

Social acceptance needs to extend past mine closure

Social acceptance of mining continues to be a challenge, not only during operations but also after closure. "Although there is a strong recognition that mining companies must rehabilitate the mining-impacted biophysical environment, many are still struggling to develop trust - or a social license to operate - within mine-affected communities," said Jessica Edwards, SRK Consulting senior social scientist.



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Even though there was general consensus that stakeholders should be engaged throughout the mine closure process, stakeholder engagement still mainly revolves around permitting processes. "Traditionally, the focus is on informing, consulting and sometimes involving stakeholders in the decision-making process. Little thought is given to more innovative or collaborative approaches for achieving sustainable benefits to communities," she said.

South Africa's once dominant mining industry is increasingly faced with the realities of mine closure, and with the absence of clear guidance on how to facilitate this closure, mining companies are left with more questions than answers.

"With an increasing number of mines approaching the end of life, good practise examples of social transitioning are bound to emerge," said Edwards. In the interim, mine closure experts must rely on established community development approaches towards sustainable social transitioning beyond closure.

Edwards presented a paper, [Social aspects of mine closure: The elephant in the room](#) at the the 13th International Conference on Mine Closure in Perth earlier last month, which she co-authored with SRK senior environmental scientist Ashleigh Maritz.