

# Beyond Public Engagement and Involvement: A Qualitative Exploration of Public Engagement by Barberton Mines – A Stakeholder Engagement Perspective

Bongani June Mwale<sup>1\*</sup> Percival Motha<sup>2</sup> Vincent Zulu<sup>3</sup>

Email of corresponding author: [mwalebj@icloud.com](mailto:mwalebj@icloud.com)

## Abstract

The Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act (MPRDA) is one of the key legislative frameworks in South Africa, aiming to develop fair and sustainable standards within the mining sector. With an eye towards stakeholder participation, this paper investigates how Barberton Mines implements Section 52 of the MPRDA, therefore clarifying the efficacy of present engagement policies and pointing out areas for improvement. This study used a qualitative research approach, which involved thorough reviews of existing documents and literature, DMRE guidelines, and Barberton Mines reports, to find important information about how the community views the company and how well its communication strategies work. The results highlight how open communication and openness are absolutely necessary to build confidence and cooperative partnerships with other towns. Notwithstanding current legal systems, Barberton Mines finds it difficult to properly involve stakeholders; problems including poor communication channels, insufficient community consultations, and little participation of local stakeholders have been seen. The study reveals the main drivers and challenges to effective stakeholder involvement, which results in customised recommendations meant to close compliance gaps with MPRDA criteria. The study also emphasises the value of corporate social investment (CSI) projects, illustrating Barberton Mines' dedication to solving community welfare issues by means of infrastructure development, health care enhancements, and educational support. The study concludes that Barberton Mines sustained operational performance relies on establishing a robust stakeholder engagement framework that incorporates diverse community perspectives and facilitates open communication channels. The study recommends the transparent inclusion of representatives from a range of stakeholders, including local businesses, non-governmental organisations, and community leaders, as well as representatives from traditional local authorities.

**Keywords:** Stakeholder involvement, Corporate Social Investment, regulatory compliance, sustainable development

**DOI:** 10.7176/EJBM/17-4-03

**Publication date:** May 30<sup>th</sup> 2025

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act (MPRDA) is one of the most important pieces of legislation enacted by South Africa's democratic regime for the mining and petroleum sectors to regulate and redress issues of the past, ensuring equitable and sustainable practices. For more than 130 years, the Barberton Mines, which include the Fairview, Sheba, and Consort underground mining operations, have been a vital part of South Africa's mining history. These top-notch operations, which have an estimated 20 years left in their lifespan, are positioned as long-term assets in Pan African Resources' portfolio. Barberton Mines produce about 80,000 ounces (ca. 3 t) of gold a year and have a stellar long-term safety record.

It is imperative to evaluate the mines' efforts to improve the lives of the surrounding communities during their 130 years of operation. Since Section 52 of the MPRDA emphasises stakeholder engagement in mining operations, this study looks at Barberton Mines' implementation of the law and its implications. Barberton Mines, the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE), and the Mpumalanga Provincial Government could improve their decision-making and policy-making processes by using this study to gain clear insights into how Barberton Mines engages with stakeholders and what that means for following regulations (Leonard, 2016).

Barberton Mines can better engage with the community and meet local needs by using the findings of an examination of its compliance with Section 52 of the MPRDA. The study provides a better understanding of how

mining companies interact with affected communities, which can help the DMRE develop and improve policies that promote industry-wide best practices in stakeholder engagement (Mpanza, Adam & Moolla, 2021). The findings and recommendations of this report may also assist the provincial government of Mpumalanga in formulating local development policies that prioritize sustainable mining, support the local economy, and address social concerns.

### **1.1. Background About Barberton Mines**

Barberton Mines, located in the old Umjindi Local Municipality within the Mbombela City Local Municipality, includes the Barberton Tailings Retreatment Plant (BTRP), which is located inside the Fairview Mine's mining right footprint. The BTRP add low-risk and low-cost ounces to the production profile by processing 100,000 tonnes of tailings per month. Given the significance of these operations, the Stakeholder Engagement Forum (SEF), which serves as a communication tool between Pan African Resources and the communities in which they operate, is essential (Ezeh, M., Ogbu, Heavens & George, 2024). It is for this particular reason to highlight the necessity of proactive stakeholder engagement strategies that uphold legal standards and promote sustainable development.

## **2. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Effective implementation of Section 52 of the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act (MPRDA) is necessary to encourage meaningful stakeholder engagement in the mining sector. Despite the regulatory framework in place to ensure that mining operations consider the interests of local communities, there are still concerns about how effectively Barberton Mines has consulted its stakeholders when making operational decisions (Department of Mineral Resources, 2010). Issues with openness, community engagement, and the management of socioeconomic repercussions could jeopardise the mining company's social license to operate. Understanding the barriers to and facilitators of fruitful contact is essential for enhancing processes, ensuring MPRDA compliance, and promoting sustainable development in the Barberton area.

### **2.1. Research Objectives**

The study aims to provide a clear framework for evaluating Barberton Mines' stakeholder engagement implementation of Section 52 of the MPRDA. Through assessing the effectiveness of current processes and gathering stakeholder perceptions, the study seeks to identify possibilities and obstacles for enhancing community participation and ensuring regulatory compliance:

1. To assess Barberton Mines' approach to ensure compliance to Section 52 of the MPRDA in stakeholder engagement initiatives.
2. To evaluate how well stakeholder engagement strategies satisfy the requirements and demands of nearby communities.
3. To examine how local stakeholders view the mining company's engagement initiatives and their own experiences taking part in decision-making.
4. To determine the obstacles Barberton Mines encountered when putting Section 52 into practice and offer suggestions for improving stakeholder engagement procedures.

