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### Assessing the Effectiveness of Mopani Copper Mines in Promoting Employment and Enhancing Household Income: A Case Study of Kantanshi Constituency, Mufulira District

<sup>1</sup> Nancy Sanga, <sup>2</sup> Chisala C Bwalya

<sup>1,2</sup> Department of Development Studies, Information and Communication University, Lusaka, Zambia

Corresponding Author: Nancy Sanga

#### Abstract

This study empirically investigates the paradoxical coexistence of corporate wealth and community poverty in Zambia's mining sector, critically assessing why Mopani Copper Mines (MCM), a cornerstone of the national economy, fails to generate equitable employment and resilient household incomes in its host community, Kantanshi Constituency. Through a rigorous case study methodology employing structured questionnaires with sixty (60) purposively sampled residents and statistical analysis in STATA, the research systematically critiques MCM's core operational practices. The findings deliver a stark verdict: MCM's recruitment is structurally exclusionary, with half the local population never applying due to opaque processes and perceived nepotism; its wage structures, though a

primary income source for 51.7% of households, are critically undermined by inadequacy and irregular payments, leaving 21.7% of families worse off; and its training programs are rendered ineffective by negligible awareness (58.3% uninformed) and a profound misalignment with industry skills demands, resulting in dismal job absorption. The study concludes that MCM's operational model perpetuates, rather than mitigates, local socio-economic disparities, offering unequivocal evidence that without a fundamental re-orientation towards transparent, inclusive, and community-centric human capital policies, the mine's developmental promise will remain unfulfilled, cementing its role as an enclave economy rather than a catalyst for broad-based prosperity.

**Keywords:** Employment, Household Income, Recruitment Practices, Training Programs, Mining Sector Zambia

#### 1. Introduction

The global mining sector is undergoing a profound transformation, driven significantly by the escalating demand for copper, a cornerstone of the green energy transition essential for renewable infrastructure, electric vehicles, and digital technologies (International Energy Agency, 2023). This surge in demand has intensified extraction activities worldwide, coinciding with international efforts, such as the ILO's Skills Development for Employability Programme (2019) [28], to align mining operations with sustainable development imperatives that foster inclusive employment and equitable income distribution. However, these aspirations increasingly clash with industry-wide automation trends, where the adoption of artificial intelligence and autonomous systems enhances operational efficiency but simultaneously displaces low-skilled labour and exacerbates socio-economic disparities in resource-dependent economies (Bhattacharya & Jenkins, 2022) [8]. This paradox is acutely visible in nations like Zambia, where mining contributes over 70% of export revenues yet employs a mere fraction of the workforce, revealing a critical misalignment between capital-intensive productivity and broad-based livelihood security, a challenge further compounded by volatile commodity prices and recurrent energy crises (World Bank, 2023).

Within the African context, the African Mining Vision (AMV, 2009) was established to guide the conversion of mineral wealth into sustainable and inclusive development; however, its implementation has been marked by persistent contradictions between policy rhetoric and on-ground realities. Zambia epitomizes this gap, where despite legislative frameworks like the Mines and Minerals Development Act (2015) and significant foreign investment, challenges such as fiscal inconsistency and critical skills mismatches undermine local benefits (World Bank, 2024). For instance, while corporate training programs have been initiated, they often prioritize niche technical skills over transferable competencies, leaving a significant portion of the local labour force, including artisanal miners and women, excluded from formal employment opportunities due to credential

barriers and underdeveloped local supplier ecosystems (Southern African Resource Watch, 2021) <sup>[52]</sup>. Consequently, despite increases in mineral output and tax revenues, poverty rates in mining communities like those in the Copperbelt have remained stubbornly high, exposing the unfulfilled promise of mineral-driven structural transformation (Natural Resource Governance Institute, 2022) <sup>[49]</sup>.

This study focuses on Mopani Copper Mines (MCM) in the Mufulira District, a pivotal entity that embodies the tensions between technological modernization and inclusive community development. Acquired by International Resources Holding (IRH) in 2024, MCM's "Mine of the Future" initiative promises enhanced production and employment, yet its impact on equitable job creation and household income resilience in its host community, Kantanshi Constituency, remains deeply contested (MCM, 2024) <sup>[43]</sup>. Initiatives such as targeted training programs have shown limited success in translating skills into secure employment, with reports indicating that only a small fraction of graduates gain full-time positions (Zambian National Assembly, 2023) <sup>[56]</sup>. Furthermore, persistent issues such as inadequate wages, gendered exclusion from technical roles, and the systemic barriers faced by local applicants raise fundamental questions about the sustainability and fairness of MCM's developmental impact (Musonda, 2024; ILO, 2021) <sup>[47, 29]</sup>. It is against this backdrop that this research seeks to critically assess the effectiveness of Mopani Copper Mines in promoting employment and enhancing household income, thereby addressing the critical gap between corporate economic output and tangible socio-economic improvements for the local population.

## 1.2 General Objective

To assess the effectiveness of Mopani Copper Mines in promoting employment and enhancing household income in Kantanshi Constituency, Mufulira District.

### 1.2.1 Specific Objectives

1. To assess the effects of Mopani Copper Mines' recruitment practices on employment levels among residents of Kantanshi Constituency.
2. To examine the influence of Mopani Copper Mines' wage structures and employee benefits on household income and economic well-being in the community.
3. To assess the effectiveness of Mopani Copper Mines' training and skills development programs on job opportunities for youth and women in Kantanshi Constituency.

## 1.3 Theoretical Framework

This study is theoretically anchored in human capital theory (Becker, 1964) <sup>[7]</sup>, which posits that investments in education, skills, and health are fundamental drivers of long-term economic returns through enhanced productivity and employability. The theory provides a critical lens to interrogate whether Mopani Copper Mines' (MCM) corporate practices namely its recruitment, wage structures, and training programs function as genuine investments that build community human capital or, conversely, perpetuate cycles of poverty and exclusion. It directly underpins the study's objectives by framing the analysis of recruitment to assess the equitable integration of marginalized groups (Schultz, 1961), evaluating if wage structures reflect fair

returns on labour productivity (World Bank, 2023), and testing whether skills development programs facilitate transitions from informal to formal employment, a cornerstone of sustainable human capital utilization (ILO, 2022). By bridging corporate strategy with community outcomes, human capital theory thus offers a robust framework for critiquing MCM's role in Zambia's development trajectory and for proposing pathways toward more inclusive growth in the Kantanshi Constituency.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Effects of Mopani Copper Mines' Recruitment Practices on Employment Levels

Globally, the literature reveals that mining recruitment practices are a critical determinant of local employment outcomes, though their effectiveness is mediated by corporate strategy, regulatory frameworks, and technological change. Studies from Europe demonstrate that localized hiring can significantly boost regional employment, with Allard *et al.* (2020) <sup>[3]</sup> and Koivisto *et al.* (2022) <sup>[39]</sup> reporting 8-10% increases in Sweden and Finland, respectively, though skill mismatches remain a challenge. In North America, contrasting models emerge: Canada's targeted indigenous hiring programs raised employment by 15% (Storey, 2021), while the U.S. reliance on temporary contract labor undermined job stability (Smith *et al.*, 2023). South American research further underscores the importance of transparency, with Morales and Sánchez (2021) linking open job postings in Chile to a 12% rise in local hiring, while Torres *et al.* (2022) found community-based initiatives in Peru increased employment by 14%. However, these gains are not universal; Australia's Fly-In-Fly-Out (FIFO) model diluted local benefits (Haslam McKenzie *et al.*, 2020) <sup>[26]</sup>, and automation in South Korea's mines, while creating a net employment gain, displaced low-skilled workers (Kim & Lee, 2024) <sup>[38]</sup>. This global panorama establishes that proactive, localized, and transparent recruitment is pivotal, but it is consistently threatened by cost-cutting, labour outsourcing, and technological displacement.

