

Thank you

This study is titled: A study on the impact of the mining boom on indigenous communities in Australia

Correction

There is one correction to be made: Paragraph [8] on page 4 is in fact a DIRECT QUOTE and not a paragraph - the Editors should have been attributed to the relevant author in footnote 7 and revision with correction will be made.

Introduction

As this paper alludes to: A mining boom is distinguished by a ‘significant increase in mining investment or mining output’. Like many states, over the years, Australia has experienced a series of mining booms; the current one being a mineral and energy boom.

The literature or research is universal in that: Mining booms are often accompanied by the phenomenon of ‘the paradox of plenty’ or ‘the resource curse’ which means that mineral rich states often suffer a decline in the rule of law, public institutions and regions with extreme poverty.

While Australia has not ‘endured the failings associated with countries caught up by the resource curse’ there exist some mining regions ‘where Aboriginal populations are significant majorities, for which the socioeconomic data show extreme poverty’.

Data

One thing to keep in mind in writing the study is that there is a lack of reliable demographic data on the impact of mining on indigenous communities.

In addition tools to measure quality of life or well-being lack a ‘cross-cultural fit’ or indigenous input and therefore the available data is limited in providing an accurate picture of the impact of the mining boom;

this challenge - measuring indigenous well being - is one that has been raised by the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

Structure

The structure of this paper included:

the relevant international law pertaining to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and then surveyed the positive and negative impacts of:

- 1) Agreement-making
- 2) Employment
- 3) Social impact including factors such as housing, health and well being.

Motivation for study

One of the motivations for this study was the black and white view that people tend to take on mining.

It is either overwhelmingly and unequivocally positive and rosy OR it is all bad with no benefits whatsoever. Both rigid positions are patently untrue.

While this study has provided a truncated overview of the impact of the current Australian mining boom upon Aboriginal communities it does show the impact is multi-faceted; both negative and positive.

** One important issue highlighted in the report emerging from Australian best practice however is the impact on communities as the boom slows and mine closure.

How indigenous communities prepare for this is important in order to have sustainability of benefits of the mining boom - employment, training, education, business investment, community development - far into the future.

The research shows the best mining agreements are those that structure royalty payments in trusts for life post-mining.

Conclusion

This is an Australian-centric study.

And although this study refers to Australia, there are many lessons that can be drawn from the current Australian mining boom for Indigenous peoples.

For example, this research was well received in a recent visit to Iqualuit Nunavut where the community and government is undergoing community readiness for their nascent mining boom. As the report shows there are some social impacts such as the impact on health and crime rates that often communities don't anticipate going into a boom cycle.

The best practice as well as the setbacks or lessons learned in Australia can translate across communities and the universal yardstick or measurement of this remains the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.