### **2.3. Research Questions**

The research questions are intended to guide the analysis of Barberton Mines' compliance with MPRDA Section 52 on stakeholder engagement. By analysing the strategies employed, the effectiveness of the current processes, and stakeholder perceptions, these investigations aim to pinpoint challenges and areas for improvement in the company's community involvement programs:

1. What measures has Barberton Mines taken to ensure stakeholder engagement in accordance with Section 52 of the MPRDA?
2. To what extent do Barberton Mines' present stakeholder engagement procedures effectively address local communities' concerns?
3. How do local stakeholders feel about Barberton Mines' attempts to involve them in decision-making?

4. What obstacles must Barberton Mines overcome in order to successfully implement Section 52, and how can these obstacles be overcome?

### 3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study contributes to the scholarly discourse on stakeholder engagement in the mining sector, particularly within the context of regulatory compliance with Section 52 of the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act (MPRDA) (Bahadorestani, Naderpajouh and Sadiq, 2020). By analysing Barberton Mines' practices through a qualitative lens, the study enriches the literature concerning corporate social responsibility (CSR) and stakeholder theory, offering insights into how mining companies can effectively engage with local communities in a way that fosters mutual understanding and trust.

Furthermore, this research adds to the growing body of qualitative literature that examines the complexities of stakeholder relationships in resource extraction industries, highlighting challenges and best practices that arise in real-world scenarios (Angelakoglou & Gaidajis, 2020). It underscores the importance of context-specific analysis, providing a valuable reference point for both academics and practitioners seeking to improve engagement strategies and promote sustainable community development in the face of operational and regulatory demands (Ngobese, Pelders, Botha, Magweregwe & Schutte, 2023).

### 4. LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 4.1. Demographic Profile of Barberton (Umjindi)

In Barberton, based on the 2022 census results released in October 2023, Black Africans constitute the largest population group (81.4%), followed by Coloureds (8.2%), Whites (7.3%), and Indians/Asians (2.7%). The demographic profile of the Barberton area (Umjindi) illustrates a dynamic and diverse community with its own unique opportunities and challenges. The predominance of a young population and varying education levels underscore the need for targeted development initiatives to optimize local human resources, especially in relation to the mining sector and overall economic growth (Statistics South Africa, 2022).

##### 1. Population Size

The population of Umjindi, which encompasses Barberton, is estimated to be between 30,000 and 40,000 residents. This population size reflects the area's status as a community with a mix of urban and rural characteristics, heavily influenced by its mining history and economic activities.

##### 2. Age Distribution

The age distribution within Barberton shows a significant proportion of young individuals, particularly in the 0-14 age group. The working-age population (ages 15-64) constitutes a large percentage, while the elderly demographic (ages 65 and older) makes up a smaller fraction. This youthful profile indicates a potential for a vibrant economic future if the local workforce is adequately trained and educated.

##### 3. Gender composition

The gender composition in Barberton exhibits a balanced ratio of men to women, though there may be a slight predominance of females, consistent with national demographic trends observed in many parts of South Africa. Gender dynamics play a crucial role in community development and workforce participation.

##### 4. Race and Ethnicity

The racial demographics of Barberton consist of Black Africans, who represent the majority of the population. Additionally, the community includes smaller percentages of coloured, Indian/Asian, and white residents, reflecting the broader diversity characteristic of South Africa as a whole. This diversity contributes to the rich cultural tapestry of the region.

## 5. Language

The primary language spoken in Barberton is siSwati, which reflects the heritage and cultural identity of the local community. English and Afrikaans are also commonly spoken, particularly in educational and business contexts, highlighting the multilingual nature of the population.

## 6. Economic Activity

Umjindi's economy is primarily driven by mining, particularly gold mining, which has been a significant contributor to the local economy for over a century. In addition to mining, agricultural activities and small-scale industries play a vital role. However, like many rural and peri-urban areas in South Africa, the region faces challenges with fluctuating employment rates, which can lead to higher levels of unemployment, particularly among the youth.

## 7. Education Levels

Educational attainment levels in Barberton vary, with numerous primary and secondary educational institutions available. However, access to higher education is often limited, which could affect the overall educational outcomes of the population. Enhancing educational opportunities is essential for empowering the local community and improving employability.

## 8. Housing and Infrastructure

Barberton has mix of formal and informal housing structures, and elements of rural settlement found in Emjindini. Roads, water supplies, and sanitary facilities are in adequate especially in informal rural dwellings. In order to support sustainable development and raise the standard of living for locals, it is imperative that the Mine focus on assisting in this regard.

### 4.2. Linkage Between Section 52 of MPRDA and Section 189 of LRA

In South Africa, two important pieces of legislation that regulate the mining industry and labour relations are the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act (MPRDA) and the Labour Relations Act (LRA), respectively. To guarantee that mining operations consider the interests of impacted communities and stakeholders, Section 52 of the MPRDA places a strong emphasis on stakeholder engagement. The LRA's Section 189, on the other hand, specifies the conditions for consultations on layoffs and modifications to working conditions. To develop a framework for compliance, employee engagement, and community relations, mining companies must comprehend how these sections interact (Karolia-Hussain and Fourie, 2021).