Across the African region, the translation of mining activities into tangible employment is often hindered by a reliance on expatriate labour, weak governance, and the pervasive use of precarious work arrangements. A seminal study by Wegenast *et al.* (2022) on Chinese mining operations in sub-Saharan Africa found that without strong local content policies, these projects yielded only a modest 3% increase in local employment, a figure that rose to 7% in Namibia where regulations were enforced. This highlights the critical role of governance, a point reinforced by the Natural Resource Governance Institute (2022) <sup>[49]</sup>, which found that a mere 20% of mining jobs in Ghana, Tanzania, and the DRC went to local residents, fueling social tensions. The quality of employment is as concerning as the quantity; Rubbers (2020) detailed how labour outsourcing in the Congolese Copperbelt creates a segmented workforce, entrenching inequality rather than fostering broad-based job growth. Similarly, South Africa's mining sector has faced employment declines, with firms becoming increasingly selective and prioritizing skilled labour due to economic pressures (African Mining Market, 2024) <sup>[2]</sup>. This regional context paints a consistent picture of mining recruitment struggling to deliver meaningful, stable, and inclusive employment for host communities.

Focusing on Zambia, and Mopani Copper Mines (MCM) in particular, the literature reveals a contentious gap between corporate claims and community experiences regarding employment generation. The Southern African Resource Watch (SARW, 2021) <sup>[52]</sup> directly contends that Mopani's recruitment practices often favor skilled workers from outside the local area, marginalizing Kantanshi Constituency residents. This critical perspective is supported by academic research; Chanda and Banda (2023) <sup>[15]</sup> found that despite local hiring policies, the demand for specialized skills frequently leads to external recruitment, limiting local employment impact. While industry reports, such as from the Zambia Chamber of Mines (2024) <sup>[55]</sup>, emphasize MCM's contributions through training over 1,000 locals, they acknowledge the difficulty in translating this into permanent jobs. Official data from the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (2023) <sup>[44]</sup> shows a 5% rise in mining employment, but clarifies that temporary contracts dominate new hires, a finding that aligns with the International Labour Organization's (2022) concern about job precarity in Zambia's mining sector. This collective evidence suggests that Mopani's recruitment practices may inflate employment figures without ensuring the job security or long-term benefits necessary to substantively enhance local livelihoods, pointing to a significant disconnect that this study seeks to investigate.

## 2.2 Influence of Wage Structures and Employee Benefits on Household Income and Economic Well-being

Globally, empirical evidence underscores that wage structures and employee benefits are fundamental levers for household economic well-being, though their efficacy is heavily influenced by policy design and institutional context. Research in developed economies demonstrates that compressed wage structures and statutory minimum wages significantly reduce income inequality and poverty. The European Commission (2022) <sup>[21]</sup> found that nations with narrower wage gaps had lower household income inequality, while Smith and Johnson (2023) documented the poverty-reducing effect of the UK's National Living Wage, albeit tempered by inflation. In North America, Brown *et al.* (2021) <sup>[9]</sup> confirmed that state-level minimum wage hikes in the US reduced household poverty rates, and Lee and Patel (2024) <sup>[42]</sup> emphasized that employer-provided health and retirement plans in Canada were crucial for stabilizing household finances. Conversely, studies in developing Asian economies reveal stark challenges. In China, a significant public-private sector wage gap persists due to unequal benefits (PLOS One, 2024), and while minimum wage increases reduced household economic vulnerability (Economic Analysis and Policy, 2023) <sup>[20]</sup>, the rise of gig economies and technological advances often widen inequality and leave workers without protections (Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, 2024) <sup>[35]</sup>. This global panorama confirms that while proactive wage policies and comprehensive benefits are vital for enhancing household income, their success is contingent on robust enforcement and the capacity to adapt to evolving labor markets.

Across Africa, the impact of wage structures and benefits is profoundly shaped by the continent's vast informal sector, which limits the reach of formal policies and exacerbates inequality. In South Africa, employee benefits, particularly pensions, are shown to be powerful drivers of wealth accumulation, creating a virtuous cycle that boosts GDP and

employment (Kashe, 2025) <sup>[36]</sup>. However, access is skewed, with only a minority of employed individuals and youth benefiting, highlighting significant inequality. Similarly, in Nigeria, a substantial minimum wage increase and mandated benefits like maternity leave and pensions aim to bolster household income (Workforce Africa, 2025; Remote, 2023), but their impact is severely curtailed by the informal sector's dominance and an underdeveloped social welfare system (IMF, 2022) <sup>[32]</sup>. Kenya's structured benefits system, including paid leave and contributions to the NHIF and NSSF, provides a framework for financial security (Multiplier, n.d. <sup>[46]</sup>; PwC, 2025), yet similar barriers of informality limit its poverty-reducing potential. The World Bank (2025) notes that with only three million formal jobs created annually against twelve (12) million youth entrants, the fundamental challenge across Sub-Saharan Africa is extending the protective umbrella of wage policies and benefits beyond the small formal sector.

Within Zambia, the interplay between wage structures, benefits, and household well-being is characterized by a critical adequacy gap and systemic exclusion. The national minimum wage, set at ZMW 2,313.10 per month (WageIndicator.org, 2025) <sup>[54]</sup>, has been historically too low to impact wage inequality meaningfully, representing only 52.48% of GDP per capita and falling short of the estimated living wage for a family (Koyi, n.d.) <sup>[40]</sup>. This inadequacy is exacerbated by inflation and a labor market dominated by low-productivity, informal employment, which limits the direct impact of minimum wage policies (World Bank, 2025). While statutory benefits such as paid annual leave, 14 weeks of fully paid maternity leave, and NAPSA pension contributions exist under the Employment Code Act (Global People Strategist, n.d.) <sup>[23]</sup>, their reach is confined to the formal sector. Consequently, despite recent sector-specific wage adjustments (Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 2025) <sup>[45]</sup>, the vast disparity between official wages and the actual cost of living (Numbeo, 2025) <sup>[51]</sup> means that current structures provide insufficient relief for many households. The literature concludes that without broader structural reforms to create formal jobs and extend social protection, the potential of wage and benefit policies to enhance economic well-being in Zambia will remain fundamentally constrained.

