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Estimating the impact of large-scale mining on local communities in sub-Saharan Africa

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Abstract

The proliferation of large-scale mining in sub-Saharan Africa and its impact on local communities living conditions has been a matter of considerable debate amongst stakeholders. Thus far, there has been little consensus as to whether a local resources curse exists, with both quantitative and qualitative research yielding contradictory results.

This dissertation aims to provide a reliable and replicable methodology to measure the social impact of large-scale mining on local communities. It does so by constructing three living condition indices measuring access to infrastructure and levels of lived poverty using Round 6 Afrobarometer surveys. Making use of the recently geocoded survey data, it links 4 796 individuals to 148 large-scale mines in 19 sub-Saharan African countries within a 100km radius of a PSU [1]. Using a linear mixed model with a random intercept and common slope, this dissertation finds that when country and urbanisation effects are controlled for, the proximity of a large-scale mine to a local community has a negligible impact on living condition outcomes.

The case studies reveal that while large-scale mining has contributed to development infrastructure provision and improved living conditions, the disruption to social fabrics and land alienation often nullify these benefits – particularly when government investments do not extend beyond mining.

In short, this paper finds no substantive evidence for a local resource "curse" or "blessing".

1. Replication data and code available on request