#### 1. Section 52 of the MPRDA: Stakeholder Engagement

Section 52 of the MPRDA mandates that mining corporations set up venues for stakeholder input prior to starting mining activities. The benefits and drawbacks of mining activities must be discussed in depth with impacted communities, workers, and other stakeholders. The participatory governance idea serves as the foundation for this criterion (Lotter, 2020). The section aims to promote transparency, build trust, and ensure that the concerns of local stakeholders are taken into consideration when making decisions. Effective stakeholder involvement increases a company's social license to operate, improves operational efficiency, and lessens conflict with the community (Owen, Kemp, Harris, Lechner & Lèbre, 2022). Section 52 requires mining corporations to engage in meaningful consultations with communities and other stakeholders prior to starting mining activities. This section emphasizes transparency and communication with regulatory agencies and affected parties in order to foster long-term benefits from mineral resources (Masebo, 2022). Since Section 52 is necessary for obtaining and maintaining mining rights, it is essential for companies such as Pan African Resources.

#### 2. Section 189 of the LRA: Labor Relations

Mining operations require effective stakeholder engagement. Failure to comply with Section 52 may lead to legal action and damaged relationships with local communities. Involving communities in decision-making processes is especially important in sensitive areas like Barberton because it fosters confidence and ensures that mining activities represent local interests. The procedures that businesses must follow when terminating employees due to operational changes are outlined in Section 189 of the LRA. It requires companies to consult

affected employees and their representatives in order to identify alternatives to layoffs and mitigate the effects of job losses (Chagwinya, Leonardus and Gerber, 2018). In order to make sure that workers are educated and have the opportunity to engage in discussions regarding job preservation and other employment-related issues, this section highlights how important it is for employers and employees to have meaningful conversations.

### **3. Intersection of Section 52 and Section 189**

Section 189 of the Labour Relations Act mandates consultations on operational changes that could have an impact on employment. For mining firms, the requirement entails making certain that impacted workers are notified and consulted throughout restructuring procedures and that workforce transitions do not result in needless job losses. This intersection highlights the necessity of unified engagement tactics that satisfy the demands of the MPRDA and the LRA (Chagwinya, Leonardus and Gerber, 2018).

Section 52 and Section 189 intersect because they both aim to promote efficient stakeholder consultation and communication. Mining firms must take an integrated approach to stakeholder engagement that considers both labour rights and community concerns to comply with both sections. The involvement required by Section 52 may enhance and benefit the consultation procedures outlined in Section 189 (Mawethu, 2010; Musevenzo, Mashavira, Chikove & Matenda, 2024).

1. **Comprehensive Engagement Strategy:** Mining firms can create an all-encompassing engagement strategy that considers the needs and concerns of their employees as well as the larger community. In order to provide a forum for thorough discussion, this entails organizing joint meetings that address employment conditions in addition to mining operations.
2. **Addressing Employment Impact:** Mining companies can proactively manage employment impacts that may result from mining operations by using the consultation process outlined in Section 52. Companies can foresee opposition and develop strategies that lessen adverse effects on employment by involving stakeholders, such as employees and local communities (Van der Merwe, 2015).
3. **Aligned Goals:** The significance of respect and understanding between stakeholders is emphasized in both sections. Effective community engagement by mining firms under Section 52 builds trust, which can facilitate consultations with employees about changes to employment terms as mandated by Section 189. When mining operations consider the opinions and concerns of their involved communities, they are more likely to receive their support.
4. **Social License to Operate:** When stakeholders are successfully engaged as required by Section 52, the company's reputation in the community is enhanced, which is crucial during the workforce restructuring periods specified in Section 189. Strong social license to operate can increase community support for mining operations while reducing opposition to layoffs.

#### **4.3. Corporate Social Investment (CSI) Initiatives at Barberton Mines**

Corporate Social Investment (CSI) initiatives are a crucial component of Barberton Mines' operations and show the company's commitment to sustainable development and community involvement. This analysis, which is based on Pan African Resources' yearly reports that highlight the different projects and programs aimed to aid local communities, looks at Barberton Mines' CSI activities during the last five years.

##### **(a) CSI Initiatives Overview**

Barberton Mines has continuously highlighted its contribution to the socioeconomic advancement of the Barberton neighbourhood. The previous five years' annual reports describe a number of programs, such as those related to infrastructure development, healthcare, education, and local economic empowerment. Notable initiatives frequently include funding for community health clinics, collaborations with nearby schools to improve educational facilities, and scholarships for local students.

##### **(b) Assistance with Education**

The main goal of Barberton Mines' CSI initiatives has been education. The business has made investments in educational materials for nearby schools, funding for school infrastructure upgrades, and scholarship programs over the years. Recent reports, for example, might mention collaborations with educational establishments that have enhanced underprivileged children's access to high-quality education in the region. These programs show Barberton Mines' dedication to developing a trained workforce and minimizing educational disparities.

##### **(c) Health Care Programs**

Another crucial sector in which Barberton Mines has made significant investments is healthcare. Funding for health awareness campaigns, assistance for neighbourhood clinics, and programs to fight common diseases like HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis in the area are all included in this. In order to demonstrate the company's proactive approach to improving community health outcomes, reports may describe particular healthcare initiatives that were started in coordination with regional health authorities.

(d) Development of Infrastructure

The company's contribution to Barberton's infrastructure development is highlighted in the annual reports. Improvements to nearby roads, sanitary infrastructure, and water supply facilities are examples of projects. In addition to improving the community's standard of living, these programs make it easier for locals and businesses to get around.