## 2.3 Effectiveness of Training and Skills Development Programs on Job Opportunities for Youth and Women

Globally, the effectiveness of vocational and technical training in enhancing employment for youth and women is well-documented, yet its impact is heavily contingent on program design, market alignment, and the integration of supportive services. In Europe, robust Vocational Education and Training (VET) systems, particularly the dual models in Germany and Switzerland, have proven highly effective in transitioning youth into employment (Bédard, 2022) <sup>[6]</sup>, though persistent gender segregation in STEM fields remains a challenge (CEDEFOP, 2025) <sup>[12]</sup>. In North America, Career and Technical Education (CTE) has been linked to higher short-term earnings and graduation rates, yet outcomes often favor males, indicating a need for gender-focused adjustments (Dougherty, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2004) <sup>[19, 53]</sup>. The most successful models globally are those that combine technical skills with practical experience and soft skills. For instance, a randomized controlled trial in Colombia demonstrated that

vocational training significantly increased formal earnings, especially for women, by reducing labor market informality (Attanasio *et al.*, 2015) <sup>[4]</sup>. Similarly, in Oceania, VET programs led to improved employment outcomes for 65% of graduates (NCVER, 2022) <sup>[50]</sup>. However, familiar challenges persist, including skills mismatches, as seen in Cambodia (Khorn, 2023) <sup>[37]</sup>, and gender barriers rooted in socio-cultural norms, which can restrict women's participation and uptake, as evidenced in Nepal and Bangladesh (Chakravarty *et al.*, 2019 <sup>[14]</sup>; Shonchoy *et al.*, 2019).

Across Africa, skills development programs show promise but are consistently undermined by underfunding, inadequate infrastructure, and a misalignment with the specific economic opportunities available in local contexts, such as mining. Studies in South Africa (Habiyaemye *et al.*, 2022) <sup>[24]</sup>, Kenya (Chakamba *et al.*, 2024) <sup>[13]</sup>, and Nigeria (ILO, 2022) confirm that demand-driven training can boost employment by 20-40%, particularly when incorporating work-based learning and digital skills. However, these gains are often uneven, with women consistently facing lower enrollment in high-growth sectors and discriminatory workplace practices that limit their outcomes. The most transformative results occur when programs are holistic; in Uganda, an intervention combining vocational training, life skills, and job placement support led to a 32% increase in women's formal employment and a 48% rise in earnings (Bandiera *et al.*, 2023) <sup>[5]</sup>. Conversely, in Ghana, traditional TVET programs saw only 38% of graduates secure formal jobs, a figure that rose to 45% with modernized, industry-aligned digital skills training (ACET, 2023) <sup>[1]</sup>. This regional evidence underscores that without gender-sensitive policies, strong private sector partnerships, and curricula tailored to high-demand sectors, training programs will struggle to translate skills into meaningful, equitable job opportunities. Within Zambia, the literature reveals a critical crisis in skills development, characterized by severely limited access, chronic underfunding, and a profound misalignment with the labor market, particularly in mining regions like Mufulira. A stark World Bank (2024) report found that only 0.05% of Zambia's 6.4 million youth had access to formal skills training, leaving a massive pool of untapped potential. The existing system is crippled by a lack of resources; Chambwa (2019) <sup>[16]</sup> linked inadequate funding to poorly equipped institutions where only 30% of TVET graduates secure formal employment. Furthermore, the vocationalization policy in secondary schools has had minimal impact, with only 1.12% of students attaining a technical certification due to high costs and inadequate infrastructure (Hamukwanza, 2020) <sup>[25]</sup>. This systemic failure is especially detrimental for women, who face barriers like childcare responsibilities, resulting in low participation rates (25%) in TVET (World Bank, 2024). While programs like those evaluated by CAMFED (2023) <sup>[11]</sup> show success in rural agricultural contexts, their applicability in mining economies is limited. The collective evidence indicates that Zambia's training architecture is ill-prepared to equip the Kantanshi constituency with the skills needed for employment at Mopani or elsewhere, highlighting an urgent need for innovative financing, demand-driven curricula, and targeted initiatives to bridge the gap between training and the specific skills demanded by the local mining industry.

## 2.4 Literature Gap

Despite the breadth of existing research on mining and development, a significant literature gap persists in the form of a critical disconnect between the isolated analysis of corporate practices recruitment, wage structures, and training and their interconnected, real-world impact on household socio-economic resilience in specific host communities. While global and regional studies effectively critique individual components, such as the exclusionary nature of recruitment (SARW, 2021; Chanda & Banda, 2023) <sup>[52, 15]</sup> or the inadequacy of wages (Koyi, n.d. <sup>[40]</sup>; World Bank, 2025), they often fail to synthesize these elements into a holistic assessment of how they collectively perpetuate or alleviate poverty. Furthermore, within the Zambian context, and specifically regarding Mopani Copper Mines, there is a lack of empirical research that critically examines the cause-and-effect relationship between the company's highly publicized corporate policies and the tangible, lived experiences of Kantanshi residents, particularly in terms of how gendered barriers in recruitment and training directly undermine household income stability and long-term economic well-being. This gap leaves a critical void in understanding the synergistic failures that transform corporate operations into enclave economies, underscoring the need for an integrated analysis that links Mopani's operational strategies directly to household-level outcomes to explain the persistent paradox of community poverty amidst corporate wealth.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Research Design

A case study research design was employed, as it is suited for an in-depth, contextual investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life setting (Yin, 2018). This design facilitated a detailed examination of the interplay between Mopani Copper Mines' corporate practices and local socio-economic outcomes, with a primary focus on quantitative data to quantify impacts on employment and household income (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019).

### 3.2 Target Population

The target population consisted of approximately 66,700 residents of Kantanshi Constituency (Zambia Central Statistical Office, 2022). This encompassed individuals directly or indirectly affected by Mopani Copper Mines (MCM), including employees, their dependents, and community members engaged in mine-linked livelihoods. The study specifically prioritized marginalized groups women and youth as mandated by equity-focused mining legislation (Musonda, 2024) <sup>[47]</sup>, thereby focusing the analysis on those most impacted by MCM's operational footprint.

### 3.3 Sampling Design and Sample Size

A stratified purposive sampling approach was used to select a final sample of sixty (60) respondents. While a larger sample size was statistically indicated (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970) <sup>[41]</sup>, a sample of sixty (60) was deemed appropriate for an in-depth case study, balancing methodological rigor with practical resource constraints and aligning with precedents in similar Zambian research (Cochran, 1977) <sup>[17]</sup>. The sample ensured representation from a cross-section of mine

employees and local residents.

