Beyond Boom and Bust: Improving Community Resilience in Rural Ghana

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Abstract

Throughout much of sub-Saharan Africa extractive industries are increasingly prominent in both national economies and rural development. Mining, timber, and oil and gas, and green energy projects are changing the character of rural communities throughout the African continent. They introduce new players (e.g., multinational corporations), raise expectations of local citizens, and strain local infrastructure and governance systems. Such is the case in rural Ghana. A number of communities are experiencing the boom from a major extraction project (e.g., mining or oil and gas) but none seem to be planning for the long term – the bust – when the project ends.

This paper examines rural Ghana communities currently impacted by extractive industries. The cases focus on how communities are engaging the industry, if (and how) they are planning for the future, and the role Ghana universities may play in improving adaptive capacity and local stakeholder engagement.

One case study site features of communities of the Afahoe District in Ghana. Since 2006 Newmont Mining Corporation has operated a gold mine in this region. As the Newmont web site reports: "Developing the "Ahafo operation proved challenging as the ore deposit was located beneath an area inhabited by about 1,700 households from two primary traditional areas, Ntrotroso and Kenyase 2, both of which are near the mine. As a result, Newmont Ghana created a range of policies and procedures to resettle and compensate people for losses suffered from development" (www.newmont.com). The authors and colleagues are conducting field work in Kenyase, talking with resettled farmers, traditional area chiefs, local business people, educators, Newmont managers, and government officials. The work reflects a participatory action approach, with local communities having voice in research and capacity building activities.

Keywords: rural development, community resilience, extractive industries, collaborative learning, local knowledge and engagement

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