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Gender equality and corporate social responsibility in the workplace: a case study of Anglo American Platinum Mine and Impala Platinum Mines Rustenburg, South Africa

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2017

https://hdl.handle.net/10539/24430

Mutasa, Francyn Chido (2017) Gender equality and corporate social responsibility in the workplace: a case study of Anglo American Platinum Mine and Impala Platinum Mines Rustenburg, South Africa, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, <https://hdl.handle.net/10539/24430>

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Abstract

This research presents an investigation of the role played by private corporations in promoting gender equality, using the platinum mining sector in the Rustenburg area as a case study. In evaluating this role the research uses The Mining Charter, a piece of legislation and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to assess the efforts that have been made by Anglo American and Impala Platinum mines. This qualitative study uses an abductive approach and a Marxist feminist theoretical perspective to establish what constitutes the problem of inequality. Relying on data collected through document analysis, which included a review of the Mining Charter, and various company annual reports, coupled with data collected from conducting interviews from September to December 2016, the research has found companies to look at the problem of gender equality from a 'female employees statistics' point of view. As such, the problem of equality has ignored the indirect negative impacts mining has on women in the communities in which the mining companies operate. This research understands equality as having two sides, "formal and informal" equality. While efforts by the government, and mining companies have tried to address the part of formal equality through increasing the numbers of females in mining, and improving the general conditions in which they operate, this research finds that there exists a form of "informal equality." This informal inequality looks at the outcomes of the efforts in reality, and goes beyond the company into society. Mining companies have the ability to address this type of equality through CSR, but this research notes that CSR programs are often not viewed through a gender lens. The study therefore concludes that there is a disjuncture between the perceived results of efforts made by corporations on paper and the outcomes in reality. While corporations can contribute to promoting equality in the workplace, their understanding of equality is skewed and one sided therefore inequality continues to persist. Perhaps if companies use the strategy of gender mainstreaming to address the goal of equality, which involves taking into account the particular problems of women in all facets, then equality can be achieved.