

Article

Diversity in Global Mining: Where We Are and What We Need to Do

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We explore how diversity plays out in a historically male-dominated domain of international business – mining – by analyzing the diversity statements and initiatives reported by 25 of the top 50 global mining firms in terms of market value. We find that home country organizational field configurations play a pivotal role in determining how mining firms perceive diversity and the specific diversity dimensions they focus on. We distinguish between accommodative, defensive and reactive configurations to understand regional variation in the way mining firms manage diversity. We provide actionable recommendations to key stakeholders on adopting a proactive approach towards advancing diversity.

INTRODUCTION

The pivotal role of Cynthia Carroll (former CEO of Anglo American) in setting a new safety standard for the mining industry (Mukunda, Mazzanti, & Sesia, 2013) is a popular example of how diversity in leadership can potentially lead to transformational outcomes. Managing diversity in international business (IB) is much more challenging due to the complexities and multi-level issues inherent to the domain, including cultural and institutional heterogeneity. This challenge is far greater in the historically male-dominated domain of mining where the focal diversity dimensions and the extent to which companies “walk the talk” appear to vary with the configuration of the organizational field (Hoffman, 2001) in the home countries, and the role played by key stakeholders.

Over 50% of mining projects are sponsored by foreign companies (headquartered mostly in advanced economies) operating in resource rich developing regions (UNCTAD, 2020). Therefore, UNCTAD (2020) considers mining the most international industry in terms of its share of cross-border projects, contributing nearly 7% to the world’s gross domestic product (GDP) while leaving deep social and ecological footprints in communities. Yet, given its turbulent history of glorifying masculinity, physical endurance and exploitation of historically disadvantaged indigenous groups (Mackenzie, 2019), the mining industry has proven to be a laggard among laggards in managing diversity (McKinsey & Co., 2021). In the case of gender diversity, despite several initiatives, women who constitute nearly 50% of the world’s population occupy only 14.9% of executive ranks, 18.1% of the industry’s board positions and 13.2% of the C-

suite executive roles in mining in 2020 with African mining companies having the highest proportion at all levels and Latin American and Caribbean region having the lowest figures (Kuykendall & Darden, 2020). None of the 30 female CEOs in S&P 500 companies belong to mining, which records one of the highest median gender-pay gaps of any industry (an estimated 25% in the United Kingdom alone) (McKinsey & Co., 2021). Moreover, the percentage of women executives in the mining sector has largely remained static over time (Osler, 2020).

In recent years mining firms have attempted to address investor concerns regarding sustainability. The heightened scrutiny accompanying recent transitions in ownership patterns from privately held to publicly traded status have forced several mining firms to prioritize diversity as a sustainability issue. Examples include: DeBeers group’s partnership with leadership incubator WomEng to promote female engineering talent post its 2012 acquisition by Anglo American Plc and Nexa Resources SA’s expansion of the diversity concept to include disability, race, ethnicity, age and sexual orientation alongside gender following its initial public offering (IPO) in 2017.

In this context, our study helps stakeholders understand (i) which are the focal diversity dimensions in the mining industry, (ii) what accounts for regional variations in the diversity statements and initiatives adopted by mining firms and (iii) what specific actions are needed from governments, industry bodies and mining firms to deliver the desired results in diversity management.

Analyzing the sustainability reports of 25 leading mining companies, our study classifies the organizational field configurations driving diversity management in home countries as accommodative, defensive, reactive and proactive

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(Clarkson, 1995). In general, companies headquartered in countries with accommodative and defensive organizational field configurations are found to address a wider range of diversity dimensions with the former exhibiting greater linkage between their stated diversity plans and initiatives than the latter. In contrast, mining companies headquartered in countries with reactive configurations mostly appear to pay lip-service to the idea of diversity through vaguely worded diversity statements and superficial initiatives. As indicated by the gap between stated positions and implemented initiatives, a proactive configuration seems lacking in mining, resulting in its failure to deliver on diversity. To derive substantial benefits from advancing the diversity agenda in IB, we recommend that key stakeholders (home country governments, industry bodies and companies) seek a more proactive approach by devising and implementing diversity initiatives in an integrated manner.

