowed with mineral deposits such as the DRC.

In South Africa the government has exclusive control over the issuing of mining licenses and is often corrupt despite the existence of a public protector. South Africa's public protector however is better in fighting corruption compared to equivalent the Anti-Corruption Commission in Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission does not serve its purpose because is not allowed to operate as an independent institution as required by the constitution. It is controlled by the politicians who are the major culprits in corruption. Zimbabwe has a relatively new constitution which was passed in 2013 but has not been fully implemented. DRC does not have an institution such as the public protector nor an anti-corruption commission. Rather, the government is in charge of the monitoring and evaluation of all mining activities. Despite the government's efforts very few benefits have been realized because of the lack of transparency caused by the involvement of political elites as players in the mining of diamonds and other precious minerals.

The DRC is one of the most populated, large and diverse countries in Africa. Its mineral deposits are numerous. The resources, however, have not benefited the general populace as much as a few who are politically connected. Individuals who have shares in the mining sector are closely linked to the ruling party. The political culture in DRC does not promote best CSR practice. The country suffers from political instability and illegitimate institutions thereof. The lack of sufficient CSR interventions has resulted in poor infrastructure, high unemployment and lack of community development. There is economic frustration in the country because of lack of jobs and opportunities which leads to rise in crime.

Federation des Entreprises du Congo (FEC, 2016) explains that CSR is the response given to global (climate change issues, nature preservation, social and information technology innovation) and domestic challenges (job creation, professional training/on-the-job training, entrepreneurship, improving the standard of living, as well as culture promotion). International organizations have a critical role to prescribe and recommend CSR practices that would help to solve global challenges such as climate change. A country's government, its laws and institutions should therefore promote CSR practices that can solve domestic challenges. A conference on "*Responsabilité Sociale des Entreprises*" (RSE), French for CSR; titled "*Responsabilité Sociale des Entreprises: de la théorie à la pratique*" [Corporate Social Responsibilities: from theory to practice], in Kinshasa, DRC in 2017 held that the general population of Congo should be sensitized on the issue of CSR. If people know and understand their rights they can therefore organize themselves as advocacy groups which will enforce CSR practices to solve domestic challenges. The people living in mining communities are stakeholders who should have a voice pertaining to operations of the industry which exploits resources in their communities.

Roberts (2017) presents a case study on how effective CSR can be put in place in a sustainable manner by responding to the *desiderata* of the communities. Muyumba (2006) examines CSR in the mining sector in the DRC in general and in particular in the eastern province of South-Kivu. While CSR may be a concept is novel in Congo, Muthuri (2010), states that CSR is now a global phenomenon. Apart from enumerating the many activities that form the CSR in the context of this resource-rich country, the study stresses that monitoring and evaluation of initiatives is still a problem (Muyumba, 2006).

Govender (2011) studied the problems posed by insufficient or ineffective monitoring and evaluation of CSR initiatives in SA. While big companies and MNCs strive to inculcate the culture of CSR in their mid-to-long term plans, Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) as well as Small, Medium and Micro-sized Enterprises (SMMEs) struggle the most to accomplish this acculturation. In the DRC, artisanal mining takes precedence on industrial (extractive) activities as far as coltan mining is concerned, and SMEs have a share in this sector. Small enterprises challenges such as the lack of resources and other capabilities leads to insufficient CSR initiatives.

Anixter (n.d) asserts that another way of helping the society overall is by refusing to do business with companies accused of corruption or maladministration. There are MNCs operating in the DRC who have impending lawsuits internationally and recently many companies were linked to politicians and government officials in non-transparent ways. However, the fact that emphasis is put on companies' own procedures or initiatives on the issue, with little regulatory or monitoring and evaluation from neutral and competent entities is a cause of concern. Most big mining corporations in the DRC are foreign-owned. Anixter (n.d) lists a number of minerals classified as blood minerals regardless of their origin, on condition that they have been used to fund armed groups fighting their respective governments. These minerals are: columbite-tantalite (coltan); cassiterite; gold, walframite and their linked varieties such as tantalum, tin and Tungsten. It is argued here that in reality the above list is not exhaustive, although all are mined in the DRC and all have been fueling armed conflicts in one way or another in the DRC (Rapport des travaux, 2017; Isheloke, 2009).