### 3.4 Data Collection Methods

Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires featuring closed-ended questions. This instrument was chosen for its efficiency in gathering standardized quantitative data on recruitment experiences, wage levels, benefits, and perceptions of training programs, allowing for systematic comparison and analysis (Oppenheim, 1992).

### 3.5 Data Analysis

Data were cleaned and organized in Microsoft Excel before being imported into STATA for statistical analysis. The analysis employed descriptive statistics to summarize key variables and inferential statistics to explore relationships between MCM's practices and community employment and income indicators (Field, 2013) [22].

### 3.6 Triangulation

Methodological triangulation was employed to enhance the validity of the findings. This was achieved by comparing responses across different demographic groups and cross-referencing primary data with secondary sources, including MCM reports and local economic statistics (Denzin, 1978 [18]; Patton, 1999).

### 3.7 Limitations of the Study

The study's limitations include a sample size that may affect the generalizability of findings beyond Kantanshi Constituency. The reliance on self-reported data introduces the potential for response bias, and the cross-sectional design provides a snapshot in time, limiting insights into long-term trends (Bryman, 2016) [10].

### 3.8 Ethical Considerations

The research adhered to strict ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time, and data were securely stored and used exclusively for research purposes following ethical approval (Israel & Hay, 2006) [34].

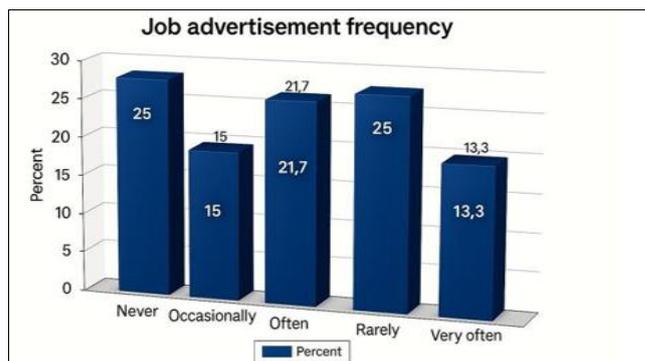
## 4. Findings and Results

### 4.1 Characteristics of Respondents (Bio Data)

The study captured a balanced demographic profile of Kantanshi Constituency, with a sample of sixty (60) respondents evenly split by gender (50% male, 50% female), ensuring equitable gender representation. The majority of participants were within their prime working years, aged 36-45 (28.3%) and 46-55 (23.3%), reflecting the community's active labor force. Educational attainment was polarized, with a significant portion possessing only primary education (33.3%), while a notable share held diplomas, degrees, or postgraduate qualifications (55%), indicating a diverse skills base. A high unemployment rate of 26.7% was reported, underscoring local livelihood challenges, though Mopani Copper Mines (MCM) provided direct employment for 16.7% of respondents. The economic significance of the mine was further highlighted by the finding that 30% of households had three or more members working at MCM, and 40% of households derived over half of their total

income from the company, pointing to a substantial, though varied, economic dependence. This reliance occurs within a context of considerable household responsibility, as the data shows a prevalence of medium to large family sizes supporting multiple dependents. The mix of long-term residents (25% for over 10 years) and more recent arrivals (33.3% for 1-5 years), combined with the fact that 60% had no prior mining experience, provides a community perspective shaped by both deep-rooted and nascent interactions with the mining economy.

### 4.2 The effects of Mopani Copper Mines' recruitment practices on employment levels among residents of Kantanshi Constituency



Source: Primary Data, 2025

Fig 1: How often Mopani Copper Mines advertise job vacancies

When asked about the frequency of job advertisements by Mopani Copper Mines in Kantanshi Constituency, responses were varied. A quarter of the respondents (25%) indicated that job vacancies were never advertised, while another 25% said they were rarely advertised. About 21.7% reported that vacancies were often advertised, 15% stated that this occurred occasionally, and only 13.3% believed that jobs were very often advertised.



Source: Primary Data, 2025

Fig 2: Recruitment methods used by Mopani Copper Mines as reported by respondents

The findings on recruitment methods show that online job portals were the most commonly cited avenue for Mopani Copper Mines' hiring, reported by 39.1% of respondents. Local community announcements followed closely at 37%, while employee referrals accounted for 19.6%. Government labor offices were the least reported method at only 4.4%.

**Table 1:** Cross-tabulation and Chi-Square analysis of application rates and outcomes at Mopani Copper Mines

Applied to Mopani	Application Success			
	N/A	No	Yes	Total
No	30	0	0	30
Yes	0	16	14	30
Total	30	16	14	60

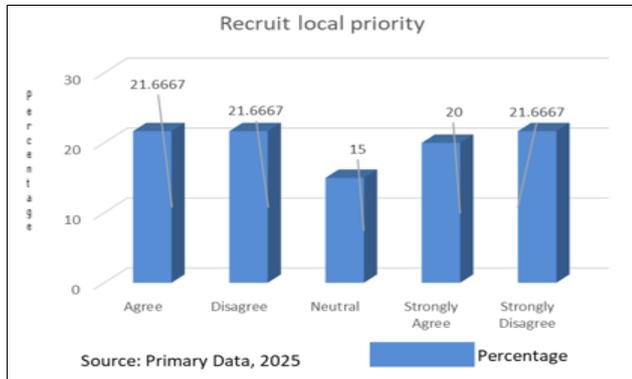
Pearson  $\chi^2(2) = 60.0000$  Pr = 0.000

The chi-square results indicate a statistically significant relationship between whether individuals applied to Mopani and their application success ( $\chi^2(2) = 60.000, p = 0.000$ ). The cross-tabulation shows that all thirty (30) respondents who did not apply to Mopani had no application outcomes, while among the thirty (30) who applied, 16 (53.3%) were unsuccessful, and 14 (46.7%) were successful.

**Table 2:** Main barriers faced by respondents during the job application process at Mopani

Main Barrier	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Corruption/nepotism	7	11.67	11.67
Lack of info	10	16.67	28.33
N/A	29	48.33	76.67
No feedback	5	8.33	85.00
No relevant qualifications	9	15.00	100.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.00</b>	

The study revealed that the most common barrier in the job application process was lack of information, reported by 16.7% of respondents, followed by the absence of relevant qualifications at 15%. Corruption or nepotism was cited by 11.7%, while 8.3% mentioned not receiving feedback after applying. However, nearly half of the respondents (48.3%) indicated no barriers, as they had not applied for employment at Mopani.