The remaining sections explore the linkage between diversity statements and initiatives and the corresponding organizational field configurations prevalent in mining. The study concludes with actionable insights for key stakeholders on seeking a proactive configuration using three broad categories of diversity initiatives viz. non-discrimination, resource (development) and fostering accountability.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LINKING DIVERSITY STATEMENTS TO INITIATIVES

We analyzed the diversity statements and initiatives reported in 2020 by 25 of the top 50 global mining companies (by market capitalization, March 2021) headquartered across 12 countries that account for over 90% of value (Mining.com Editor, 2021) in their sustainability reports. Diversity statements help us understand the firm's focal diversity dimensions and whether the firm envisions diversity as a liability in need of protection or as a strategic source of competitive advantage (Yang & Konrad, 2011). Diversity initiatives seek to increase target groups' representation, provide them equitable career opportunities and increase their perception of integration and inclusion.

We categorized the diversity initiatives of our sample firms using a modified version of Leslie's (2019) three-way typology (See [Figure 1](#)), comprising: (i) non-discrimination practices, (ii) resource (development) practices such as forming diversity networking groups (e.g., employee resource groups) and work-life initiatives and (iii) accountability practices. While non-discrimination and resource practices focus on the means to achieve progress towards diversity goals, accountability practices focus on the end of diversity goal progress (Leslie, 2019).

The diversity rhetoric in the sustainability reports of global mining firms indicate a wide range of related dimensions – gender, ethnicity, race, age, disability, nationality, religious belief, socio-cultural background and experience; however, their diversity initiatives typically straddle only a few dimensions. Gender diversity and representation of indigenous groups (ethnicity) emerged as the most common dimensions across firms followed by sexual orientation and disability to a smaller extent.

Strong interlinkages of an organization's diversity statements with its diversity initiatives might indicate substantive efforts to manage diversity. Conversely, weak linkages might indicate a superficial attempt. As the strength of the interlinkage appears to progressively decrease across firms headquartered in home countries with accommodative, defensive and reactive configurations respectively (see [Figure 1](#)), we explore why this may be so.

ACCOMMODATIVE CONFIGURATIONS

Accommodative configurations (see [Figure 1](#)) are prevalent in home countries driving diversity management chiefly through either (i) universal and sectoral government regulations (e.g., Australia, South Africa, Chile) or (ii) organizational voluntarism guided by strongly enforced universal pro-diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) laws and an active industry discourse on diversity (e.g., USA, UK). Firms here focus on diversity dimensions of gender and race/ethnicity (indigenous people) through diversity targets, sexual orientation (LGBT+ community) through inclusive employee resource groups and training programmes, and disability using accessibility enhancing aids. They also work with suppliers to design machinery and safety equipment that accommodate people with diverse characteristics (e.g., size), to foster a more inclusive workplace.

In the first case, a combination of strongly enforced universal as well as mining sector-specific DEI regulations define the focal diversity dimensions and set diversity targets for firms. In South Africa, the Mining Charter III plays a pivotal role in ensuring that mining firms have five-year diversity targets, for representation of Historically Disadvantaged South Africans (HDSA) and women, against which their performance is reported and tracked. Chile's Workplace Inclusion Law mandates that people with disabilities should constitute at least 1% of the workforce since April 2020. Further, the Chilean Standard 3262 and voluntary gender equality and work-life balance ordinance offer clear guidelines on diversity management for mining firms headquartered or operating there. In Australia, compliance with legislations such as the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 are ensured through bodies such as the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA). Also, governments take the initiative to provide platforms that engage key stakeholders such as industry bodies, mining firms and local communities in helping shape the diversity agenda. In Chile, multi-lateral groups such as the Women in Mining Working Group made of representatives from Ministry of Mining, Ministry of Women and Gender Equity and mining firms ensure that firms headquartered and/or operating there actively pursue increasing workforce gender diversity with targets. The Australian government's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) mandates organizations operating there to provide adequate employment opportunities to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

In the second case, voluntary initiatives by mining firms are guided by strongly enforced universal anti-discrimination and employment equity legislations such as the Equality Act in the USA, normative pressures exerted by industry bodies such as Women in Mining and a supportive culture. In the UK, the Companies Act mandates female representa-