The notion that certain companies try to prevent themselves from entering business deals with individuals or organizations alleged to have used or using blood minerals is only good rhetoric. In practice, little is done to stop the hemorrhage of blood diamond and conflict minerals. The lack of many reports about blood diamonds in the media does not mean the practice is less prevalent. There is no freedom of speech and press freedoms in DRC, information access is restricted and censored. Media freedoms help to enhance transparency and accountability thereby enforcing good CSR practices amongst the business society. If CSR is implemented fully by firms in the mining supply chain it can help to discourage illegal trade of minerals, and thus limiting conflict in the mining communities.

There is no doubt that institutions that will oversee CSR must be strengthened in the DRC, Zimbabwe and SA. What is applicable in these countries could be applicable with some adaptation to other African countries with possibly some exceptions. US President Obama once said that Africa does not need strongmen; it needs strong institutions (*Sunday Times*, 2009). Anixter (n.d) advocates that business deals should respect human rights, ethical codes and observe environmentally friendly practices. In view of the above, voices have been heard to oppose any move to blindly incorporate the European CSR model in Africa, as in other developing countries. Scholars such as Argandona and Hoivik (2009), Devinney (2009), Dobers (2009), Dobers and Halme (2009) challenge the "uniformisation" of CSR.

In Africa overall and in the DRC, in particular, the problem lies in the lack of what is termed here the three "Ls": the Lack of government regulations on CSR; the Lack of government capacity in understanding and enforcing CSR policies; and last but not least, the Lack of commitment to enforce CSR regulations in the DRC. In view of the above, Muthuri (2010) is of the view that the civil society can play a positive role in complementing the actions of the state.

Legal compliance is part of CSR. DRC law obliges mining companies to respond to their CSR responsibilities such as the preservation of the environment and their participation in community-based initiatives. The revised mining code is therefore the basis of any sound analysis of CSR in the DRC, and the code speaks to socio-economic aspects as well. The legal framework includes the labor legislation, the Ministerial Decree no. 2008/002 as well as the ISO 26000 (FEC, 2016:18). ISO 26000 seeks to contribute to sustainable development, health and societal well-being in terms of stakeholders' expectation.

3 Corporate Social Responsibility in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is a landlocked country which used to be the breadbasket of Africa, and had one of the highest literacy levels in the continent. Robert Mugabe who led the country for over three decades post-independence until November 2017 ruined the economy which was once described as the jewel of Africa. In 2008, the president was accused of rigging the presidential elections although Morgan Tsvangirai was declared the winner of the legislative (Dixel, 2010). Mugabe stepped down after a military takeover and proceedings of his impeachment. Emmerson Mnangagwa took the oath of office in November 2017 as president of the military controlled government. The demise of the despot was wanted by the people and led by formerly loyal generals of the very leader.

In 2018 Zimbabwe had elections which were not endorsed as free and fair by international observer bodies such as the European Union, United States and British Commonwealth. Nonetheless, US Congress extended the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act (ZIDERA) as a vote of no confidence in reforms required to lift the targeted sanctions.

Arli and Lasmono (2010) examined the challenges of CSRs in developing countries and argued that the rationale for focusing on CSR in developing countries are different from those justifying CSR in the developed world. Developing countries have rapid economic expansion which is mainly based on agriculture and extractive industries. The extraction of natural resources often lead to acute social and environmental crises in host communities. Developing countries have economic and CSRs challenges which are quite different from the economically developed countries. Mugova et al. (2017) states that according to Carroll (1991), corporate social responsibility CSR involves the conduct of a business which is economically profitable, law abiding, ethical and socially supportive. To accomplish these, a balanced approach is required with economic, social and legal pillars. The exploitation of Zimbabwe's economy by Mugabe occurred in collusion, overtly and indirectly with MNCs, particularly those from China.

Zimbabwe has remained with the same economic and political problems despite the change of presidents. The promises made by the new president Emmerson Mnangagwa have failed to translate into economic projects aimed at uplifting the lives of ordinary citizens. Human rights abuses and economic mismanagement have continued and democratic space has been squashed. The cultural and colonial history affected how CSR is conceptualized in Zimbabwe, the country is a former British colony where businesses were largely dominated by multinational corporations. The country embarked later on ways to address historical and colonial imbalances through laws such as Indigenization Act. Politics shaped the understanding of the rights and duties of both the government and the industry in terms of CSR implementation, monitoring and evaluation. There is poor service delivery by the government. Private sector firms and Not-for-Profit Organizations (NPO) regularly assist the people of Zimbabwe to fight challenges such as cholera, drug shortages in hospitals, provision of clean water and drought relief.

