



RESOURCEFUL SOLUTIONS

In the first collaboration of its kind, UQ’s Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining is advising and working with some of the world’s leading mining companies to improve the lives of people affected by resettlement.

When people are displaced, they lose more than just their homes and land – their health, education, rights, and even lives can be at stake.

Global mobility due to displacement is on the rise – caused by political and armed conflict, rising sea levels, and natural disasters, among others – and leads to a myriad of issues for both displaced people and the communities they resettle within.

Mining-induced displacement and resettlement (MIDR) is one such cause, which affects the lives of millions of people around the world who reside near current mines or sites identified for future mining activity.

Unfortunately, the mining industry has not always handled MIDR well.

“It’s something that the industry has long struggled with,” says Associate Professor John Owen from the Sustainable Minerals Institute’s Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining (SMI-CSR).

“Yet when the need for resettlement arises, this is not always done well. It’s something that the industry has long struggled with.”

Earlier this year, Associate Professor Owen and Professor Deanna Kemp, Director of the SMI-CSR, oversaw the launch of the UQ-SMI Mining, Resettlement and Livelihoods: Research and Practice Consortium.

The Consortium brings together researchers from UQ’s Sustainable Minerals Institute (SMI) with five of the world’s largest mining companies – Anglo American, MMG,

Newcrest Mining Limited, Newmont and Rio Tinto – and allows industry representatives to look at resettlement issues in a collaborative manner.

“Mining companies all face similar problems. The point of the Consortium is not to make a single operation or company the focus of research, but instead to focus on the issue,” says Professor Kemp.

“Our industry partners agreed to pool their funds to look at this as an industry-wide issue, rather than focusing on individual instances of poor practice.”

Rachel Durdin is General Manager, Project Shaping at Rio Tinto, one of the partners in the Consortium. She says this collaboration is an important part of tackling what is a highly sensitive topic.

“You want to keep people engaged and open to contributing. A lot of the cases are not positive stories, especially in resettlement, so we’re looking for an environment to be able to do that,” says Ms Durdin.

“The Consortium provides a platform for us to look at our approach in a critical and constructive way.”

Challenges of mining-induced resettlement

Professor Kemp and Associate Professor Owen were motivated by the lack of research and dedicated policy in the area of MIDR. Currently, mining resettlement is governed by general standards such as those developed by the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation (IFC).

These standards are designed to deal with broader development-induced displacement and resettlement, which mostly takes place at the beginning of the project, such as the start of the construction of a hydropower dam or road.

“Mines can keep expanding, and their footprint changes over time, so a lot of displacement happens as the operation moves forward,” says Professor Kemp.

“That’s something that the general World Bank and IFC standards don’t cover so well, and is the major challenge in this industry.”

Indeed, the data gathered by Professor Kemp and Associate Professor Owen show that around two-thirds of mining-induced resettlement takes place several years after a project is up and running..

Professor Kemp and Associate Professor Owen say a closely related issue is that of brownfield resettlement.

Mining projects can be roughly divided into greenfield and brownfield sites. Greenfield sites are where no mining activity has occurred in the past, while brownfield sites are where mines are currently operating, or where there have been mines in the past.

Associate Professor Owen says brownfield sites can have an industrial history complicated by previous disturbances to land and natural resources in the area.

“When you look at a brownfield site, you have to take all of that history and prior disturbance into account,” he says. “In these environments communities have already experienced significant impacts.

"In greenfield projects there is typically less of this industrial history. A lot of the other industries we look at that are covered by these international standards don't find themselves having to plan for resettlements, during the operational phase of a project."

Shaping resettlement policy

In August this year, Professor Kemp and Associate Professor Owen hosted a resettlement practice workshop at UQ for Rio Tinto.

The workshop brought together practitioners from across the company's global operations, together with experts from SMI-CSRSM.

"We want to really understand what the challenges are and, having identified the challenges, come up with some solutions," says Janina Gawler, Global Practice Leader for Communities and Social Performance with Rio Tinto.

She says it can be difficult to maintain knowledge and learnings around resettlement because mining projects take place over many years, and people with the knowledge often move on to different positions.

"We're having the workshop to try and capture the knowledge while we've got a strong body of capability from the business, and then use that to go back into project development..

"Too often I think what we do is learn in the moment and then put it to one side. The intention of this session with SMI-CSRSM is to get them to challenge us, to distil our learnings and to help us determine what needs to happen going forward."

Following on from the workshop, Rio Tinto have now commissioned UQ to conduct additional research to assist them in better understanding the resources needed for responsible resettlement.

Looking to the future

The Consortium is now working on a number of initiatives to help improve mining resettlement practices.

One is the database of MIDR cases, intended to preserve knowledge and understanding of resettlement issues.

"We've been working for about three years on building this database, which is the first global database on mining resettlement cases," says Professor Kemp.

The database allows researchers to access information on resettlement cases from across the world, to analyse patterns and influence industry policy and practices. It also provides near-mine communities with information about what they can expect in the event of resettlement.

"In an industry that is so data-driven, we need data to focus the industry's attention," says Associate Professor Owen.

Another initiative is a comparative analysis of the regulatory frameworks of six active mining economies, where some of the world's largest mining companies operate.

Professor Kemp and Associate Professor Owen hope this framework will help provide a basis for shaping resettlement laws and regulations into the future.

Professor Kemp says the mission for the Consortium is to reframe how the mining industry approaches its impact on local communities..

"We want to continue to improve practice and policy, build an evidence base, open up new avenues for collaboration, and make sure the industry is focused on this."

uq.edu.au/research/impact

(Image credit: SMI-CSRSM)

Progress to date:

2001: The Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining (SMI-CSRSM) is established at UQ

2002: Theodore Downing's Mining, Minerals and Sustainable Development (MMSD) calls attention to major knowledge and policy gap relating to resettlement in global mining industry

2002-2010: CSRSM researchers are involved in empirical studies where mining-induced displacement and resettlement (MIDR) presents significant company and community risks

2010: Associate Professor Owen and Professor Kemp undertake intensive resettlement-related studies; Owen serves as independent IFC monitor for the re-opening of the Gold Ridge mine in the Solomon Islands

2013: Professor Kemp and Associate Professor Owen engage mining companies in policy and sector-wide discussions about MIDR

2014: Four global mining companies provide funding to establish an eLibrary and start development of a database of resettlement cases

2015: 'Mining induced displacement and resettlement: a critical appraisal' paper published in *Resources Policy* journal

2016: Development starts on a mining resettlement consortium

2017: Official launch of the UQ-SMI Mining, Resettlement and Livelihoods: Research and Practice Consortium, and a fifth company joins

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