



Article

Poverty Reduction through Corporate Social Responsibility: Case Study of Peruvian Rural Families

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Abstract: Poverty remains one of this millennium's main problems, which why the first objective of sustainable development is poverty reduction. Multiple actors are working on this issue: states, multilateral organisms, civil societies, and—perhaps less boldly—the private sector, through social responsibility programs. In this research, the aim was to understand how rural families perceive the contribution of CSR programs, in respect to the decrease in rural poverty. A total of 20 rural families, who were beneficiaries from CSR programs belonging to two extractive companies, were interviewed; furthermore, they were no longer poor and were currently dwelling within the highlands and jungles of Perú. The results show that the CSR strategies used by the companies directly and indirectly contribute toward a reduction in rural poverty, and particularly those more specifically related to capacity development, access to markets, and strategic philanthropy. In this study, it was also found that families mostly use the strategy of informal entrepreneurship, which is not directly linked to the companies' actions; as such, this could serve as a basis for the future implementation of CSR actions.

Keywords: poverty; corporate social responsibility; rural families

1. Introduction

Poverty reduction is a global concern [1]. Furthermore, it is a desirable goal for the purposes of successful economic development and it is also “an essential requirement” for sustainable development [2]. Notably, the COVID-19 pandemic has rendered the situation of the poor more acute. In addition, the sanitary crisis has subsequently raised concerns as to whether the first objective of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development agenda could be attainable [3]; in other words, whether poverty elimination by 2030 is even possible.

Governmental, multilateral, and bilateral development agencies, as well as the private sector, are currently developing socially oriented projects in order to reduce poverty [4,5]. The companies are interacting with communities in several different ways, as consumers, workers, suppliers, or distributors [6]. Therefore, companies could positively impact poor communities through their value chain or competitive context, which would thus contribute to obtaining a shared value, i.e., both an economic and social benefit at the same time [7].

There is evidence in other instances of research [8–10] that CSR programs with a pro-poor focus, enact a positive impact upon their beneficiaries, particularly through employment generation, an increase in the family income, an improvement in working abilities [11], social infrastructure improvement (such as schools and hospitals), and the promotion of human rights [8–10]. However, other studies on the impact of CSR programs in respect to poverty reduction [12] are not conclusive. There are studies [13,14] that have concluded that pro-poor programs can even have negative effects, such as nepotism, bribes, fraud, an increase in poverty, and the loss of natural resources.

As such, our research is guided by the following question: how do rural families perceive the contribution of corporate social responsibility, in relation to a reduction in their poverty levels?



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This study contributes to the enrichment of the scarce literature on the impact of private sector companies upon poverty reduction, regarding three aspects. First, the contribution of social responsibility in relation to poverty reduction is studied. This is an area with no conclusive studies in the literature on whether there is a positive or negative impact upon poverty reduction. Second, the study was conducted on poverty in Perú specifically, which is a country with an emergent economy, as well as a country that possesses a complex multicultural and social context. It should be stressed that the majority of studies focusing on poverty reduction have mainly been conducted in the African continent, whereas there are very few that have been conducted in Latin America; furthermore, those that have been conducted in Latin America, were conducted specifically in Colombia and Brazil [12,15]. Third, this research was conducted in rural areas, due to the fact that the dwellers of these areas possess a higher risk of poverty [16]. In addition, rural areas have their own characteristics that demand poverty analysis at the family level, not simply at the individual level. This was determined due to the fact that, if one member of the family is poor, the rest of the family will likely be also. In this sense, the current research places families in rural contexts as the unit of analysis.

This paper is structured as follows: Section 1 is the introduction; Section 2 is the literature review, where the reasons for reducing poverty, social responsibility, and the relationship between poverty and social responsibility are focused upon; in Section 3, the study venue, methods used, data collection, and data analysis are described; in Section 4, the findings are analyzed; in Section 5, the discussion and practical implications for organizations and the government, as well as the basis for future research, are presented. Finally, the conclusions of the study are detailed in Section 6.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Poverty

Poverty has been defined in manifold diverse ways [17,18]: as precariousness; exclusion; insufficient or low monetary income; inability to meet needs; living conditions that generate vulnerability [19]; or as the state of long-term deprivation of the wellbeing needed to live with dignity [20], among other notions. Therefore, the attempts to render poverty operational—or to define it—though it has often been praiseworthy, could result in an insufficient and reductionist analysis, due to the fact that it is a complex phenomenon [21]. On this note, its measurement could be monetary or multidimensional.

Multiple studies and authors [22,23] have tried to explain the origin of, impact of, and the different approaches to facing poverty [16]. Recently, Ayoo [24] proposed five large lines of work to fight poverty from a pragmatic perspective, in which multiple players are considered: economic development in order to increase income and expand job opportunities for the poor; economic and institutional reforms at the government level; microfinancing programs; the development and improvement of commercialization systems; and positive measures, such as selective cash transfers. In the same manner, Blank [25] synthesizes the main economic theories related to the origin, nature, and approaches, regarding addressing poverty, such as the human capital theory and that of the labor market. This is broken down into six conceptual frameworks regarding the causes of poverty: a lack of extensive and robust economic markets; a lack of human capital; unfair markets that benefit only a few; social and political processes outside the market (e.g., corruption, wars, discrimination); the behavior of the poor (conditioned by lifestyles, choices, and cultural patterns); and the perverse effect of programs in relation to fighting poverty. All of these frameworks allow us to perceive the fact that poverty is an extremely complex and dynamic phenomenon. It includes dissimilar and, at times, opposing perspectives, as well as the participation of many actors. As such, the fight against poverty implies an integral view [25].