Zimbabwe has a weak institutional environment and poor governance structure that require innovation, integrity and ethical behavior on the side of business to champion their CSR initiatives (Burlea, Vertigans, & Idowu, 2017). The country was under a dictatorial regime of Robert Mugabe for over three decades, corruption and absence of the rule of law has worked against CSR as it is always the case elsewhere, both in the public and private sectors. The World Justice Project Rule of Law index ranks South Africa on number 44 in the world whilst Zimbabwe is ranked a distant 108. CSR entails legal compliance but also going beyond what is required by the law. For example creating an environment that encourages business development and entrepreneurship is more than a matter of laws. Yet, Zimbabwe is also ranked amongst the worst in the world in terms of doing business. Its business environment is said to be very uncompetitive which has resulted in failure to attract foreign direct investment.

4 Corporate Social Responsibility in South Africa

The history of SA just like that of the DRC and Zimbabwe dates back to pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial. South Africa was under apartheid governance and then transformed into a democracy. The country is more economically developed than both DRC and Zimbabwe. CSR was more a matter of government oversight duty pre-1994. In parallel, MNCs (including extractive firms) did very little to uplift the economic situation of the communities at large, except that historically white citizens were more privileged than their black counterparts, albeit not exclusively. In post-apartheid SA, subsequent to the liberation led by Nelson Mandela the government introduced the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (then called BEE) - a positive discrimination that aimed at emancipating mainly blacks and to redress the economic imbalances of the past (Golden Consulting, 2012). Positive discrimination could be regarded as a type of CSR in the context of SA. In this light, benefits meant that CSR could now reach all the population rather than the only few as was the case when it was a profit-business oriented activity under Apartheid.

5 Limitations of Post-apartheid CSR Efforts

South Africa attained democracy in 1994, however, to date the system of governance has failed to emancipate the poorest of the poor and other groups who were previously disadvantaged. The ruling elite is involved in corruption especially to do with awarding of contracts and procurement irregularities. In SA, CSR falls under corporate governance as the legislation does not force companies to engage in CSR (The companies' Act 71 of 2008).

The discovery of diamonds in Kimberley in 1877 revolutionized the economy of SA as it propelled industrialization with all its developmental consequences (urbanism, immigration, mining (ghost) towns, etc.). On the political arena, SA was influenced, albeit in the negative manner, by discriminatory policies such as the Native Land Act of 1913. The system of apartheid as it was later known culminated in the regime prohibiting interracial sexual intercourse or marriage, segregation of residential locations, human rights violation against the black majority as well as economic discrimination to the detriment of the people of colour (Dixel, 2010). Income disparity in SA was caused by apartheid and further exacerbated by gender-related challenges perhaps owing to the patriarchal nature of the society (Isheloke, 2013, 2017; Fajardo & Erasmus, 2017; Folbre, 2006; Klasen & Lamanna, 2009). It is argued here that income disparity could be addressed by enforcing CSR programs in Africa. Companies must make not just pursue profit but above all they must create opportunities and long-term wealth which benefit the local communities they operate in.

Dixel (2010) explains that many illegal immigrants and other groups from Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana came to SA to look for jobs in the mining sector. However, the conditions were very discriminatory and oppressive to workers who appeared to come from disadvantaged communities such as the poor and African immigrants from the SADC region. The wages and salaries were very low but the situation of poverty and marginalization gave the job-seekers had little choice in a country where unemployment reaches 40% of active population in search of job opportunities (including those who are unemployed but who have now ceased to look for job, citing the lack of opportunities as one reason making them fed-up). The rate of unemployment is currently estimated to be 27, 5% which is considerably high. In SA government policies influenced CSR during the colonial period and the post-independence government has sought to reverse the legacy of apartheid.

Muyumba (2006) enumerates a number of activities that fall under CSR. South Africa has an advantage over the DRC and Zimbabwe on CSR matters owing to its institutional infrastructure and political will power of the government. Perhaps as the new law was promulgated (Liffran, 2017), DRC could experience a better future if political interference does not become a further blockage going forward.