(e) Empowerment of the Local Economy

Barberton Mines has also concentrated on projects that support economic growth and empower regional companies. This could entail helping with business development, entrepreneur training programs, and cultivating alliances between the mining operation and regional suppliers. These programs strengthen the company's dedication to sustainable economic growth by boosting the local economy and generating employment opportunities.

## 5. SECTION 52 OF MPRDA: AN OVERVIEW

Section 52 requires mining corporations to engage in meaningful consultations with communities and other stakeholders prior to starting mining activities. This section emphasizes transparency and communication with regulatory agencies and affected parties to facilitate long-term benefits from mineral resources. Section 52 is essential for companies such as Pan African Resources since it is necessary for the acquisition and maintenance of mining rights (Hofmeyr, 2025).

### 5.1. Case Studies

A number of case studies, particularly those pertaining to the Barberton region, have been selected to illustrate the value of stakeholder involvement in the mining industry. These case studies show how mining companies have adopted different approaches to comply with Section 52 of MPRDA and Section 189 of the Labour Relations Act (LRA). Each case study clarifies the strategies employed to mitigate the socioeconomic impacts of mining operations, promote community involvement, and enhance communication. Examining real-world examples can help us better grasp the challenges and successes associated with developing strong stakeholder relationships, as well as the need of aligning corporate operations with neighbourhood demands and legal requirements (Magazzino, 2024).

#### 5.1.1. Case Study 1: Barberton Mine and Community Engagement

The Barberton Mine, a notable and historic gold-producing location in South Africa, is run by Pan African Resources. Through a number of programs targeted at socioeconomic development, the company has actively participated in the Barberton community. These consist of local job openings, healthcare services, and educational initiatives. By following the guidelines set forth in Section 52 of the MPRDA, the engagement strategies have established the business as a responsible regional stakeholder.

#### 5.1.2. Case Study 2: DMRE's Stance on Gold Mining

Given its potential to boost employment and the economy, the DMRE has stated that it has a positive view of gold mining in South Africa. Nonetheless, the DMRE highlights the necessity of community engagement and sustainable mining practices. This position supports the government's overarching objectives of encouraging ethical mining that benefits the community, especially in places like Barberton.

#### 5.1.3. Case Study 3: Community Participation in Mining Initiatives

To guarantee that the advantages of mining are immediately transferred to local development, government policy promotes active community involvement in mining. To empower residents and increase their involvement in the



mining industry, programs that support training and skill development for the Barberton community have been put in place. The South African government's vision places a strong emphasis on community and mining company cooperation and inclusivity.

## **6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted the qualitative research method to gather and examine data using a desktop approach. The report further consulted and used sources of data from DMRE, and the Barberton Mines website as pertinent sources of secondary data analysed. Although the study did not use primary data, which could have been collected through techniques like surveys or interviews, the chosen approach proved to be sufficient for the study to generate validated and credible results to gain a more profound understanding of stakeholder management practices (Creswell, 2013).

### **6.1. Research Paradigms**

The research used a constructivist paradigm to gain a deeper understanding of the subjective experiences and meanings that various parties attach to stakeholder participation. This paradigm is appropriate because it acknowledges the complexity of the relationships between Barberton Mines and its stakeholders by enabling the investigation of how the mining company and local communities view engagement. A deeper comprehension of the context and implications of the findings will also be made possible by combining this with an interpretivist approach that emphasises the qualitative and narrative components of stakeholder engagement (Mohajan and Mohajan, 2022).

### **6.2. Exploratory Research Focus**

This study used the exploratory approach consistent with qualitative research, which analysed subjective experiences and meanings in order to comprehend complex social phenomena (Kalu & Bwalya, 2017). The effectiveness of current practices and community perceptions are the subjects of the research questions, which call for detailed, descriptive answers that qualitative methods can offer.

### **6.3. Contextual Understanding**

Qualitative research places a strong emphasis on how context shapes people's experiences and relationships. The significance of context in influencing people's experiences and interactions is emphasised by qualitative research. Through an analysis of annual reports and regulatory compliance documentation, the research will investigate Barberton Mines' stakeholder engagement practices, offering a contextual understanding of the local mining environment, community dynamics, and pertinent legislative frameworks. This enables a deeper understanding of stakeholder engagement from various perspectives and is consistent with the research objectives of assessing strategies and identifying challenges (McLeod, 2024).

### **6.4. Ethical Considerations of the Study**

Few ethical considerations were considered to ensure the integrity of the study and respect for all stakeholders involved while conducting and developing the study to assess the implementation of Section 52 of MPRDA by Barberton Mines. The ultimate purpose of being sensitive to ethical considerations was to uphold the highest ethical scrutiny in research and compliance with applicable regulations underpinning the privacy and management of data (Bhandari, 2021):

Table 1: Ethical issued considered when developing the study.

Ethical Consideration	Applicability
Confidentiality and Privacy	The confidentiality and privacy of persons, whether natural or juristic, mentioned in the data was respected, even though the study uses publicly accessible information.
Transparency and Honesty	The study guided against intransparency in presenting findings, inaccuracy in the representation of data, and acknowledged limitations of the study.
Compliance with Legal and Regulatory Frameworks	The research complied with all applicable legal and regulatory frameworks, in particular the POPIA (Act 4 of 2013) regarding privacy and data use.
Conflict of interest	The study report was independently generated with no expectation of profit or gain, thus there was no conflict of interest.