In this respect, Knecht [19] affirms that “understanding and combatting poverty requires knowledge and actions, both at micro and macro level.” In this sense, from our perspective, the causes of poverty comprise the lack of economic markets and human capital, based on human capital and labor market theories. These approaches integrate

macro and micro aspects, thereby indicating that poverty originates due to economic underdevelopment and a lack of human capital; therefore, actions taken that affect the market, as well as education, could promote economic development [26].

Regarding the human capital theory, it is proposed that education and training increase knowledge, ability, and productivity; as such, individuals subsequently receive higher income for their productivity in the labor market [27]. In this sense, according to Eide and Showalter [28], human capital is an asset (i.e., in individual, group-based, organizational, and/or social terms), which consists of intrinsic productive capacities that can be increased and improved through education, labor training, and health. There is evidence to suggest that investments in human capital greatly increase economic welfare and reduce poverty; nevertheless, human capital is not a solution per se, as it will not be of great use if trained staff are not deployed effectively; this is due to the fact that their ability to contribute is linked to economic function and to its organization, as well as to the existence of conditions, such as competitive and developed markets [29]. Based upon these theoretical perspectives, it may be concluded that poverty derives from the combination of a lack of fundamental capacities [30], a weak trade market [31], and a small labor market that is characterized by insufficient remunerations [24]. Thus, this research has been conducted with this perspective.

2.2. Corporate Social Responsibility

The motivations for implementing CSR in companies may vary: some have implemented it under the pressure of stakeholders, whereas others have done so to promote sustainable development [32].

Kao et al. [11] identify three conceptual frames of corporate social responsibility: instrumentation, legitimacy, and stakeholder perspectives. The first aims to obtain an improvement in the corporate image and in its branding; the second orients toward acquiring a social license (either tacit or implicit permission from a variety of social actors) that will allow companies to operate without conflicts and threats; and the third implies that companies understand that their businesses are part of an interrelated network of stakeholders coming from different sources and actors (both internal and external), which are affected or will affect their operations. Hence, these interests, expectations, and/or demands must be adequately managed and cared for. Furthermore, these various orientations generate diverse ways in which to understand and define CSR.

From our point of view, the nature of CSR should be oriented toward the stakeholder perspective; this is due to the fact that the other two views do not strictly correspond to an ethical management, or are reductionist and non-sustainable (i.e., the fruits of these actions disappear in the short term). In addition, the benefits they seek are attained when there is a genuine interest and concern for acting socially responsibly, while keeping in mind the impact that the company has, socially and economically. Consequently, CSR must be understood as a management style, whereby the organization acts in a transparent, legal, and moral manner with its stakeholders, in order to attain economic, social, and environmental wellbeing; this contributes to sustainable development. Forstater et al. [6] state that an organization should know the environmental, social, and economic demands of their stakeholders. Therefore, it is the companies' responsibility to assess the effects of their actions upon their environment in order to achieve economic and social benefits [33].

The current research considers CSR from the stakeholder theoretical perspective [34]. This approach allows one to consider the stakeholders (i.e., all of those participants affecting or being affected by the company's actions) in the strategy. In addition, it also allows one to ensure an adequate relationship with the stakeholders, so as to guarantee the building of trust [34]. As such, the company can function without any problems, and thus assure competitiveness in the long term. In our case, the studied rural families represent external stakeholders for the companies whose CSR strategies are analyzed in this paper.

2.3. Corporate Social Responsibility and Poverty Reduction

Although poverty reduction is not necessarily the “core” or the sole reason for a company to act, CSR strategies should nevertheless center around key issues, such as poverty reduction; this is a structural [35] and critical problem in the attainment of individual, social, and organizational development and wellbeing. Companies have become more aware of this notion. As such, they have increasingly used the CSR strategy in order to establish a participation framework, regarding the fight against poverty [36]; this considers the strategic philanthropy method, as developed by Porter [7], the bottom-of-the-pyramid business development framework, as designed by Prahalad [37], and the empowerment method, as developed by Kao et al. [11]. It should be mentioned that the most used CSR strategies, for the purposes of poverty reduction in developing countries, are based on the philanthropic theory; similarly, access to the markets is based on the pyramid bottom [32].

First, the act of corporate philanthropy helps generate shared value. Furthermore, it should be oriented toward social investment as it can offer both financial and social benefits. However, studies on philanthropy do not yield conclusive results, due to the fact that, in some cases, philanthropy may not be a beneficial strategy for the poor; this is perhaps due to the fact that it will only presuppose a short-term development concept [9,38]. Prahalad’s approach [37] proposes that transnational companies should assume the role of creating a fairer and more humane society by improving access to the markets, encouraging new aspirations, and promoting local solutions; this is in addition to taking advantage of the opportunities that become available by conducting these actions. Second, the empowerment strategy, which is based upon human capital and labor market theories, aims to enable the poor to improve their competencies through training and skill improvement, such that they could widen their work choices (in terms of employment or self-employment), be incorporated into the company’s supply chain (e.g., local supplier programs), or generate their own entrepreneurship [11]. Third, the labor market theory maintains the notion that the labor market is where exchanges take place between businesses searching for workers to fulfill the companies’ activities, and workers offering their services for such activities in exchange for remuneration. It is assumed that under this theory, jobs that demand a higher qualification are better-compensated, due to the type of training needed to fulfill them, which renders high-qualified workers more valuable [39]. For the purpose of a better analysis, the proposal by Kao et al. [11] was split into two strategies: labor market development and capacity development. Thus, in this study, CSR strategies are considered as a framework for strategic philanthropy [7], capacity development [11], labor market development [11], and BOP market development [37].