In the mining sector, CSR is costly as companies deal with daily challenges in their operations. South African economic disparity as a result of government failure in service delivery and to some extent lack of CSR policies especially issues of gender inequality. A negative relationship between gender and economic growth has also been established as found, the lower the gender gap, the better economic development is spurred (Klasen & Lamanna, 2009). Mugova et al. (2017) focused on the case of Zimbabwe on CSR issues and make use of relevant case studies to illustrate that despite the challenging economic environment CSR is practiced by some firms operating in the country. The following synoptic table presents the major issues of contention and the rapport among the countries state of affairs on CSR. It is held that CSR is a relatively new concept in the DRC (Muyumba, 2006) as it is in Zimbabwe. In SA, it can be said that CSR as an activity that seeks to benefit both blacks and whites equally is a fairly new concept and is in its adolescent age.

Davies (2017) spoke about the 4th industrial revolution whereby digital technology will become a much sought after professional skill. Thus, the use of Information Technology (IT) becomes imperative for effective CSR nowadays. Mugova et al. (2017) examine more cases in a very inclusive way than a selective approach undertaken for the Katanga (DRC) study. Specific to this source is a level of philanthropy which is seen as part and parcel of CSR. Parallel to this view, FEC (2016) posits that CSR has nothing to do with philanthropy. It is suggested here that the two views can hold true depending on the situation. The low levels of economic development and high levels of poverty makes the philanthropy CSR more appropriate to developing countries compared to developed countries. Resolving the difference of CSR focus for developed and developing countries could be a useful direction for future research.

Dobers and Halme (2009) in corroboration with other authors found that the Low-Income Countries (LICs), as much as they differ, also present some dis/similarities with the Western world as far as culture is concerned. Blowfield and Frynas (2005), Fox (2004) and Frynas (2005), as cited in Mugova et al. (2017) critique CSR as not being attuned with the realities in developing countries. Thus, a contextualized CSR is advocated by many scholars.

A universal approach to CSR is subject to criticism and deemed irresponsible, null and void by some. Crotty and Marie (2014) elaborate on the need to contextualize CSR policies and practices. Mugova, Mudenda, and Sachs (2017) agree with Crotty and Marie (2014) on the need to contextualize CSR in Africa. Last but not least, agreeing with Mugova et al. (2017: 207), “CSR needs to be adapted to local issues, different cultural contexts and the weak institutional environments, such as in developing countries." In the literature survey, CSR in the three countries under study was analyzed from different perspectives and using different lenses.

South Africa has the Public Protector Office as an institution that gives it a competitive advantage over its SADC counterparts in general, the DRC and Zimbabwe in particular. The particularity of the Public Protector Office as an institution in SA is that there is seldom a situation where similar power to protect the general population against abuse by state and other institutions is found to be as independent as is in SA (The importance of the Public Protector, 2016: 1–2). Its prominence is also the determined fight against corruption (Public Protector, 2017). The rule of law is another competitive advantage of SA as a country according to several statistics. The DRC and Zimbabwe are known to have very corrupt courts where the government often dictates its will as it applies the law selectively jeopardizing political opponents (Anti-Corruption Helpdesk, 2014: 1–11; Business Anti-corruption Portal, 2016). This affects good governance, political stability and the independence of the judiciary amongst the other things.

6 Conclusion

This study discussed CSR from a comparative point of view, addressing the situation in the DRC, Zimbabwe and SA. From a historic and contextual perspective, CSR was reviewed in the three African countries. An analysis of the literature allowed to appreciate the depth and width of theories, concepts and knowledge at the researchers' disposal on CSR and how best to apply them in the context of the studied phenomena, thus responding to the need to extinguish both epistemological and ontological curiosity. It emerged that just as there are many definitions of CSR, there are several uses to be contextualized to the needs and wants of countries involved. The novelty of CSR in Africa in general and in the studied countries, begged the question: is there a room for innovative ways and more efficient ways of dealing with CSR concepts applicable to the three SADC countries?

Future research should focus on how politics and legal infrastructure influence firms' CSR policies. A comprehensive review of CSR policies and initiatives by the private sector and public sector will provide a deeper insight of the issues which has shaped CSR practices in Africa. A more complete review of literature from the three countries will help to inform theory and practice of CSR. The policies and institutions developed by each country influences the path of CSR and economic development. SA is doing well in curbing corruption cases through its courts and the public protector due to institutions being stronger and better developed than in the other two countries. Zimbabwe and the DRC should learn to enhance and solidify their democratic institutions to harness the implications of the study and to look into the whole CSR discourse profoundly.

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