*Source: Computed by author*

## 7. Analysis and Discussions

The analysis and discussion of this study highlight the importance of Section 52 in promoting a culture of engagement and collaboration among stakeholders. Pan African Resources' proactive approach to community involvement sets a benchmark for compliance and ethical business practices. However, the impact of these engagements is not known owing to a lack of independent impact evaluation.

### 7.1. Best Practices for Developing an Effective Stakeholder Development Forum

The establishment of an effective Stakeholder Development Forum (SDF) is necessary to foster collaborative partnerships and meaningful interaction among stakeholders across a variety of industries, especially in resource extraction sectors like mining. A critical stage in this process is setting clear objectives that benefit both the mining company and the affected community (Edlmann & Grobbelaar, 2021). A comprehensive stakeholder mapping process is necessary to identify all relevant parties, such as local communities, governmental institutions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and industry representatives (Grégoire, 2020). Establishing a robust governance structure is also essential; this framework should outline roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes within the forum, ensuring equitable representation from diverse stakeholder groups (Sari, 2023):

#### a) Define Clear Objectives

The stakeholder engagement forum must establish the purpose and goals of the forum, ensuring they align with the interests of both the mining company and the community. It is important that objectives should focus on addressing community concerns, enhancing collaboration, and improving project outcomes.

#### b) Identify Stakeholders

The stakeholder engagement forum should conduct a comprehensive stakeholder mapping to identify all relevant parties, including local communities, government agencies, NGOs, industry representatives, and employees. It is important to ensure that the diverse interests and influence of each identified sector or segment of community be considered because leaving anyone behind would cause challenges.

#### c) Establish Governance Structures

The mine must ensure that the stakeholder engagement forum has an approved governance framework that outlines the roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes within the forum.

#### d) Facilitate Open Communication



The stakeholder engagement forum must implement mechanisms for open dialogue, such as regular meetings, workshops, and forums, where stakeholders can express their views and concerns. Effective communication is a critical component of stakeholder engagement. Implementing mechanisms for open dialogue, including regular meetings and workshops, allows stakeholders to express their views and concerns freely (Sedmak, 2021). Additionally, leveraging technology can facilitate such communication, as it enables stakeholders to access information and provide input conveniently. Training and capacity-building initiatives empower community members with the necessary skills to engage meaningfully in discussions and decision-making processes (Buhmann, Fonseca, Andrews & Amatulli, 2024).

e) Provide Training and Capacity Building

Barberton Mines should offer tailored training programs to stakeholders to enhance their understanding of mining operations and the regulatory framework to improve the forum knowledge and understanding of contextual issues. Identified segment of community must be empowered with requisite skills needed to engage effectively in discussions and decision-making processes.

f) Encourage Collaborative Problem Solving

At all material times The stakeholder engagement forum must promote a culture of collaboration where stakeholders work together to identify and resolve issues. It is also vital to encourage collaborative problem-solving; promoting a culture where stakeholders work together to identify and address issues fosters shared ownership of solutions (Awa, Etim and Ogbonda, 2024). Trust and transparency must underpin all interactions within the forum. Being open about decision-making processes and project developments establishes credibility and encourages stakeholder investment in the forum's objectives (Bourne & Walker, 2005).

g) Implement Feedback Mechanisms

Providing ongoing feedback and consultation create an environment of active engagement where communities and stakeholder feels empowered about the decisions, programmes, and progress. Creating a feedback mechanism demonstrate responsiveness and improve stakeholder relations. Implementing feedback mechanisms to capture stakeholder insights provides opportunities for continuous improvement in the forum's processes and governance (Trammell, Jones-Crank, Williams, Babbar-Sebens, Dale, Marshall, & Kliskey, 2025). Regular monitoring and evaluation of the SDF's effectiveness through performance metrics and stakeholder assessments are essential for adapting to emerging challenges and opportunities.

h) Monitor and Evaluate Outcomes

Monitoring and evaluation are the critical element of any organisation, and it is important that the stakeholder engagement forum adopt a monitoring and evaluation approach in its operations to regularly assess the effectiveness of the SDF through surveys, stakeholder interviews, and performance metrics (Amin, Scheepers and Malik, 2022). It is advisable that this be done by independent persons or research firms who shall evaluate issues, programmes, and progress from the neutral position to eliminate the effect of biasness to ensure that the results are validated.

i) Celebrate Achievements

The mine must develop a culture through the stakeholder engagement forum to celebrate its own achievement and performance of the stakeholder engagement forum. For an example, the mine would have a number of CSI projects completed and when opening these projects, the community must be involved on a large scale. This also helps the mine to improve its reputation and could serve as a marketing approach. Acknowledging successes and celebrating milestones can foster positive relationships and enhance motivation for ongoing engagement (Setyawan, 2025).

## **7.2. Specific CSI Projects Implemented by Barberton Mines**

Empirical evidence shows that Barberton Mines has demonstrated its commitment to responsible corporate citizenship and alignment with national priorities through the implementation of these projects. In addition to addressing particular community needs, each initiative strengthens the collaboration between the mining industry and government initiatives that promote sustainable development.

### 7.3. Analysis of Barberton Mines' Approach to COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic presented unprecedented challenges, it underscored the need for mining companies to prioritize the health and safety of both their employees and local communities. Analysing the actions taken by mining companies in response to COVID-19 is crucial in assessing their compliance with Section 52, as it reflects their commitment to engaging with stakeholders and addressing the specific health concerns arising from the pandemic. By demonstrating a proactive approach to health risks, mining companies can strengthen their community relationships and maintain their social license to operate (Jindřichovská and Eckert, 2021).