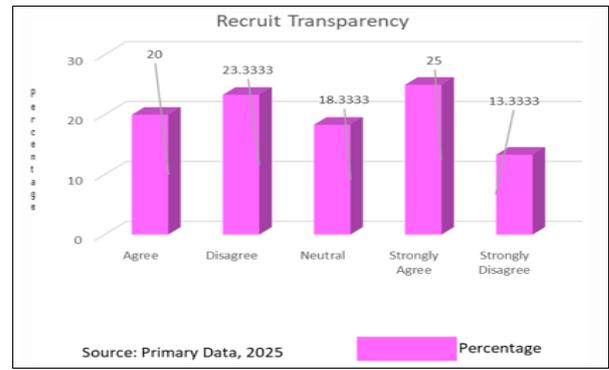


Source: Primary Data, 2025

**Fig 3:** Perceptions on whether Mopani prioritizes hiring local residents

Respondents were divided on whether Mopani Copper Mines prioritizes hiring local residents. While 20% strongly agreed and 21.7% agreed with the statement, an equal proportion of 21.7% strongly disagreed and another 21.7% disagreed.

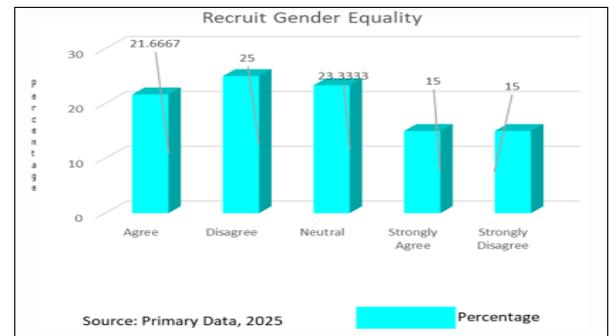
Meanwhile, 15% of respondents remained neutral. This near-even split indicates mixed perceptions within the community, suggesting that although some residents recognize efforts by Mopani to favor local employment, others feel that such opportunities are either limited or not fairly distributed.



Source: Primary Data, 2025

**Fig 4:** Perceptions regarding the transparency and fairness of Mopani's recruitment process

Perceptions of the transparency and fairness of Mopani Copper Mines' recruitment process were mixed. About 25% of respondents strongly agreed and 20% agreed that the process was transparent, while 23.3% disagreed and 13.3% strongly disagreed. A further 18.3% remained neutral.

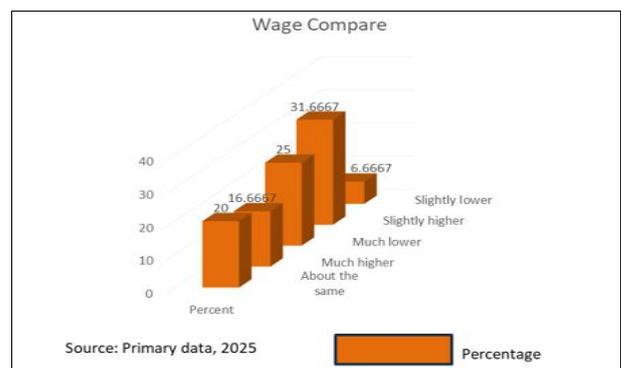


Source: Primary Data, 2025

**Fig 5:** Perceptions on the equality of job opportunities for men and women at Mopani

On the issue of gender equality in job opportunities at Mopani Copper Mines, responses were fairly divided. While 15% strongly agreed and 21.7% agreed that opportunities are equally accessible to men and women, a larger proportion either disagreed (25%) or strongly disagreed (15%). Additionally, 23.3% of respondents remained neutral.

**4.3 The influence of Mopani Copper Mines' wage structures and employee benefits on household income and economic well-being in the community**

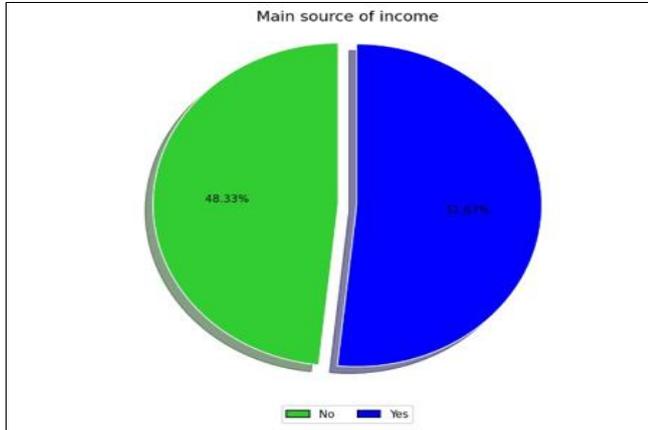


Source: Primary Data, 2025

**Fig 6:** Mopani's wages perceived to compare with those of other local employers

The findings on wage comparisons show that Mopani Copper Mines' pay structure is perceived as slightly higher than other employers by 31.7% of respondents, while 25% indicated that wages were much lower. A further 20% felt wages were about the same, and 16.7% reported them as much higher, while only 6.7% considered them slightly lower.

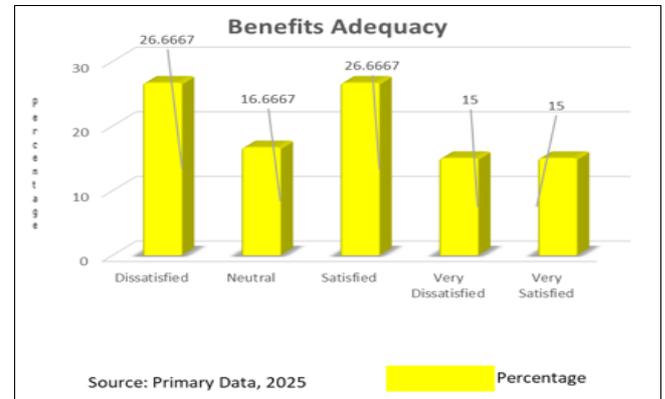
The results on wage sufficiency indicate a highly divided perception among respondents. While 40% expressed satisfaction (20% satisfied and 20% very satisfied) an almost equal share of 35% were dissatisfied, including 16.7% dissatisfied and 18.3% very dissatisfied. Meanwhile, 25% remained neutral.



Source: Primary Data, 2025

Fig 7: Whether income from Mopani is the primary livelihood source for households

The results indicate that income from Mopani Copper Mines serves as the main livelihood source for a slight majority of respondents (51.7%), while 48.3% reported relying on other income streams.



Source: Primary Data, 2025

Fig 9: Level of satisfaction with the adequacy of employee benefits

Findings on the adequacy of employee benefits reveal a balanced yet polarized picture. About 41.7% of respondents expressed satisfaction (26.7% satisfied and 15% very satisfied), while an equal 41.7% reported dissatisfaction (26.7% dissatisfied and 15% very dissatisfied). A smaller group, 16.7%, remained neutral.