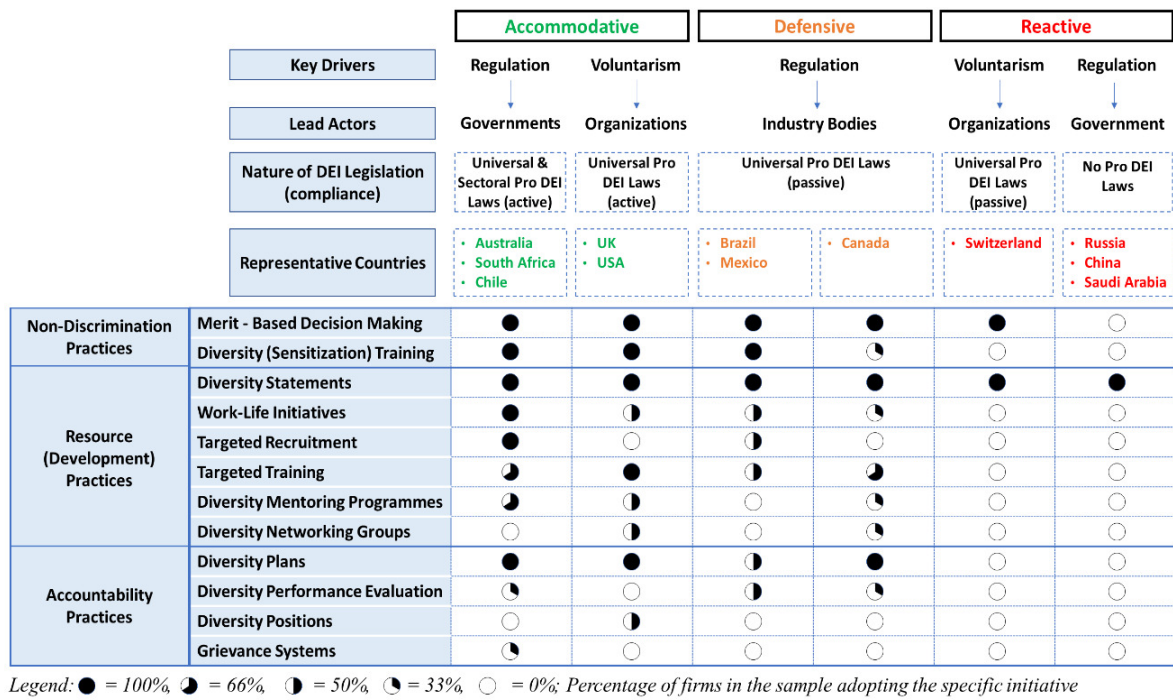


Figure 1. Linking Organizational Field configurations to Diversity Initiatives in Mining firms

tion on the boards of registered mining firms and regular reporting of the extant gender wage gap along with measures taken to reduce the same. Legislations such as the Modern Slavery Act in the UK (2015) encourage firms to prominently address labour and human rights issues.

Figure 1 shows that mining firms situated in accommodative organizational fields appear to do well on non-discrimination practices, and moderately so on resource practices ensuring reasonably strong linkage between the diversity statements and initiatives. While sectoral regulations prompt firms to engage in targeted recruitment, voluntarism appears to promote the formation of employee networks and diversity positions in organizations. Interestingly, this configuration houses the only two firms in our sample with women CEOs – Elizabeth Gaines at Fortescue Metals (Australia) and Natascha Viljoen at Anglo-American Platinum (South Africa). They rank among the top five firms in giving prominence to diversity and inclusion in their sustainability reports. Further, these firms actively seek recognition for their diversity efforts by participating in international sustainability and gender equality benchmarking forums such as the SAM Corporate Sustainability Assessment and Bloomberg Gender-Equality Index.

However, this configuration falls short on accountability practices. Configurations with sector-specific regulations witness marginally better adoption of dedicated grievance systems and diversity performance evaluations (linking executive compensation to performance against periodic diversity targets), compared to voluntarism, which pays lip service to accountability by deploying diversity leaders. Comprehensive adoption of accountability practices are critical for sustained leadership support to embedding diversity in the organizational culture, and in turn, achieve the stated diversity goals.