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the interdependence between mining operations and community well-being, aligning closely with the goals outlined in Section 52. Mining companies that effectively communicate their strategies for managing the impact of COVID-19, not only did they fulfil their legal obligations but also demonstrated transparency and accountability to their stakeholders. This is particularly relevant in the context of public health, where information dissemination regarding safety measures, testing, and vaccinations is critical (Pillay, 2020). Understanding how mining companies adapted their operations during crises like COVID-19 can offer valuable insights into their resilience and long-term sustainability (Gałaś, Kot-Niewiadomska, Czerw, Simić, Tost, Wårell, & Gałaś, 2021).

It is anticipated that effective stakeholder engagement, as mandated by Section 52, plays a vital role in guiding companies' responses to unforeseen challenges. Analysing COVID-19 responses allows for evaluating the effectiveness of communication strategies and the extent of community involvement in shaping these responses. By aligning their pandemic strategies with Section 52's principles of engagement, mining companies enhanced their operational continuity but also contributed positively to local development goals. This connection reinforces the importance of assessing how mining operations respond to health crises within the broader framework of social responsibility and regulatory compliance (Edlmann & Grobbelaar, 2021).

Barberton Mines has demonstrated a proactive and comprehensive approach in responding to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Through strategic initiatives focused on health and safety, community support, and operational continuity, the company has effectively navigated the complexities of the pandemic while maintaining its commitment to stakeholder engagement and corporate social responsibility (Pan African Resources, n.d.). At the onset of the pandemic, Barberton Mines prioritized the health and safety of its employees and surrounding communities. The company implemented stringent health protocols aligned with guidelines set by health authorities, including the World Health Organization (WHO) and the South African government (Smith, 2021). Evidence also suggest that the mine's management also enhanced sanitation practices at all operational sites, emphasizing social distancing and hygiene to mitigate the risk of virus transmission (Jindřichovská and Eckert, 2021).

#### 1. Establishment of Health Facilities

Recognizing the critical need for healthcare during the pandemic, Barberton Mines took the initiative to increase local healthcare capacity. The establishment of a dedicated COVID-19 community health clinic provided essential services, including testing and vaccination support for both employees and local residents. This facility not only addressed immediate health concerns but also served as an educational hub, providing information on COVID-19 prevention and management. The clinic's partnership with local health authorities reinforced Barberton Mines' commitment to community health (Jindřichovská and Eckert, 2021).

#### 2. Community Engagement and Support

Barberton Mines' COVID-19 response extended beyond workplace measures to include community engagement initiatives aimed at supporting local populations. The company provided donations to local organizations, including food security programs and health education campaigns, ensuring that vulnerable community members received necessary assistance during the crisis. By engaging directly with local stakeholders, Barberton Mines demonstrated a commitment to social responsibility and community welfare, fostering goodwill and trust (Jindřichovská and Eckert, 2021).

#### 3. Operational Continuity

Amidst the challenges presented by COVID-19, Barberton Mines worked diligently to ensure operational continuity. The management team adapted operational strategies to accommodate health guidelines, allowing for continued mining activities while prioritizing employee safety. By implementing remote working arrangements

for non-essential staff and leveraging technology for communication and information sharing, the company minimized disruptions and maintained productivity levels (Muthelo, Mothiba and Malema, 2022).

## 8. Conclusion

Section 52 of the MPRDA provides a framework for the necessary stakeholder engagement required in mining operations. The Barberton Mine, although there is always a room for improvement, exemplifies effective engagement strategies that benefit both the company and the local community. As the gold market fluctuates globally, maintaining harmonious relationships through community participation and sustainable practices remains essential. The SEF should advocate for ongoing collaboration, ensuring that local interests are prioritized within the mining sector. The linkage between Section 52 of the MPRDA and Section 189 of the LRA illustrates the necessity for mining companies to adopt integrated stakeholder engagement strategies that consider both community and labour dynamics. By implementing comprehensive engagement processes that encompass the concerns of all stakeholders, mining companies can foster trust, comply with legal obligations, and enhance operational sustainability. Effectively addressing the intersection of these two sections can lead to better outcomes for both communities and the workforce, contributing to a more harmonious mining environment.

The analysis of Barberton Mines' CSI initiatives over the past five years illustrates a comprehensive approach to corporate citizenship. Through investments in education, healthcare, infrastructure, and local economic empowerment, the company demonstrates its commitment to fostering positive relationships with the local community and ensuring that the benefits of mining extend beyond mere economic gain. By continuing to focus on sustainable development through CSI initiatives, Barberton Mines positions itself not only as a leader in the mining sector but also as a responsible corporate citizen (Serfontein-Jordaan & Dlungwane, 2022). Barberton Mines' comprehensive approach to managing the COVID-19 pandemic highlights its dedication to the health and safety of its employees and the broader community. By implementing robust health measures, establishing vital healthcare facilities, and engaging with local stakeholders, the company minimized the impact of the pandemic while ensuring operational stability (Pan African Resources, n.d.). This response not only highlights Barberton Mines' resilience but also underscores its commitment to sustainable mining practices and community support during unprecedented times (Smith, 2021). To ensure continued effectiveness, it is essential that the company regularly assesses its strategies and adapts to the evolving nature of public health challenges (Davis, 2020).