Table 3: The impact of Mopani income on households' ability to afford basic necessities

Afford Basic Needs	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
No change	17	28.33	28.33
No, it has worsened	13	21.67	50.00
Yes, significantly	18	30.00	80.00
Yes, slightly	12	20.00	100.00
Total	60	100.00	

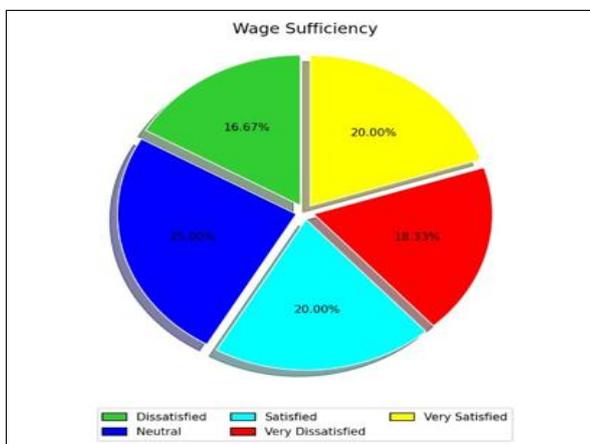


Source: Primary Data, 2025

Fig 10: Satisfaction levels with the timeliness of salary payments

Findings show that 50% of respondents reported an improvement in their household's ability to afford basic needs due to income from Mopani Copper Mines 30% significantly and 20% slightly. However, 28.3% indicated no change, while 21.7% stated their situation had worsened.

Findings on salary timeliness show a mixed level of confidence among employees. While 36.7% reported satisfaction (25% satisfied and 11.7% very satisfied), a larger share of 45% expressed dissatisfaction (23.3% dissatisfied and 21.7% very dissatisfied), with 18.3% remaining neutral.



Source: Primary Data, 2025

Fig 8: The level of satisfaction with the sufficiency of wages for household needs

Table 4: Additional employee benefits desired by respondents to improve economic well-being

Desired Extra Benefit	Freq.	%
Child education support	14	24.56
Electricity subsidy	3	5.26
Food subsidy	4	7.02
Health insurance	12	21.05
Housing allowance	14	24.56
Transportation support	10	17.54
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.00</b>

When asked about additional benefits that would improve household economic well-being, the preferred options were child education support and housing allowance, each selected by 24.6% of respondents, followed closely by health insurance (21.1%) and transportation support (17.5%). Fewer respondents highlighted food subsidies (7%) and electricity subsidies (5.3%).

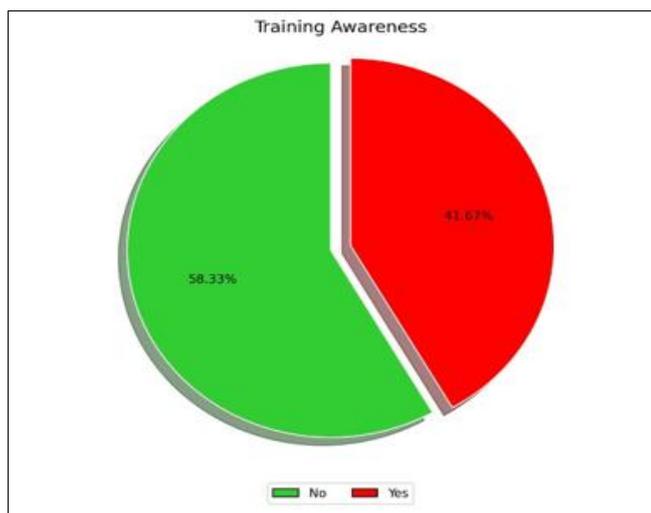


Source: Primary Data, 2025

Fig 11: Percentage of Mopani income that employees spend within the local community

The findings on local spending show that a significant proportion of Mopani employees (33.3%) spend over 75% of their income within the Mufulira community, reflecting a strong contribution to the local economy. Another 23.3% reported spending between 51-75% locally, while 16.7% spent 25-50%. However, 26.7% indicated that less than a quarter of their income is spent locally, suggesting some income leakage outside the community.

**4.4 The effectiveness of Mopani Copper Mines’ training and skills development programs on job opportunities for youth and women in Kantanshi Constituency**



Source: Primary Data, 2025

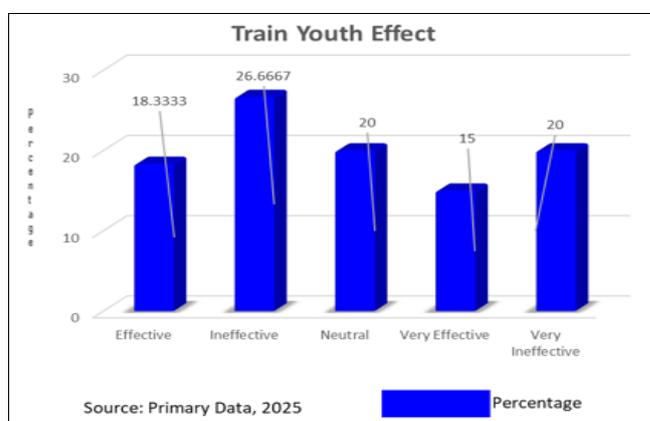
Fig 12: Awareness of Mopani's training programs for youth and women

The findings show that awareness of Mopani Copper Mines’ training programs for youth and women is relatively low, with 58.3% of respondents reporting no knowledge of such initiatives, while only 41.7% were aware.

Table 5: Mopani's training programs and the subsequent outcomes

Participated Training	Training Outcome				Total
	N/A	No	Yes, at..	Yes, el..	
N/A	35	0	0	0	35
No	0	4	4	5	13
Yes	0	7	2	3	12
Total	35	11	6	8	60

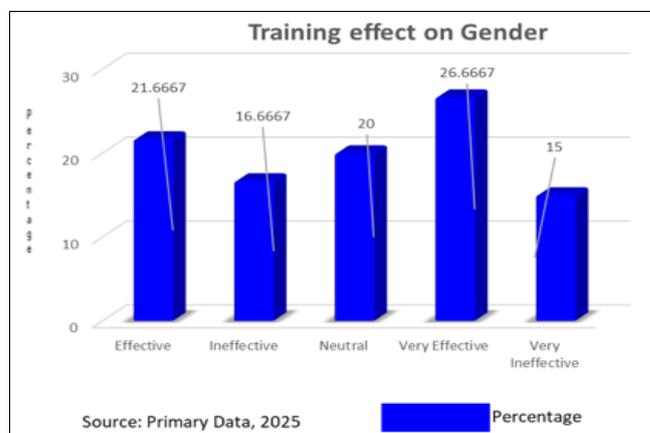
Analysis of participation in Mopani Copper Mines’ training programs shows that thirty-five (35) respondents (58.3%) did not participate or were not aware of the programs, while twenty-five (25) respondents (41.7%) had some level of involvement. Among those who participated, outcomes varied: seven (7) individuals reported that the training did not lead to employment or skill enhancement, two (2) gained employment at Mopani, and three (3) found opportunities elsewhere. Additionally, four (4) non-participants reported no impact, and four (4) gained skills indirectly.



