

IAIA 18

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Preferred Session: Involuntary Resettlement: Social License to Operate

Title of paper / presentation

Managing Resettlement Expectations, Risks and Timelines

Social license to operate has become a fundamental requirement for all mining companies; however, their approach and management of issues such as involuntary resettlement often undermine this. The term 'resettlement' often brings about concerns of huge capital expenditure, schedule delays and community unrest. For communities the term can create anxiety and uncertainty, yet also anticipation. It is often these juxtaposed views that can complicate the process, but also provide opportunities for improved social license.

It is a fact that resettlement is often a very slow and delicate process, this often goes directly against a mines unrelenting schedule, milestones and budgets. The question is – which is more important, a carefully managed and implemented resettlement process or an unwavering adherence to a schedule? This is often the difficult role of the resettlement practitioner - to juggle the demands of the mine together with expectations from affected communities.

The bottom line is, a mining company's core business is to mine and make profits – anything outside of that task is a secondary obligation and a possible hurdle, this includes resettlement. It is all too often that for this reason mining companies seek the quickest and easiest option to relocate people. This will usually jeopardize the long-term sustainability of the process, have a detrimental impact on social license and incur further costs down the road.

Summary statement

How the disconnect between a mines unrelenting schedule and budget and a carefully managed and implemented resettlement process can undermine a resettlement process and social license.

Presenting author bio

Andrew Hart is a resettlement and development consultant with over 10 years' experience in the management and implementation of resettlement action plans throughout Africa.