Based upon these strategies, companies carry out a set of diverse and specific pro-poor CSR activities. Medina and Medina [12] reviewed multiple studies in this field and identified certain types of activities that are implemented by companies; these include initiatives related to the business core, assistance to the community, and community development initiatives. On the one hand, initiatives related to the business core refer to developing CSR actions with the poor; this would help to compensate for the possible negative impacts derived from their operations, as well enable them to access goods and services that will meet their basic needs. On the other hand, community assistance initiatives focus on the offering of adequate means (i.e., technical knowledge, technology, resources, etc.) for the poor, in order to escape from poverty. These include donations (monetary or material), volunteering actions, help with specific improvements in terms of basic infrastructure services (school and hospital improvement, etc.), or campaigns addressing specific problems (e.g., nutrition), among others. As for community development initiatives, they center around developing community capacities and empowering dwellers of the area, both individually and collectively, such that they become self-sustainable. These include actions particularly related to education (basic education and training), local suppliers’ development, entrepreneurship encouragement, large infrastructure development (i.e., lighting services, roads, water networks, educational and hospital complexes, etc.), access to microcredits and financing, and access to technical and/or specialized advice (e.g., legal services).

3. Methods and Data

3.1. Research Setting

In order to address our research question, a qualitative methodology was used, specifically in conjunction with the case method. The two case studies of this paper were located in Perú, Minera Yanacocha (Yanacocha Mine, Cajamarca, Peru) and Grupo Energético Aguaytía (Aguaytía Energy Group, Lima, Peru). Following Yin's [40] classification and taking into account the purpose at hand, explanatory case studies were used. This was performed due to the fact that the goal was to understand the way in which rural families perceive the contribution of social corporate responsibility strategies, in respect to a reduction in their poverty levels.

The 2020 monetary poverty rate in Perú of 30.1% decreased to 25.9% in 2021. However, these rates still continue to be higher than those seen in pre-pandemic years, when poverty had reduced from 59.9% to 20.2% between 1986 and 2019 [41]. The accomplishments achieved during the past twenty years are at risk due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the greatest danger is that a significant number of the population could return to poverty conditions. Poverty distribution differs in the country: urban areas reached 22.3%, while rural areas amounted to 39.7% in 2021. Likewise, informal employment is the general rule in the country: two thirds (76.1%) of the total population work under this condition, 70.6% in urban areas, and 95.3% in rural areas [42]. All of this, thus, evidences significant gaps in the living conditions of these areas.

The criteria used to select the locations where the research took place were two-fold: (1) all of the provinces selected in Perú were required to possess a high level of rural poverty, and (2) the private sector also had to be present. For this research, companies from the extractive sector were chosen, each located in a different geographical region: one in the Andean highlands (Cajamarca, in the north of Perú) and the other in the jungle (Ucayali, in the center of Peru). In 2021, the poverty level in the province of Cajamarca, where the Yanacocha mine is located, was at 40.9%, whereas in Ucayali, where the Aguaytía company is located, the poverty level was at 17% [43].

3.2. Case Studies

3.2.1. Yanacocha Case

Minera Yanacocha is a gold mine and it is the largest in South America. The deposit comprises five open-pit mines, four lixiviation platforms, and three gold recovery plants. The company has faced several social conflicts since its establishment in 1999, up until the past few years; the conflict peak was found to be between 2012 and 2013, and appears to be involved in the Conga project. Despite this, however, Yanacocha has been characterized by its active participation in communities through its social responsibility programs, led by the Fundación Los Andes.

The CSR programs concentrate on a technical-productive consultancy, the development of local suppliers, and on donations. CSR actions are generally carried out by third parties (NGOs, foundations, etc.), such that the company's presence is not direct. Table 1 shows the description of each program and the CSR strategy used by the company (which has been assigned by the authors, according to the literature review).

3.2.2. Aguaytía Case

Aguaytía Energy del Perú directs their efforts toward the exploration, extraction, transport, storing, and processing of natural gas. The company's philosophy is to care for the environment and to support communities.

The programs they offer are focused on two areas, namely support through technical production projects and energy transformation (i.e., the promotion of liquefied petroleum gas). Table 2 shows the description of each program and the CSR strategy used by the company (which has been assigned by the authors, according to the literature review).

Table 1. Yanacocha's social responsibility programs.

Programs or Projects of Corporate Social Responsibility	Description	CSR Strategies
Development of local suppliers	Promotes regional producers to become input suppliers for the company and the whole community.	BOP market development
Competitiveness project for micro, small, and medium north-eastern Touristic Circuit enterprises (CTN)	Designs and markets products. Contributes in regard to strengthening the management of the tourist sector in the regions of La Libertad, Lambayeque, Cajamarca, and the Amazonas.	BOP market development
Temporary job program	Integrates people and families within employment, thereby enabling them to obtain economic income and to train their abilities.	Labor market development
Progress, a microfinancing project for housing and small businesses in the construction sector	The project aims to improve the living conditions of the population.	BOP market development
PMSC, the Cajamarca Solidarity Fund, a program for the people of Cajamarca	Promotes social development in the region, accessible to all public and private regional institutions.	Strategic philanthropy
The Koriwasi Jewelry Technological Research Center (CITE)	Develops a production and trading jewelry platform in Cajamarca.	BOP market development
Development project for the agricultural, fish farming, and agro-industrial sector	Trains and provides technical assistance to eighteen companies, which is invested into production infrastructure for the purposes of market competitiveness.	Capacity development

Table 2. Aguaytía's social responsibility programs.

Program	Description	CSR Strategies
Fish farming projects	Aids the residents of the company's nearby districts to build fish farming ponds, with the company's advice and assistance.	Capacity development
Project for bovine cattle improvement and milk production	Develops competitive animal raising through technical assistance, improving grasslands, bovine breeds, and, subsequently, milk production.	Capacity development
Small animals breeding project	Promotes the raising and consumption of small animals, such as guinea pigs and birds.	BOP market development
Agricultural Aid Project, a noni production initiative	Strengthens the production of noni, a jungle exotic fruit. The fruit is in high demand in local and international markets, due to its healing properties.	BOP market development
Donation for energy source conversion	This program of energy source conversion promotes the consumption of liquefied petroleum gas and reduces the production costs of local ventures.	Strategic philanthropy
Electro-domestic donations	This project aims to implement the use of liquefied petroleum gas that is produced by the company among the social organizations, through the donation of household and industrial kitchens.	Strategic philanthropy

CSR actions are directly undertaken by a team of community relations, thus reinforcing the company's presence among families. The following table shows the description of each program.

