



By  
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COLUMN

# Digging Deep— Philanthropy in Mining

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What do successful philanthropists have in common? They make the best use of their talents, resources and business networks to ensure they get the biggest possible bang for their charitable bucks. Mining leaders across Asia are well placed in philanthropy by virtue of their contributions to skilled employment, technological developments,

and provision of essential ingredients for everyday items. The modern mining company does more than dig rocks; it needs a social license, and often plays a major role in the welfare of the communities in which it operates.

## MINERS FOR A GOOD CAUSE

In Australia, miners lead the charge in corporate giving, according to a Catalyst study in 2012. Global giants BHP and Rio Tinto accounted for over 70% of the total donations in corporate Australia. BHP is said to have donated A\$200 million, representing 1% of its pretax profits, the highest proportion among Australia's 12 biggest corporate donors.

In my 25 years as a geologist and an investment banker, I have visited hundreds of mining operations worldwide and can confidently say that many of the most successful operations were those with best practices and assisted local communities through various efforts.

High net worth individuals in resources are known for their generous philanthropy. Australian mining billionaire Andrew Forrest supports a diverse range of causes. He took the Giving Pledge, started by Bill Gates and Warren Buffett, to donate half of his wealth—and doesn't include his support for Indigenous Australians and a campaign to end slave labor. Forrest said: "It's one thing to know about a terrible problem and not be able to fix it; it is another to know about the problem and have the means to do something about it." Mining mogul turned politician Clive Palmer recently said he would donate his parliamentary salary to as many as 100 organizations—a good example for other politicians. New Zealand billionaire Richard Chandler donated \$100 million to education in India. "Charity is good, performance philanthropy is better, and social investment is best," Chandler was quoted as saying.

**PHILANTHROPY IN INDONESIA**

Indonesia has several natural resources billionaires donating their wealth to help others. Tycoon Edwin Soeryadjaya has the William Soeryadjaya Foundation, named after his father, that provides financial support for humanitarian, public health, nutrition, and education programs. Bayan Resources founder Low Tuck Kwong funds universities in Indonesia and Singapore. His daughter Elaine made the single largest personal donation to the Embassy of Japan in Singapore to aid victims of the 2011 earthquake. A nature lover, Low has one zoo, Gunung Bayan, and plans for a second one, Tabang, to house gibbons, sun bears, tigers and orangutans waiting reintroduction to the wild.

Tycoon Hashim Djojohadikusumo has addressed social issues. Hashim is backing programs to save Kalimantan’s orangutan and honey bears, and Sumatra’s wild elephants. He founded the Arsari Djojohadikusumo Foundation, named after his father, economist Sumitro Djojohadikusumo, who was the architect of Indonesia’s modern economy.

Rajawali’s Toka Tindung gold operations in North Sulawesi works closely with the local community to improve skills and promote agriculture in the area, and is a good example of how mining has assisted the local communities. Peter Sondakh, chairman of the Rajawali corporation and patron of the Rajawali Foundation, strongly supports research and education relating to public policy to promote poverty reduction, sustainability and social harmony. “Even small improvements to public policy can help millions enjoy a better life,” Peter recently told Petra Commodities.

**PERSONAL TOUCH**

The family, being at the center of Asian life, is often the best way to instill philanthropy, as charity begins at home. Wendy Yap, co-founder and CEO of Nippon Indosari Corpindo, volunteered her two daughters during school breaks to help build homes sponsored by Habitat for Humanity in Thailand and the Philippines. In doing so, three main goals were achieved: to help society, engage with her family through giving, and leave a legacy for the next generation.

In Asia, where business is largely a family affair, and where wealth is usually no more than three generations old, the landscape of family philanthropy is emerging. Across the continent, stories abound of those who started with very little, became wealthy and now are turning to philanthropy. “He who is generous will be blessed,” Wendy says.

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**BUCKLE UP FOR CHARITY**

While charity is definitely a worthwhile endeavour, there is no reason you can’t have a good time as well. Opening up your wallet to enjoy a raucous ride in a Lamborghini, while supporting a good cause, was my small contribution to helping raise funds at a coal event in Indonesia. The money was used to support the Bali Sports Foundation, which provides opportunities for Indonesia’s disabled athletes, and the Priscilla Hall Memorial Foundation, which runs a Vocational Training Center for young people in Cipanas, West Java. Ken Allan, a director of Borneo Lumbung Energy & Metal, was the generous donor and recipient of a fast ride on the grand prix circuit in Singapore.

**MINING YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE**

These success stories have one thing in common: a vision and drive to make things happen. These experiences show that philanthropy is a multifaceted concept that can fit the needs of the issue and the donor’s personal preferences. Businesspeople do not want to give handouts—they want to use their wealth for social change to improve the quality of life of the disadvantaged. To find your passion, you may need to look no further than your own life. Many donors begin with organizations that have touched their lives or their families. Perhaps your mining operations are where a village needs a school or the local hospital needs new equipment. Think out of the box—the next challenge—to make the future brighter than the past. As the poet James Russell Lowell said: “All the beautiful sentiments in the world weigh less than a single lovely action.” 

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