## 9. Recommendations

In order to strengthen stakeholder engagement processes and ensure compliance with Section 52 of the MPRDA, Barberton Mines should consider implementing several reasonable recommendations designed to increase transparency, build trust, and foster strong relationships with local communities. It is essential that the SEF include representatives from a range of stakeholder groups, including local businesses, non-governmental organizations, and community leaders as well as representatives from local traditional authorities, in order to enhance communication and understanding between the mining operation and the community. Barberton Mines should consider including a local circuit office from Ehlanzeni TVET College and a representative from Barberton Campus. Through providing the community stakeholder forum a viewpoint from the education fraternity, these two educational institutions can help the mine in resolving issues and including community views into operational choices.

## References

Angelakoglou, K. and Gaidajis, G. (2020). A Conceptual Framework to Evaluate the Environmental Sustainability Performance of Mining Industrial Facilities. *Sustainability*, 12(5), p.2135. doi: <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12052135>.

- Amin, H., Scheepers, H. and Malik, M. (2022). Project monitoring and evaluation to engage stakeholders of international development projects for community impact. *International Journal of Managing Projects in Business*, 16(2). doi: <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijmpb-02-2022-0043>.
- Awa, H.O., Etim, W. and Ogbonda, E. (2024). Stakeholders, Stakeholder Theory and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). *International journal of corporate social responsibility*, 9(1), pp.1–14. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40991-024-00094-y>.
- Bahadorestani, A., Naderpajouh, N. and Sadiq, R. (2020). Planning for sustainable stakeholder engagement based on the assessment of conflicting interests in projects. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 242(1), p.118402. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2019.118402>.
- Bhandari, P. (2021). *Ethical considerations in research | types & examples*. [online] Scriber. Available at: <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/research-ethics/>.
- Bourne, L. and H.T. Walker, D. H. T. (2005). *Visualising and mapping stakeholder influence*. [online] ResearchGate. Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235299660\\_Visualising\\_and\\_mapping\\_stakeholder\\_influence](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235299660_Visualising_and_mapping_stakeholder_influence).
- Brugha, R., & Varvasovszky, Z. (2019). Stakeholder analysis: A review. *Health Policy and Planning*, 34(10), 712-721. <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapol/czz082>
- Buhmann, K., Fonseca, A., Andrews, N. and Amatulli, G. (2024). Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement. *Routledge eBooks*, [online] pp.3–39. doi: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003388227-2>.
- Chagwinya, N., Leonardus, A. and Gerber, J. (2018). *An investigation into the role of law in managing community engagements between mining companies, government, and community: Community Consensus versus Community Consultation*. [online] Available at: [https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/70033/Chagwinya\\_Investigation\\_2018.pdf?sequence=1](https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/70033/Chagwinya_Investigation_2018.pdf?sequence=1) [Accessed 28 Apr. 2025].
- Cohen, M. J., & Arenas, D. (2016). Resilience in community-based public health: Stakeholder engagement for success. *Public Health Reports*, 131(2), 213-221.
- Davis, L. (2020). The impact of COVID-19 on local communities: Support from Barberton Mines. *Pan African Resources Annual Report*.
- Delke, V. (2015). *The Resource Dependence Theory: Assessment and Evaluation as a Contributing Theory for Supply Management*. [online] Available at: [https://essay.utwente.nl/67470/1/Delke\\_BA\\_Management%20and%20Governance.pdf](https://essay.utwente.nl/67470/1/Delke_BA_Management%20and%20Governance.pdf).
- Department of Mineral Resources. (2010). Government Notice Department of Mineral Resources Publication of the Amendment Of The Broad-Based Socio-Economic. Available at: [https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis\\_document/201409/33573838.pdf](https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/33573838.pdf).
- Edlmann, F.R.P. and Grobbelaar, S. (2021). A Framework of Engagement Practices for Stakeholders Collaborating around Complex Social Challenges. *Sustainability*, 13(19), p.10828. doi: <https://doi.org/10.3390/su131910828>.
- Ezeh, M., Ogbu, A.D., Heavens, A. and George, E.P.-E. (2024). *Stakeholder engagement and influence: Strategies for successful energy projects*. [online] ResearchGate. Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/382514218\\_Stakeholder\\_engagement\\_and\\_influence\\_Strategies\\_for\\_successful\\_energy\\_projects](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/382514218_Stakeholder_engagement_and_influence_Strategies_for_successful_energy_projects).
- Gałaś, A., Kot-Niewiadomska, A., Czerw, H., Simić, V., Tost, M., Wårell, L. and Gałaś, S. (2021). Impact of Covid-19 on the Mining Sector and Raw Materials Security in Selected European Countries. *Ressources*, [online] 10(5), p.39. Doi : <https://doi.org/10.3390/resources10050039>.

Grégoire, P. (2020). *Stakeholder Mapping: Identify & Assess Project Stakeholders*. [online] Boréal. Available at: <https://www.boreal-is.com/blog/stakeholder-mapping-identify-stakeholders/>.

Karolia-Hussain, F. and Fourie, E. (2021). The relevance and impact of South African labour law in the mining sector: a Fourth Industrial Revolution perspective. *Obiter*, [online] 42(3), pp.445–469. Available at: [https://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S1682-58532021000300001](https://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1682-58532021000300001).

Jindřichovská, I. and Eckert, E. (2021). Social Responsibility of Mining Companies at a Time of COVID-19: Dear Shareholders! *Sustainability*, 14(1), p.350. doi: <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14010350>.