3.2.3. Comparison of the Social Responsibility Programs from the Two Companies

The two companies have developed social responsibility programs related to the strategies of capacity development (program of development projects for the agricultural, fish farming, and agro-industrial sectors); BOP market development (Progress, a micro-financing project for housing and small businesses in the construction sector, and small animals breeding projects), and strategic philanthropy (PMSC, the Cajamarca Solidarity Fund, a program for the people of Cajamarca, and donations for energy source conversion). All of these programs, from both companies, aimed to constantly improve family income over time. Moreover, the programs sought to improve the living conditions of the families; strategies included offering housing loans, granted by the company in Yanacocha, and the conversion from wood fire cooking to natural gas cooking, developed by the company in Aaguaytia.

3.3. Data Collection

Two stages—identification and filtering—were carried out in order to locate families that had overcome poverty and who were also beneficiaries of the corporate responsibility programs. For the first stage, identification, each company provided a list of 45 families who were the beneficiaries of the companies' CSR programs. Regarding the second stage, filtering, a socioeconomic questionnaire was applied with the aim of obtaining quantifiable information, related to the current situation of the 45 families identified. The filter included the following criteria: (a) income greater than two dollars per day per capita at the moment of data collection, whereby the income indicator was defined by the World Bank [44] and by the National Institute of Statistics and Information of Perú [42], and (b) families that did not reach two dollars per day per capita ten years ago. In other words, rural families whose poverty had reduced over a span of ten years were chosen. In order to corroborate the initial poverty level of the families and their ability to reduce it, information from local government authorities, community leaders, and the major companies in the area were used for the purposes of data triangulation. Thus, 30 families that met the criteria for the current study were identified and filtered. Finally, the families that met the requirements were interviewed.

For each family, at least one adult informant, either the father or the mother, was identified for the interview. The interviews were carried out in the families' own homes. The questions encouraged the development of narratives by comparing the past and the present. The technique of using the most significant change was adapted and used in the interviews [45]. In-depth interviews, lasting approximately two and a half hours each, were conducted using a protocol designed and adapted throughout the research process. Ten questions were asked, including questions on the following topics: assistance received (from family members, the community, and the company), employment-related activities (past and present), possessions owned by families and how highly they valued them, as well as perceptions of the company. In total, 20 interviews—10 from each company—were registered using the saturation method.

In addition, company managers were also interviewed. A total of 14 questions were formulated in order to learn more about each company's core business, the CSR programs carried out in the communities in which they operate, each manager's perception of the degree of poverty in those communities, and the impact of their CSR programs on local people.

3.4. Data Analysis

The focus was on the analysis of each case, followed by a cross-case analysis; this was in order to determine what strategies the poor used to escape poverty and what CRS strategy supported them to exit poverty.

Data from the family interviews were organized into themes and categories. In the first analysis, themes emerged from the interviews. In the second analysis, categories emerged

from the data clusters surrounding each theme, which explained the dimensions of each poverty reduction strategy.

First, fieldwork data collected through the family interviews were transcribed. Then, the content was processed using Atlas TI software. Grounded theory was used in order to analyze the family interviews, which allowed for the structuring and organization of the data [46].

3.4.1. Case Analysis

Yanacocha

As stated before, the interviews helped to identify the strategies used by the poor in order to overcome poverty, as well as to identify which were perceived as the most significant (high, medium, or low) in terms of helping to them come out of poverty. Table 3 shows an example of the actions and strategies that were undertaken by two families in order to overcome poverty, as well as the significance of each action and strategy. Similarly, the table also shows the CSR program/project, developed by the firm, that benefited the family; all of these were narrated by the family themselves. In addition, the table also shows when no program was developed by the company. Hence, a relationship was found between the pro-poor CSR strategies and the actions undertaken by families to overcome poverty, along with the CSR programs/projects developed in conjunction with the families.

Table 3. Initiatives undertaken by families to overcome poverty and pro-poor strategies carried out by the Yanacocha company.

Families	Actions and Strategies Undertaken by Families to Come Out of Poverty				CSR Pro-Poor Program	CSR Pro-Poor Strategy
	Quotations	Themes (Actions)	Categories (Strategies)	The Significance Perceived by the Family		
1	"... the company granted me a loan for construction ... when I finish paying ... I would like to get another one for the finishings ... the company benefited us with this ... my husband decided to rent some rooms to workers coming from other places that work for the mining company or for other supply companies ..."	Monetary loan; House rental	Access to financing; Informal entrepreneurship	High	Progress, a microfinancing project for housing and small businesses in the construction sector	BOP market development
	"I opened a small restaurant and my daughter sells them safety equipment ... we have been able to make our living with that ... My daughter travels to Cajamarca or Lima and buys the things that are requested by workers ..."	Service business; Buy and sell	Access to market; Informal entrepreneurship	High	Development of local suppliers	BOP market development

Table 3. Cont.

Families	Actions and Strategies Undertaken by Families to Come Out of Poverty				CSR Pro-Poor Program	CSR Pro-Poor Strategy
	Quotations	Themes (Actions)	Categories (Strategies)	The Significance Perceived by the Family		
3	The training sessions that the mining company has given on fish farming, guinea pig raising . . . have helped me expand my business."	Technical competence learning	Capacity development	High	Development project for the agricultural, fish, farming, and agro-industrial sector	Capacity development
	"The little piece of land that I have was given to me by a godmother who saw me without work. This was key to pulling myself up."	Reception of inherited goods	Social network support	Medium	Not applicable	Not applicable
	"I give the company some inputs, but they want to be given a business receipt, but it is not good for me. [. . .] I have to pay taxes and that is not business, for me."	Local supplier	Access to market	Low	Development of local suppliers	BOP market development

From these three examples, it can be deduced that there are many instances when poor people undertake actions and strategies by themselves in order to overcome poverty, and are not affected by a direct intervention of the Yanacocha company, but by an indirect one.