DEFENSIVE CONFIGURATIONS

In defensive configurations, industry bodies initiate self-regulation in the presence of universal pro-DEI laws that demand only passive compliance from organizations. Mining firms in these configurations appear to focus on diversity dimensions such as gender, ethnicity/race and sexual orientation, depending on the home country societal norms. In some cases, government regulations specify the dimensions. For example, the Canada Business Corporations Act identifies women, visible minorities, indigenous people and people with disabilities as designated groups allowing companies to voluntarily set diversity targets.

In Brazil, Canada and Mexico, governments play a supportive role to industry bodies such as the Brazilian Mining Association (IBRAM), Women in Mining (Canada) and the Mineras de Acero (Women Miners of Steel) arm of the National Union of Mine, Metal, Steel and Similar Workers of the Mexican Republic (SNTMMSSRM, known as “Los Mineros”) in setting the diversity agenda. Since the prevalent universal pro-DEI regulations such as the Brazilian National Plan for Women’s Policies, Canadian Employment Equity Act and the Mexican National Programme for Equal Opportunities and Non-Discrimination against Women largely require only passive compliance from employers (with no mandatory targets), industry bodies set the guidelines on the diversity initiatives that mining companies headquartered or operating here commit to. For example, Women in Mining Canada developed a National Action Plan in 2016 with support from Canada’s Department for Women and Gender Equality, which was subsequently adapted by IBRAM as an action plan for advancement of women in mining in Brazil.

As evident from [Figure 1](#), industry self-regulation regarding diversity leads to firms doing the bare minimum by almost wholly espousing non-discrimination practices, adopting resource practices such as targeted recruitment and training, work-life initiatives and networking groups in an ad-hoc manner while preventing themselves from being held accountable by governments in the absence of mandatory diversity targets. Widespread adoption of resource practices such as structured diversity mentoring initiatives along with robust accountability practices such as diversity positions, diversity performance evaluation and grievance systems are required for these firms to advance diversity.

REACTIVE CONFIGURATIONS

We found reactive configurations largely in home countries whose government had no discernible pro-DEI legislation in place apart from standard non-discrimination and human-rights laws (e.g., Russia, China and Saudi Arabia) and restrictive socio-cultural norms. Notably firms based here refrain from setting clear targets in their diversity plans, citing the “male-dominated”/“physical” nature of the industry along with regulatory and local norms prohibiting employment of women in certain operations. Although such countries have regulations for the protection of minority rights, the absence of industry-level diversity discourses and firm-level initiatives on resource development (diversity mentoring activities) and accountability (clear diversity plans) that are strongly linked to their diversity statements, suggest that governments, industry bodies and the mining firms view diversity more as a liability.

Reactive configurations also occur when home countries advocate voluntarism in the context of universal pro-DEI regulations that demand passive compliance with a very nascent supportive industry discourse on diversity (e.g., Switzerland). Although Switzerland formulated its Gender Equality Act in 1996 and is ranked tenth in the World Economic Forum gender equality ranking, the country has focused more on shaping the macro business environment rather than introducing industry specific policies. Thus, the industry body Women in Mining Switzerland held its first meeting only in 2020 while the Swiss mining giant Glencore (with operations in over 35 countries) finalized an Equality of Opportunity Policy and a Diversity and Inclusion Policy only in 2020 and is yet to incorporate gender diversity initiatives in its sustainability report. Companies based in such configurations appear to adopt DEI policies chiefly to satisfy international investors or to meet regulatory requirements in accommodative host countries where they hold assets. Firms headquartered or operating in these regions report rudimentary data pertaining to gender and indigenous people employed (in terms of proportion of total workforce) but rarely offer diversity data split by hierarchical levels.