Source: Primary Data, 2025

Fig 13: The perceived effectiveness of Mopani Copper Mines’ training programs for youth

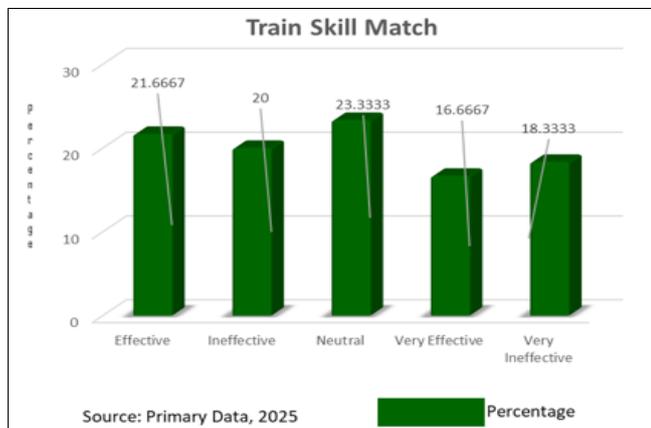
The findings on the perceived effectiveness of Mopani Copper Mines’ training programs for youth reveal mixed opinions. About 33.3% of respondents considered the programs effective or very effective (18.3% effective, 15% very effective), while 46.7% viewed them as ineffective or very ineffective (26.7% ineffective, 20% very ineffective). A further 20% remained neutral.



Source: Primary Data, 2025

Fig 14: Effectiveness of training in reducing gender disparities in employment

The findings on the effectiveness of Mopani Copper Mines’ training programs in reducing gender disparities show a generally positive perception. About 48.3% of respondents considered the programs effective or highly effective (21.7% effective, 26.7% very effective), while 31.7% viewed them as ineffective or very ineffective (16.7% ineffective, 15% very ineffective). A further 20% remained neutral.



Source: Primary Data, 2025

Fig 15: How well the skills taught in training programs match industry demands

The results on the alignment of skills taught in Mopani Copper Mines’ training programs with industry demands reveal a mixed perception among respondents. About 38.3% considered the training effective or very effective (21.7% effective, 16.7% very effective), while 38.3% perceived it as ineffective or very ineffective (20% ineffective, 18.3% very ineffective). A further 23.3% remained neutral.

Table 6: Most valuable skills acquired by respondents from Mopani’s training programs

Most Valuable Skill	Freq.	Percent
Computer literacy	9	15.00
Electrical maintenance	13	21.67
Machine operation	9	15.00
N/A	15	25.00
Safety training	6	10.00
Welding	9	13.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.00</b>

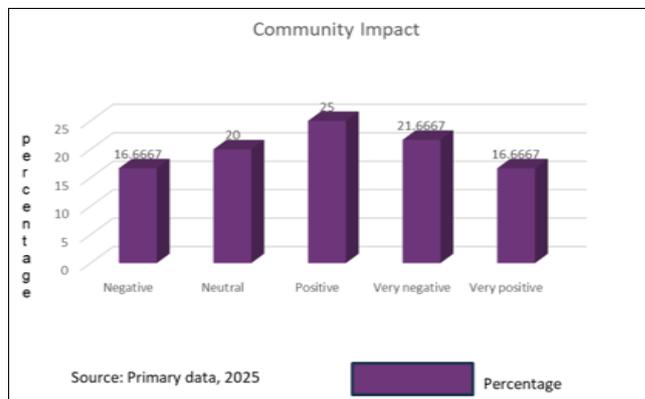
The findings on the most valuable skills acquired from Mopani Copper Mines’ training programs indicate that electrical maintenance was the top skill, cited by 21.7% of respondents, followed by computer literacy and machine operation, each at 15%. Welding was mentioned by 13.3%, while safety training accounted for 10%. A quarter of respondents (25%) did not participate or were unaware of relevant skills.

Table 7: Skills that respondents believe Mopani should prioritize in future training programs

Priority Future Skill	Freq.	Percent	Cum
Advanced mining tech	14	23.33	23.33
Entrepreneurship	11	18.33	41.67
ICT	9	15.00	56.67
Mechanical skills	15	25.00	81.67
Safety management	11	18.00	100.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.00</b>	

The findings on key skills that Mopani Copper Mines should prioritize in future training programs show that mechanical skills (25%) and advanced mining technology (23.3%) were the most requested by respondents. Entrepreneurship and safety management were each prioritized by about 18%, while ICT skills were selected by 15%.

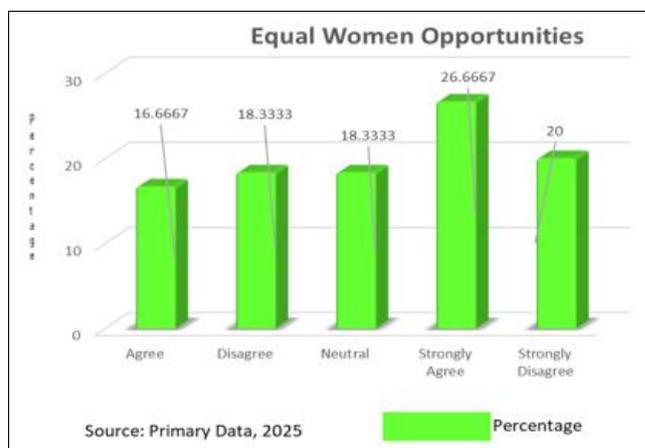
#### 4.5 Community Perceptions & Gender Dynamics



Source: Primary Data, 2025

Fig 16: Community perceptions of Mopani’s overall environmental and social impact

The findings on community perceptions of Mopani’s environmental and social impact in Kantanshi reveal mixed views, with no single perspective dominating. While 25% of respondents rated the impact as positive and 16.7% as very positive, a combined 38.4% expressed negative sentiments (16.7% negative and 21.7% very negative). Additionally, 20% held neutral views, suggesting uncertainty or balanced opinions.



Source: Primary Data, 2025

Fig 16: Perceptions on whether equal employment opportunities exist for women at Mopani

The results on perceptions of equal employment opportunities for women at Mopani indicate a divided community view. A notable 43.3% (16.7% agree, 26.7% strongly agree) believe that women have equal employment opportunities, while a comparable 38.3% (18.3% disagree, 20% strongly disagree) feel that such opportunities are lacking. Meanwhile, 18.3% of respondents remained neutral, reflecting uncertainty or mixed experiences.

**Table 8:** Categorized Challenges Women Face in Seeking Employment at Mopani

Category	Freq.	%
Cultural & Social Barriers	12	16.7%
Discrimination & Bias	11	18.3
Workplace Environment	9	15.0%
Training & Education Gaps	12	18.0%
Work–Life Balance Issues	7	11.7%
Job Insecurity & Career Growth	6	10.0%
Logistical Challenges	5	8.3%
Health & Safety Concerns	3	5.0%
Self-Confidence Issues	1	1.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.00</b>

The findings show that women in Kantanshi face multiple barriers to employment at Mopani, with the most significant being training and education gaps (18%), discrimination and bias (18.3%), and cultural and social constraints (16.7%). Workplace environment issues (15%) including harassment, male-dominated culture, and difficult shifts also hinder participation, alongside work–life balance pressures (11.7%), job insecurity and limited growth opportunities (10%), and logistical challenges (8.3%). Additional but less common obstacles include health and safety concerns (5%) and low self-confidence (1.7%). Overall, women's employment barriers at Mopani stem from intertwined social, cultural, structural, and institutional factors.