Aguaytía Case

As in the case of Yanacocha, Table 4 shows examples of the actions and strategies undertaken by the two families that benefited from the activities of the Aguaytía company, in order to overcome poverty. In addition, the table also details the relationship between the pro-poor CSR strategies and the CSR programs/projects developed with the families. Similar to what was observed in Table 3, poor people often undertake actions and strategies to overcome poverty through their own initiative, and not via the direct intervention of the Aguaytía company.

3.4.2. Cross-Case Analysis

In conducting the cross analysis, the aim was to identify the common CSR pro-poor strategies that contribute the most; this was in terms of overcoming the poverty of the rural families that are involved with the two companies. A company's contribution to overcoming the poverty of families was classified as direct (perceived by the family as a highly significant action that helped them to come out of poverty) or indirect (perceived by the family as an action of medium or low significance that helped them overcome poverty). Table 5 shows examples of the strategies that the four families utilized in order to overcome poverty, via the company's contribution. For instance, the Yanacocha company supported family 1 so that they could become suppliers; thus, they granted the family access to the market, and the poor started their own business ventures in order to overcome poverty.

It is important to note that the verification procedures were followed in order to ensure the quality of the study, thus obtaining a comprehensive description of the case study, as well as a valid and reliable interpretation of the data.

Table 4. Initiatives undertaken by families to overcome poverty and pro-poor strategies carried out by the Aguaytía company.

Family	Actions and Strategies Undertaken by Families to Overcome Poverty					
	Quotations	Themes (Actions)	Categories (Strategies)	Perceived Significance	CSR Pro-Poor Program	CSR Pro-Poor Strategy
2	“... I make my living by raising cattle ... and sowing cassava and corn ... prices are low, they pay you what they want ... but cows provide me with more earnings for their milk.”	Agricultural business	Informal entrepreneurship	High	Not applicable	Not applicable
	“My cattle have improved ... before we fed them stored grass ... we had grass silos ... but now we feed them fresh grass because the company helped us with technical sprinkling irrigation ... we sowed grass and it is of quality ... I wish they could help us with an embryo transfer laboratory ... to improve our cattle breed ... ”	Technical competence learning	Capacity development	High	Bovine cattle improvement and milk production	Capacity development
4	“ ... I was granted a stove that uses natural gas ... ”	Equipment and input donations	Reception of philanthropy	High	Donation of electro-domestics; Energy source conversion projects	Corporate philanthropy
	I sell food (fixed menus) ... that always provides money ... it is hard work, but convenient because gas is cheap. We are not afraid of anything. There’s enough to save up. [...]. We do different kinds of jobs.”	Service business	Informal entrepreneurship	High	Not applicable	Not applicable
	“At any rate, one has to work. Sometimes, I’ve learned to ask my friends to teach me and at other times, I have watched how they do it. That’s how I learned to drive a car and do business.”	Labor competence self-learning; Social networks	Capacity development; Support from social networks	High	Not applicable	Not applicable

The use of several sources of data—i.e., data triangulation—allows a better construction of validity [40]. In this study, the data were triangulated via collecting information from multiple sources, including company documents and sources, as well as interviews with company managers. This was conducted in order to verify the data collected from the interviews with rural families.

In order to ensure reliability, an audit trail was used; this consisted of an in-depth description of how the information was gathered, as well as the development of detailed protocols, in order to guide the interviews with the company managers and rural families.

Table 5. Strategies to overcome poverty used by families and CSR pro-poor strategies developed by the companies (in terms of significance and relation).

Company	Family	Strategies Used by Families to Overcome Poverty					CSR Pro-Poor Strategies Developed by Companies together with Beneficiary Families				
		Receive Support from Social Networks	Develop Capacities Through Social Networks	Informal Entrepreneurship	Receive Philanthropy	Access to Labor Market	Access to Financing	Capacity Development	Market Development		Corporate Philanthropy
									BOP	Labor	
Yanacocha	1			X			X		X		
				Significance: High			Significance: Medium		Significance: High	Relation: Direct	
	3	X	X			X		X	X		
						Significance: Low		Significance: High	Significance: Low	Significance: Low	
		Significance: Medium	Significance: High					Relation: Direct	Relation: Indirect	Relation: Indirect	
				Significance: High		Significance: Low			Significance: Low	Relation: Indirect	
Aguaytía	2		X	X	X			X			
			Significance: High	Significance: High	Significance: High			Significance: High		Relation: Direct	
	4		X	X						X	
		X	Significance: High							Significance: Medium	
		Significance: High		Significance: High						Relation: Direct	
			Significance: High					Significance: Medium			
			Significance: Medium					Relation: Indirect			

4. Results

4.1. CSR Strategies and Their Contribution to Overcome Poverty

The findings, based on the cross study of the cases, show that the CSR strategies used by the companies have contributed in regard to overcoming poverty. However, the magnitude or contribution of a company's CSR actions to overcome poverty were different, such that contribution was perceived to be direct for some families and indirect for others (See Table 5).

CSR strategies, capacity development, and strategic philanthropy were perceived by the interviewed families to have a high significance; in other words, they were perceived to be a direct contribution. Regarding this, the head of a certain family explained:

"... Our boats use gasoline. We had 5 to 6 gasoline containers to go out and work ... it was very expensive ... The company came to adapt our engines to gas; first, it was two of my friend's engines ... I had to try first ... I thought that it might ruin my engine ... we did not even spend two gas containers ... I was surprised and decided ... now, I work with the gas that the company helped me to convert ... and I have more income." (Family 4, Aguaytía).

