

The shifting paradigm: A new landscape for collaboration

by Eric Lundgren

The mining paradigm is changing on the continent of Africa. Jessica Kogel's closing statement from her September 2013 President's Page (*ME*, September 2013, pp. 6) has never been more appropriate, "Africa is shaping up to be the next mining powerhouse, and there is huge opportunity for local communities, national governments and private industry to work together to create a win-win situation for all." Supporting this notion, attendance at numerous industry conferences around the world demonstrates the shift toward a more

success in scale and sustainability is not always accomplished from our work alone.

As the director of international programs for Africare, a nonprofit with more than 40 years of experience implementing community-based development programs in Africa, I can report that our organization is changing the way we think about successful development partnerships. Africare recognizes that for too long the mining sector and nonprofits have been at odds, choosing noncommunication as a "solution" to the problem. Both sides now recognize that this standoff is outdated, and Africare, specifically, is ready to cross the proverbial line. We see the potential benefits of mining for local communities and, when done responsibly, the opportunity to properly manage Africa's resource boom as a benefit to all.

There are challenges in this conversation. Many mining professionals view nonprofits as whistle-blowers, ready in a pinch to speak to news sources and complain about poor operational standards. Those are advocacy organizations, and while their role is important, they are not the only nonprofits interested in mining operations in developing countries. Organizations like Africare, with decades of experience implementing poverty reduction programs, approach this differently. We know we can work with mining companies to promote economic opportunity in the communities where mining operations are occurring. We recognize that the conversation is difficult, and we are open to discussions about how we can bring our unique experience to bear on the problems faced by mining companies in carrying out their investment programs.

We are local. As a nonprofit, Africare's mission is to improve the quality of life for the Africans with whom we partner. Staffed by more than 95 percent locally hired Africans, we have an intimate knowledge of the concerns and solutions that best suit the local communities with which we work.

We are focused on results. Programs implemented for communities near mining



sustainable, more environmentally conscious extractive model. But questions remain: How effectively is the industry making this transition, and how willing are companies to learn from the experiences of others?

The international development community, as we like to call ourselves, is going through a parallel shift. We are experiencing our own funding crisis; governments are not as flush with resources as they were pre-economic meltdown. But more importantly, after a half century of implementing development programs, we must admit that while

some of our programs have been fantastically successful, too many still fail to achieve the goal of poverty alleviation for the world's poorest. Moving forward, we are forced to recognize that achieving

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investments should not be measured by the number of handouts given but by the number of lives improved in a sustainable fashion, including access to long-term income generating opportunities. It is the latter that compels Africare to shift from traditional aid sources to mutually beneficial partnerships with private sector companies.

We are trusted. Africare has operated from a nonpartisan standpoint for more than 40 years and in more than 35 countries, earning the trust of local communities, governments and other stakeholders, including international investors. In this capacity, Africare explores partnerships with private sector companies that share the vision of building local capacity and strengthening institutions in Africa. Communities know that projects represent their needs and companies assure us that projects align with responsible operational criteria outlined by international bodies such as the International Council for Mining and Minerals and the African Union.

We are nimble. Commodity prices change. Africare understands that the various stages of exploration and extraction influence cash flow. But we also understand that certain community needs are not going to change because of external economic factors, and we are committed to finding a balance between these realities

when working with communities supported by extractive industries.

We are committed. Mining companies and nonprofits have the unique ability to commit to long-term solutions. Unbridled by impending elections, we have the ability to work in partnership to influence governments to support policies that benefit effective operations, local community needs, various supply chains and sustainable workforce development – all critical issues faced by countless companies attempting to invest in developing countries, particularly those in subSaharan Africa. This long timeframe also allows Africare to focus on sustainable solutions to the root causes of poverty, rather than using bandaid approaches to whatever symptoms are most visible.

At the upcoming SME Annual Meeting in Salt Lake City, UT (Feb. 23-26, 2014), I will join a panel of thought leaders speaking at the keynote session (Monday, Feb. 24, Salt Lake Convention Center, 8:30 am), including colleagues from Conservation International, the Wildlife Habitat Council, the International Finance Corp., Newmont Mining Corp. and Rio Tinto. I look forward to discussing and listening to how the mining community can reframe its approach to promoting sustainable development. Beyond Salt Lake City, I look forward to meeting you in the field, collaborating on the win-win situation Kogel so accurately articulated in September. ■

The 2014 SME Annual Meeting – There's an app for that

For the third consecutive year, the SME Annual Meeting app is available for free, and this year the app is full of new and improved features.

One of the most visible upgrades will be in the mapping feature. Not only does the app have the ability to draw a map to get attendees from one booth or meeting to the next, but this year's version is digitized, meaning its users can zoom in and out to find where they want to go.

Other improvements from the versions used the previous two years are the ability to build a personal schedule, connect with friends and post photos and video from the meeting.

“We collected comments and suggestions about the app that was used in Seattle (2011) and Denver (2012) to design this version,” said Liz Jones, SME meetings coordinator. “This app is designed to be a digital version of the Pocket

Program. We will still have the Pocket Program, but this has the same information and will be updated with any changes.”

Once the app is downloaded to any Apple, Droid or Blackberry device from Apple's App Store or Google Play store (search for SME Meetings), it does not require a WiFi signal to function.

Through the Dashboard function, users of the app will be able to find a complete list of exhibitors (searchable by name and category), maps to the exhibit hall in the Salt Palace Convention Center and the Marriott hotel, where many of the meetings will take place. Users will also be able to read through 690 abstracts that are searchable by day and field of interest. A complete list of technical sessions is also available and searchable by date and by track. ■