In reactive configurations, firms restrict themselves to non-discriminatory practices claiming merit-based decision making and resource practices limited to issuing diversity statements. Most firms in this group use the term “diversity and equal opportunities” rather than “diversity and inclusion” and are more likely to adopt practices when coerced by regulations in host countries. Their diversity statements

sound largely superficial, aimed likely at satisfying regulations and gaining legitimacy. Further, reactive configurations are largely characterized by institutional voids (Palepu & Khanna, 1997) as evidenced in the lack of a well-developed institutional infrastructure to promote diversity in home countries (e.g., Saudi Arabia, Russia, China). As is the case with sustainability, soundly enforced pro-diversity regulatory frameworks, strong reporting systems as well as benchmarking forums which regularly feature in accommodative configurations are largely absent from reactive configurations. The associated increase in transaction costs are likely to make it more expensive and punitive for firms headquartered in reactive configurations to meet the diversity standards set by their counterparts in accommodative and defensive configurations, prompting them to view diversity as a liability. For instance, article 253 of the Russian labour code prevents skilled women from taking up well paying machine operator jobs while allowing them to work as cleaners with lower pay in underground mines (Colgan, McKearney, Bokovikova, Kosheleva, & Zavyalova, 2016). Instead of encouraging firms to improve working conditions for all employees underground, such legislations engender a paternalistic attitude towards women, while protecting well-paying jobs for men. Similarly, Russian disability quotas are rarely met as firms find it cheaper to pay fines rather than hire disabled employees and make adaptive changes to the workplace (Colgan et al., 2016).

SEEKING A PROACTIVE CONFIGURATION

Although all firms in the sample issue diversity statements (see [Figure 1](#)), a proactive organizational field configuration where key stakeholders integrate non-discrimination, resource (development) and accountability practices is essential for the mining industry to ‘walk the talk’ and realize the value of diversity as a source of strategic advantage. [Table 1](#) outlines a set of actionable insights categorized into three groups viz. non-discrimination, resource (development) and accountability practices, that governments, industry bodies and organizations can apply to proactively approach diversity. Firstly, non-discrimination practices such as merit-based decision making and diversity (sensitization) training require government agencies to raise awareness of regulations and best practices, industry bodies to sponsor the development of sector-specific guidelines and action plans and organizations to audit their talent management systems for rooting out unconscious biases while complying with reporting regulations. Secondly, resource (development) practices such as work-life initiatives and targeted recruitment work well when governments mandate and work alongside industry bodies to develop strongly enforced universal and sector-specific pro-DEI regulations with incentives or subsidies that encourage organizations to comply. Targeted training, diversity networking and mentoring programmes for designated groups require industry bodies to create implementable blue-prints in consultation with organizations who can use them to develop programmes relevant to their operating regions. Thirdly, accountability practices such as diversity plans and setting up dedicated grievance systems to handle diversity issues require governments to coordinate with industry bodies to

enforce adoption and reporting. After examining whether their stated posture on diversity are adequately reflected in their initiatives, organizations must develop diversity plans in line with regional and global considerations, take the lead in designating diversity champions to translate plans into regional action and incorporate diversity metrics into performance evaluations to ensure accountability.

CONCLUSION

Advancing key sustainability issues such as diversity and inclusion in IB demands collaboration between state, society and multinational enterprises (Ghauri, 2022). Notwithstanding the small sample size, our study highlights the impact of organizational field configurations on the translation of specific DEI initiatives into diversity performance. Governments, industry bodies and organizations need to focus on the pathways and inputs (Budde-Song, Bullough, Kalafatoglu, & Moore, 2019) required to deliver the desired output on DEI. Proactive collaboration in implementing non-discrimination, resource development and accountability initiatives is a critical step in this direction.

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Table 1. Recommended Actions in a Proactive Organizational Field Configuration