Conversely, actions corresponding to labor market development were perceived by the interviewed with a medium significance; thus, with a more indirect contribution. In this sense, one of the people interviewed explained:

"We rent rooms with their own bathrooms, we charge monthly to the workers that come to the mining company ... the company helped us build this house with a loan that we have already paid... sometimes the company hires my children temporarily, but it is not a permanent income ... the room rental is so ..." (Family 8, Yanacocha).

As can be perceived from these quotes, the company developed a strategy for market development aimed at enhancing people's quality of life. Furthermore, this initiative represented an input for families that allowed them to take up another economic activity, thereby resulting in an indirect contribution from the CSR program.

Rural families took up several activities in order to overcome poverty, which could be combined or linked. Families developed capacities through the company's social responsibility programs, or through their own particular experience or family experiences. Moreover, at the same time or later, they applied this knowledge in ventures (which were generally informal), so as to access the market and, thus, become self-employed.

4.2. CSR Strategies and Their Direct Contribution to Overcome Poverty

4.2.1. Capability Development

This CSR strategy was very much appreciated by the interviewed families, due to the significant contribution they ascribed to the strategies in regard to overcoming poverty. Training and technical assistance were some of the most recurrent actions. They were oriented toward two types of capabilities: the training of productive capabilities for employment or self-employment, and technical assistance to improve agriculture, fishing, or ranching production. Regarding this, two interviewees stated:

"... my cattle has improved ... before we fed them stored grass ... we had grass silos ... but now we feed them fresh grass because the company helped us with technical sprinkling irrigation ... we sowed grass and it is of quality ... I wish they could help us with an embryo transfer laboratory ... to improve our cattle breed ..." (Family 2, Aguaytía).

"... my daughter worked as domestic help ... she was always paid the same until the company offered courses on heavy machinery handling through a technical institute ... now she works at the municipality operating backhoes ... she is happy ..." (Family 1, Yanacocha).

4.2.2. Corporate Philanthropy Related to Materials or Equipment

Corporate philanthropy, related to materials or equipment, appeared to be one of the strategies that most contributes to families in relation to fighting against poverty. The companies that develop CSR programs based on collective donations have an effect on family economies; for example, the donation of equipment improves their productivity and efficiency. A head of a certain family explained:

“I spent 200 soles on fuel for each fishing working day, sometimes three days or four ... we went into the jungle by boat ... part of the fish became off and we lost 30%... Now, with my boat that was converted to natural gas by the company, we spent 50 soles and we have a refrigeration system ... we have no losses and save on fuel.” (Aguaytia, interview 9).

“ ... I was granted a stove that uses natural gas ... I sell food (fixed menus) ... that always provides money ... it is hard work, but convenient because gas is cheap.” (Aguaytia, interview 4).

These materials or equipment were donations to the communities as collective property. Moreover, they were equitably administered among the families through a system of implicit norms, which was, in turn, respected by them.

4.3. CSR Strategies and Their Indirect Contribution to Overcome Poverty

As mentioned above, not all strategies that were put into practice by the company directly contribute to overcoming poverty; for example, there is the market development strategy, which has an indirect contribution. Similarly, there are some initiatives undertaken by rural families—such as informal entrepreneurship and the search for support from social networks—that have a high significance for overcoming poverty. There was no direct company intervention upon them, but an indirect contribution of CSR programs resulted in a non-programmed collateral effect.

4.3.1. Market Development: BOP Market and Temporary Jobs

The establishment of CSR programs under a bottom-of-the-pyramid market development strategy was also appreciated with a medium significance (which was recorded as an average by the interviewed people that have overcome poverty). Through this approach, companies promote a local vendor program, aimed at encouraging small regional producers to become input or service providers for the company and the community. Some of the interviewees perceived a low significance for the CSR programs intended for overcoming poverty. On this note, a head of a certain family explained:

“I give the company some inputs, but they want to be given a business receipt, but it is not good for me. [...] I have to pay taxes and that is not business for me.” (Family 3, Yanacocha).

When serving as providers to a formal enterprise, the poor will be required to be formal suppliers and to pay taxes, which renders their earnings too low. Although the significance was not high, this has generated significant knowledge that will serve for other supply opportunities within the community.

In other cases, significance was perceived as high. In this regard, an interviewee explained:

“I opened a small restaurant and my daughter sells them safety equipment ... we have been able to make our living with that ... My daughter travels to Cajamarca or Lima and buys the things that are requested from workers ... ” (Family 1, Yanacocha).

Regarding temporary jobs, there is a CSR program that only hires family members for a given period of time, as it is based on specific tasks that commonly require non-qualified labor; as such, it is occasional and sporadic. Indeed, it could last for days or weeks. In this regard, a head of a family explained:

“We have worked since we were children as construction laborers, helping with cleaning or in a farm. They pay us only day wages [. . .]. The company sometimes hires us to clean the highway [. . .] but it is only temporary.”

Even though rural families have considered the temporary job program to be one of lower significance, its implications or requisites have generated a learning significance that enabled rural families to have other opportunities. In this sense, a head of a family sustained:

“ . . . I learned to build since I was young, but I wasn’t an expert, just an assistant . . . when the company requested workers to build houses, I applied . . . it was just for a while until the loan-based houses were finished . . . but I learned several things . . . I specialized in finishings . . . now, I am an expert in finishings . . . ” (Family 3, Yanacocha).