#### 4.6 Discussion of Research Findings

The findings reveal that Mopani's recruitment practices are fundamentally exclusionary, characterized by a significant communication gap and a reliance on digital job portals (39.1%) that risks marginalizing those with limited access, contrasting with more inclusive community-based models documented in Peru (Torres *et al.*, 2022). This opacity is compounded by perceived nepotism (11.7%) and a lack of application feedback (8.3%), echoing the informal practices that create segmented labour markets in the Congolese Copperbelt (Rubbers, 2020). Consequently, half (50%) of the local population has never applied for a job at the mine, substantiating claims of a fundamental disconnect between corporate operations and local employment expectations (SARW, 2021) [52]. The community's deep skepticism is evident, with 43.4% believing local hiring is not prioritized and 40% perceiving a lack of gender equality in recruitment, confirming the ILO's (2022) concerns about systemic barriers for women in Zambia's mining sector (Mwanangombe, 2024) [48]. This collective failure to establish transparent and fair processes supports Wegenast *et al.*'s (2022) assertion that without robust regulatory frameworks and visible fairness, mining recruitment fails to deliver substantial benefits to host communities.

The findings on wage structures reveal a critical paradox where Mopani Copper Mines serves as both a vital economic lifeline and a source of financial precarity for Kantanshi Constituency. While 48.4% of respondents acknowledged Mopani's wages are relatively higher, a striking 25% perceived them as much lower, and 21.7% of households with a mine employee reported a worsened ability to afford basic needs, underscoring a severe adequacy crisis that aligns with analyses of the Zambian minimum wage being too low to impact inequality (Koyi, n.d.) [40]. This is compounded by operational failures, with 45% of respondents dissatisfied with salary timeliness a key factor

destabilizing household well-being (Lee & Patel, 2024) [42]. The community's heavy reliance on the mine (51.7% depend on it as their primary income source) exists alongside deeply polarized satisfaction, with benefits splitting opinion evenly (41.7% satisfied vs. 41.7% dissatisfied), reflecting the limited impact of benefits when access is perceived as inadequate (Kashe, 2025) [36]. While the local economy benefits from significant internal spending (33.3% of employees spend over 75% of their income locally), substantial income leakage (26.7% spend less than 25% locally) tempers the multiplier effect, corroborating that mining revenues often fail to generate broad-based local development without deliberate intervention (Natural Resource Governance Institute, 2022) [49]. The clear preference for long-term, security-oriented benefits child education support (24.6%), housing allowances (24.6%), and health insurance (21.1%) mirrors a global shift towards equity-driven compensation (HRM Asia, 2020) [27] and confirms that without strategic reforms to make compensation adequate and predictable, Mopani's wage bill will continue to fall short of fostering sustainable community development.

The effectiveness of Mopani Copper Mines' training programs is critically undermined by a fundamental disconnect between corporate initiatives and community needs, beginning with a severe awareness gap where 58.3% of respondents were unaware of existing programs. This implementation failure reflects the broader national crisis in skills development access identified by the World Bank (2024). The programs demonstrate limited tangible success, with only five (5) participants securing employment post-training, validating Chambwa's (2019) [16] findings on poor TVET outcomes in Zambia. Community perception reflects this failure, with programs rated as ineffective by 46.7% of respondents compared to 33.3% who found them effective, mirroring skill-employment mismatches documented in Cambodia (Khorn, 2023) [37]. While 48.3% acknowledged some progress in reducing gender disparities aligning with Bandiera *et al.*'s (2023) [5] evidence that integrated programs can boost women's employment persistent skepticism from 31.7% of respondents indicates that cultural barriers and workplace discrimination continue to limit women's gains. The critical misalignment between current training and industry needs is starkly evident in community skill priorities, which emphasize mechanical skills (25%) and advanced mining technology (23.3%) skills essential for the automated "Mine of the Future" (Kim & Lee, 2024) [38] while current programs focus on basic trades. This creates a critical "skills-to-jobs gap" (Chakamba *et al.*, 2024) [13], further evidenced by 25% of participants reporting no valuable skill acquisition, underscoring the need for the comprehensive, demand-driven redesign demonstrated in Colombia (Attanasio *et al.*, 2015) [4] to achieve transformative impact.

Community perceptions of Mopani Copper Mines' employment practices reveal a profound trust deficit, characterized by a paradoxical coexistence of economic dependence and deep dissatisfaction, where significant discontent with wage sufficiency (35%) and benefits adequacy (41.7%) reflects the limited local benefits typical of extractive economies in the Global South (Natural Resource Governance Institute, 2022) [49]. This erosion of the social license is exacerbated by operational failures, such as dissatisfaction with salary timeliness (45%), which

Rubbers (2020) identifies as critical to relational contracts in mining communities. The gender dynamics further illustrate systemic exclusion, where perceived progress in training (48.3%) is contradicted by persistent barriers including discrimination (18.3%) and cultural norms (16.7%), validating the ILO's (2022) findings on women's underrepresentation in technical roles and demonstrating "partial gender mainstreaming" that fails to address interconnected barriers (Bandiera *et al.*, 2023) <sup>[5]</sup>. Ultimately, the community's sophisticated prioritization of intergenerational security child education support (24.6%), housing allowances (24.6%), and health insurance (21.1%) over short-term subsidies challenges Mopani's paternalistic approach and aligns with global calls for community-driven benefit frameworks (Wegenast *et al.*, 2022), highlighting a fundamental strategic misalignment that perpetuates the inequalities corporate programs purport to address.

## 5. Conclusion

This study concludes that Mopani Copper Mines' operational practices systematically fail to convert corporate presence into equitable local development, with empirical evidence revealing structurally exclusionary recruitment where 50% of residents have never applied due to opaque processes and perceived nepotism (11.7%). While the mine is an undeniable economic lifeline with 51.7% of households relying on it as their primary income source it is simultaneously a source of fragility, as 21.7% of households with a mine worker report a worsened ability to afford basic needs and 45% express dissatisfaction with the timeliness of salary payments. Furthermore, the training infrastructure is critically ineffective, demonstrated by the stark fact that 58.3% of the community is unaware of programs and outcomes are negligible, with only 5 total participants securing documented employment, while a glaring skills mismatch persists between community demand for advanced technical training and the basic trades currently offered. These findings collectively serve as a bold empirical declaration that Mopani's current model perpetuates, rather than mitigates, socio-economic disparities, necessitating a fundamental restructuring of its human capital policies to align with community aspirations for sustainable welfare.

## 6. Acknowledgement

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