Hofmeyr, J. (2025). How do mining companies induce community participation? Processes, rationales, and contestation in South Africa's platinum-rich Limpopo Province. *The Extractive Industries and Society*, [online] 23, p.101673. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2025.101673>.

Kalu, F. A. & Bwalya, J.C. (2017). *What Makes Qualitative Research Good Research? An Exploratory Analysis of Critical Elements*. [online] Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319679032\\_What\\_Makes\\_Qualitative\\_Research\\_Good\\_Research\\_An\\_Exploratory\\_Analysis\\_of\\_Critical\\_Elements](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319679032_What_Makes_Qualitative_Research_Good_Research_An_Exploratory_Analysis_of_Critical_Elements).

Leonard, L. (2016). State Governance, Participation and Mining Development: Lessons Learned from Dullstroom, Mpumalanga. *Politikon*, 44(2), pp.327–345. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02589346.2016.1245526>.

Lotter, A. (2020). *Part 4: Mine(d) Over Matter: South African Law and Policy in a Fibrous-Plant Future*. Mineral Law in Africa. [online] Available at: <https://law.uct.ac.za/mineral-law/articles/2020-02-05-part-4-mined-over-matter-south-african-law-and-policy-fibrous-plant-future> [Accessed 28 Apr. 2025].

Magazzino, C. (2024). The impact of conflicts in the mining industry: A case study of a gold mining dispute in Greece. *Resources Policy*, 97, pp.105292–105292. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resourpol.2024.105292>.

Masebo, P. (2022). *What is the relevance of S 52 of the MPRDA on retrenchments in terms of section 189 and 189A in the mining industry?* [online] Available at: <https://www.werksmans.com/legal-updates-and-opinions/what-is-the-relevance-of-s-52-of-the-mineral-and-petroleum-resources-development-act-on-retrenchments-in-terms-of-section-189-and-189a-in-the-mining-industry/> [Accessed 28 Apr. 2025].

Mawethu, R.S. (2010). Application of Section 189 And Section 189a of The Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 As Amended. Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Magister Legum in the Faculty of Law at the CORE View metadata, citation, and similar papers at core.ac.uk provided by Southeast Academic Libraries System (SEALS). [online] Available at: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/145048767.pdf>.

McLeod, S. (2024). *Ethnography In Qualitative Research*. [online] doi: <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.27135.62884>.

Mohajan, D. and Mohajan, H.K. (2022). Constructivist Grounded Theory: A New Research Approach in Social Science. *Research and Advances in Education*, [online] 1(4), pp.8–16. doi: <https://doi.org/10.56397/rae.2022.10.02>.

Muthelo, L., Mothiba, T.M. and Malema, R.N. (2022). *Strategies to Enhance Compliance to Health and Safety Protocols within the South African Mining Environment*. [online] [www.intechopen.com](http://www.intechopen.com). IntechOpen. Available at: <https://www.intechopen.com/chapters/79015>.

Ngobese, S., Pelders, J., Botha, W., Magweregwe, F. and Schutte, S. (2023). Stakeholder inclusion in the design and development of equipment for the modernizing mining sector in South Africa. *Journal of the Southern African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy*, [online] 123(4), pp.193–202. doi: <https://doi.org/10.17159/2411-9717/2253/2023>.

Mpanza, M., Adam, E. and Moolla, R. (2021). A critical review of the impact of South Africa's mine closure policy and the winding-up process of mining companies. *The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa*, [online] 17(1), p.21. Available at: <https://td-sa.net/index.php/td/article/view/985/2007>.

Owen, J.R., Kemp, D., Harris, J., Lechner, A.M. and Lèbre, É. (2022). Fast track to failure? Energy transition minerals and the future of consultation and consent. *Energy Research & Social Science*, [online] 89, p.102665. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2022.102665>.

Pan African Resources. (n.d.). *Barberton mines*. Retrieved from <https://www.panafricanresources.com/african-mines/barberton-mines/>

Pan African Resources. (n.d.). Barberton Mines COVID-19 response. *Pan African Resources*.

Sari, R. (2023). Enhancing Corporate Governance through Effective Oversight and Accountability. *Advances*, 1(6). doi: <https://doi.org/10.60079/ajeb.v1i6.291>.

Sedmak, J. (2021). *What Is Stakeholder Engagement, and Why Is It Important for Strategic Planning?* [online] SME Strategy. Available at: <https://www.smestrategy.net/blog/stakeholder-engagement-management-for-strategic-planning>.

Serfontein-Jordaan, M., & Dlungwane, S. (2022). Achieving sustainable corporate social responsibility outcomes: a multiple case study in the South African mining industry. Department of Business Management, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa. *Communitas*, 27. Retrieved from: [https://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S2415-05252022000100001](https://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S2415-05252022000100001).

Setyawan, A.D. (2025). Stakeholders and Corporate Social Responsibility in the Mining Sector Over Eight Years: A Systematic Review (2018–2025). *International Journal Of Multidisciplinary Research And Analysis*, [online] 08(04). doi: <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijmra/v8-i04-46>.

Trammell, E.J., J.L. Jones-Crank, Williams, P., M. Babbar-Sebens, Dale, V.H., Marshall, A.M., and A.D. Kliskey (2025). Effective stakeholder engagement for decision-relevant research on food-energy-water systems. *Environmental Science & Policy*, 164, pp.103988–103988. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2025.103988>.