4.3.2. Informal Entrepreneurship

It is important to mention that this strategy, undertaken via the initiative of the rural families, emerged during the research. All ventures coming from rural families were developed informally. In other words, they were commercial/labor businesses or activities that were not officially recorded, according to taxing and legal norms; this is why they are labeled as informal entrepreneurship. Something worth mentioning is that, although these actions were performed without the company’s intervention, there was an indirect contribution from them. This support involves the improvement of their living conditions through loans for home improvement, or other actions that enhance ventures related to tourism or boarding. An interviewee explained:

“ . . . the company granted me a loan for construction . . . when I finish paying . . . I would like to get another one for the finishings . . . the company benefited us with this . . . my husband decided to rent some rooms to workers coming from other places that work for the mining company or for other supply companies . . . ” (Family 1, Yanacocha).

Another interviewee stated:

“ . . . I was granted a natural gas stove . . . with that I sell food (fixed menu) . . . that always leave money . . . it is hard work, but it is convenient as gas is cheap.” (Family 4, Aguaytía).

In this sense, companies have helped families in the community to create opportunities for the poor by granting donations or training that has then been used for purposes that the company had not previously identified.

4.3.3. Social Networks of Mutual Aid

It is worth mentioning that a strategy of social networks of mutual aid undertaken by the initiative of rural families emerged during the research. This strategy includes informal training and the endowment of resources, which were received through both family and close social networks. Emotional support, as persons overcome poverty, was also provided by their family members and community friends. A head of a family explained:

“ . . . my husband started working at Telefónica . . . his brother made him join Telefónica and he stayed there until he learned a job . . . his parents supported us with a piece of land . . . that’s how we started building . . . now, my husband works for several companies providing services . . . contacts he made at work, always call him . . . ” (Family 1, Yanacocha).

The active roles of families, friends, and community networks were identified by some of the studied families, which allows us to ascertain that poverty reduction is not individual; this shows the relational concept of the strategies used by the families. In this regard, an interviewee explained:

“ . . . we have organized ourselves as farmers and the company has supported us in getting our organization registered . . . we plant noni that is well sought after, and we are

all initiating cacao cultivation . . . we wanted to include coffee but our lands are not good for coffee . . . my neighbors started pig raising, of good breeds . . . and they are teaching me . . . starting in June I am going to build all the pens . . . I am also going to work with apiculture, bee-keeping . . . my brother-in-law has been trained by the company to assist us technically . . . ” (Family 6, Aguaytia).

As described before, capacity development does not imply simply the learning of technical knowledge that is facilitated by companies, but rather the independent actions carried out by the families’ own initiative. Much of the knowledge, and many of the skills and values acquired, were transmitted from parents, relatives, and community friends; this allowed people leaving poverty to take advantage of economic opportunities that had now become accessible to them, due to the companies establishing them within their communities. On this note, an interviewee explained:

“ . . . what the engineers taught me, I have improved it . . . we take up several types of work . . . just to say . . . that (pointing at a machine) is for selling popcorn . . . at night I make popcorn . . . there are young unemployed people, so I provide them with something to sell . . . during the day I make ice-cream . . . fruit is cheap here, so I prepare fruit ice-cream . . . the company allowed us to be trained, but the most valuable thing is the gas that they sell cheap to us . . . that way I can work doing different things as you are not always safe with just one thing . . . ” (Family 4, Aguaytia).

5. Discussion

Our research contributes, with empirical qualitative evidence, to the permanent debate regarding the role of companies in reducing poverty, in relation to CSR programs [47]. Qualitative studies allow the exploration of the way in which the beneficiaries of a social responsibility program could perceive its different effects [48]; this is as opposed to quantitative studies, which give an objective approach to poverty research [49]. The results of this research reveal that families perceive that the CSR actions developed by the companies have directly or indirectly played a role in their overcoming of poverty. In developing countries, such as Peru and several countries in Africa, the CSR approach addresses poverty alleviation, as opposed to developed countries, in which the approach is oriented toward environmental care and sustainable behaviors [50]. Kao et al. [11] explained that companies could help reduce poverty by the adoption of a proactive CSR strategy. However, our findings, related to an effective contribution to poverty reduction through CSR programs, are different from other studies [38,51] that maintain that CSR actions are counterproductive to the communities in which they operate; this is particularly regarding those related to extractive businesses. This is because CSR could generate a conflict among communities when trying to obtain the benefits from the programs. As such, it is suggested that CSR strategies belonging to extractive companies should focus on poverty reduction. Moreover, CSR programs should be viewed from a complementary compensatory perspective, where companies assume responsibility for the impact their operations could have upon others [52].

Several studies on the fight against poverty, such as those found in Blank [25], Brady [53], and Jung and Smith [26], maintain that the cause of poverty is multidimensional. Furthermore, they possess different aspects, such as weaknesses in the market, in people’s capacities, and implemented policies, as well as in economic and cultural structures. Kao et al. [11] propose the need to articulate actions at individual and structural levels; they label this personal and social empowerment, and this provides an integral focus to these actions. In this sense, a study conducted in rural areas of Peru shows the importance of a multi-actor intervention, in order to strengthen social organizations for sustainable rural development and, in particular, reduce rural poverty [54]. As such, poverty reduction strategies should be developed in the same multidimensional and multistakeholder manner. Our findings reveal that the companies participating in the study would, therefore, have an integral approach to the issue of poverty. It is also the case that each family has not only implemented one activity, but several activities in order to overcome poverty. In order to

further this understanding, future research could focus on exploring whether there is a particular combination of strategies that have proven more or less effective, as well as on key determining factors and actors that are essential to overcoming poverty.