DEI initiative	Recommended Action		
	Governments	Industry bodies	Organizations
Non-discrimination Practices: Merit-Based Decision Making Diversity (sensitization) Training	- Disseminate best practice reports on how to implement merit-based decision making across sectors - Seek annual gender pay gap reports from organizations and industry bodies	- Formulate action plans to create awareness among organizations on measures to address gender pay gap across regions - Review best practices of global leaders - Develop guidelines to enhance transparency in pay and promotion decisions	- Conduct periodic audits of talent management systems for unconscious biases - Adopt practices such as name-blind resumes, inclusive job postings, diverse hiring slates and interview panels at both global and regional levels - Monitor and report gender pay gaps across operating regions in annual sustainability reports
	Conduct industry awareness workshops on the relevance of diversity (sensitization) training	- Devise guidelines on developing culturally relevant diversity training programmes for employees - Institute awards for best training programmes	- Develop culturally relevant diversity training in each region to address unconscious biases - Foster a culture of mutual respect and fairness in daily operations meetings - Promote diversity sensitive behaviour through employee recognition
Resource (Development) Practices: Work-life Initiatives Targeted Recruitment Targeted Training Diversity Networking Groups and Mentoring Programmes	- Mandate industry bodies and organizations to adopt work-life initiatives such as: - Flexible work timings - Support infrastructure on mine-sites such as child care facilities, changing rooms, separate toilets for women miners - Providing PPE kits in appropriate sizes to suit a diverse workforce - Impose sanctions upon non-compliance	- Initiate discussions and formulate action plans on adopting work-life initiatives - Work with governments to resolve challenges to setting up support infrastructure on mine-sites - Create industry standards for providing PPE kits for diverse workforce within defined time periods	- Assess organizational and operational readiness for implementing work-life initiatives in operating regions - Set up support infrastructure in operational mines based on the nature of the projected workforce and costs - Work with PPE suppliers to ensure that kits in multiple sizes are made available
	- Mandate and work with industry bodies to recruit target groups by: - Setting quotas for recruitment - Offering partnership with educational institutions, and local community bodies in the operating regions	Create industry-wide blueprint in consultation with organizations, government bodies and local communities in operating regions	Develop regional targeted recruitment programmes and workshops in line with industry and government guidelines and linked to diversity plans
	- Help industry to partner with leading countries in developing targeted training programmes - Incentivize organizations offering training in designated communities and regions	- Review and adopt best practices from global industry leaders - Develop region-wise industry guidelines for training minority groups	- Follow industry guidelines in training entry-level and mid-career minority employees - Develop region-wise programmes to prepare them for potential leadership roles
	- Work with industry bodies on developing networking and mentoring programmes to retain mid-career talent from minority groups - Conduct cross-industry awareness and networking sessions	- Identify regional challenges to retaining mid-career minority group employees - Set up a blue-print for initiating industry-wide diversity mentoring programmes and networking groups - Conduct industry-level periodic meets of minority employees	- Initiate diversity networking groups within the organization - Offer targeted diversity mentoring programmes to retain diverse workforce in consultation with employees and industry bodies

DEI initiative	Recommended Action		
	Governments	Industry bodies	Organizations
Accountability Practices: Diversity Plan	- Mandate and work with industry bodies and organizations to: - Develop region-wise annual diversity plans with clear targets at all workforce levels - Ensure filing of annual reports tracking performance against set targets - Penalize non-compliance	- Work with government bodies and mining firms to: - Outline regional challenges and unique factors impacting diversity plan formulation - Develop guidelines for setting annual diversity plans - Ensure compliance through industry norms	- Conduct annual regional meets involving employees and local community stakeholders in operating regions to incorporate their suggestions into annual diversity plans - Ensure regional and global diversity plans are in sync - Formulate and track performance against set targets
Diversity Positions	Lobby with industry bodies for appointing diversity officers	Conduct awareness workshops on how diversity officers can streamline implementation of diversity plans	- Appoint a Chief DEI personnel to co-ordinate DEI planning and implementation across the organization - Designate DEI officers in each region to develop regionally relevant DEI plans & track performance against DEI goals
Diversity Performance Evaluations	Create awareness sessions on the merits of linking diversity plans to diversity performance evaluations	Review and disseminate best practices from other extractive industries (e.g., oil and gas) on how organizations can link diversity plans to diversity performance evaluations	- Incorporate regionally meaningful hiring, retention and promotion metrics on DEI as part of supervisor/manager performance evaluation for both short and long-term - Review the metrics on a regular basis and convey its relevance to employees
Dedicated Grievance Systems	- Mandate and work with industry bodies and organizations to: - Set up dedicated grievance systems to address diversity issues (violence and harassment) - Conduct regular audits of reported incidents - Impose penalties for non-compliance	- Develop industry-wide action plan to set up dedicated grievance systems in operating regions - Highlight regional challenges to government - Institute awards for best performing organizations	- Set up region-wise dedicated grievance system with mechanisms to prevent harassment and violence - Train support staff for handling DEI issues separate from the regular ethics helpline - Set timelines and track resolution of reported incidents



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