This research builds upon previous work that demonstrates that companies adopt corporate philanthropy [7] as a shared value strategy; this is used by the company to relate with the society in which they operate. As such, they obtain a shared benefit, both for the company and for society. In our study, companies used this strategy to relate with rural families through donations, referred to as equipment, that can be used to set up a business; this generates a direct and almost immediate contribution towards reducing poverty. In other words, it is very important to define the type of donations, such that the contribution is more likely to be beneficial in the long term and not according to the expectations of poor families; this is because they normally expect money and an input that has a visible and immediate impact in the short term [33]. Furthermore, our study results reveal that the energy company develops its philanthropic social responsibility activities to be closely related to its core business, thereby aligning CSR strategies with its business strategy [7,55]. This is due to the fact that the business produces natural gas and its CSR activity refers to the promotion and sale of natural gas. It is suggested that companies should align pro-poor CSR strategies with their core business as much as possible, and that corporate philanthropy should focus on providing materials or equipment that could serve as a working tool.

In addition, our research contributes to the advancement of CSR research, particularly in relation to the development of human capital and the labor market. Education and training increase the possibility of entering the labor market [27]. Moreover, it could enlarge and improve the intrinsic productive capacities of poor families [28] in order to help them overcome poverty. In Peru, opportunities for rural families to access and remain in the labor market are rather few, most likely due to the fact that illiteracy reaches 12% in rural areas [41]. However, the cross analysis of such cases made it possible to identify that the companies' programs for capacity development helped toward their aim of overcoming poverty; this is in line with previous research [11,12]. Apart from the companies' support, families themselves applied self-learning or support from contact networks in order to exit poverty. Rural families value and will conduct their own independent efforts to develop their capacities in order to obtain a job and establish a business. Particularly important is the finding that families that embraced the strategy of capability development were prone to invest heavily in their children's education; in this way, they showcased an alternative pathway to exit poverty that contradicts the poverty trap theory [56]. Furthermore, the research findings identified that temporary jobs do not contribute directly, in respect to overcoming poverty; this is due to the fact that they represent a short-time measure. Having said that, they do possess a learning significance. From what has been stated, it is proposed that CSR strategies should focus on capacity development strategies. Specifically, it is suggested that companies should include the following in their CSR programs: a) the granting of financing for better access to education through scholarships, sponsorships, and contests, as well as more efficient construction of schools; and b) the granting of technical consultancy for rural families, such that they are able to strengthen their capabilities and entrepreneurial activities.

This research contributes more specifically toward the study area focusing on the access to markets. Prahalad [37] orients toward the joint creation of a market that should bear in mind the needs of the poorest members of society, such that they can exit poverty. In this BOP market, the poor could either serve as consumers or providers. In this study, most families generated their own employment, such that some became informal suppliers. The findings show that, in certain cases, families perceived that CSR programs, related to the development of suppliers, have a low significance with regard to overcoming poverty. Instead, other families perceived that these programs have a high significance when the poor are suppliers for informal companies, members of their community, or people working in the company. This access to the market as suppliers coincides with studies by Karnani [57],

who proposes that the private sector should help alleviate poverty by focusing on the poor as suppliers, thus allowing their real income to increase. Ishengoma and Kappel [58] indicate that these entrepreneurial ventures cannot become formalized due to the high costs and the lack of incentives that formalization entails.

The two companies of this study do not carry out specific programs focusing on social networks and entrepreneurship; however, the CSR programs that were undertaken contribute indirectly to help families overcome poverty. The perception of the families is that they can overcome poverty with the support of their contacts, family or community networks, as well as through informal entrepreneurship. These networks increase the capabilities of the poor and thus enable them to access markets in less time and in better conditions than those who were not part of the social networks. This finding is rather similar to Lin's perspective, which defines capability improvement through self-learning and support from social networks [59]. These networks are not related to CSR programs; however, they can improve the quality and results of individual actions, due to the fact that networks facilitate the flow of information, represent social credentials for the individual, and reinforce identity and recognition. In order to further the understanding of how social networks support the overcoming of poverty, it is necessary to study the factors that facilitate the relationships within the network, as well as to verify if, indeed, the CSR programs could strengthen the social capital existing in the communities. Most notably, this is due to the fact that many of these social networks were around even before the company's operation started.

As mentioned above, this study has also identified that the informal entrepreneurship strategy is one of the strategies that has the most significance in overcoming poverty. This finding is similar to other studies [60–62] that propose that the entrepreneurship of poor families has a positive correlation with poverty alleviation. However, such strategies are required to be sustainable in order to maintain a real alleviation. Although informal entrepreneurship represents a source of income and jobs for poor families, it is only associated as such in the short term, particularly in developing countries [63–65]. Hence, an in-depth study of the relationship between informal entrepreneurship and poverty is proposed, in order to evidence that this type of entrepreneurship could help families overcome poverty; this is especially due to the fact that previous research is not conclusive, regarding its effectiveness in the long term [62].

6. Conclusions

It is important to acknowledge that the contexts of mining and gas companies are different from each other, both in terms of geographical location and poverty levels; for instance, Cajamarca has a higher level of poverty than Ucayali. Moreover, the programs developed by each company are different, but their strategies are almost the same. Although location and poverty levels could be perceived as a limitation, findings could be transferred and also used in other extractive companies [66].

In summary, this study revealed that families perceive that the CSR strategies implemented by the companies analyzed in this research have had a direct or indirect contribution to their exit from poverty exit rural areas (which are often less favored areas). Both companies and poor families have carried out a series of activities that are combined or linked in order to overcome poverty. This is because such an endeavor possesses a multidimensional cause, which implies that a whole and integrative approach is necessary in order to address it. Capacity development, corporate philanthropy, and market development are the strategies with the highest significance that have directly contributed to helping rural families exit poverty. However, the strategy with the least significance for families was found to be the labor market development approach. It should be noted that both informal entrepreneurship and support from networks have emerged as significant actions that families undertake in order to rise out of poverty without a company's direct intervention. Having said this, it does also represent a collateral benefit of CSR strategies. These insights

are expected to support companies to continue developing their CSR programs and to better comprehend how CSR can contribute to a reduction in poverty.

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