



Action Voices

Bench Marks Foundation

Community Monitoring School

2013



We thank the following organisations for supporting the Bench Marks Foundation Monitoring School Project:

Action Aid South Africa
Bread for All (Switzerland)
Church of Sweden
Embassy of Sweden (SIDA)
HIVOS-MAGI

We thank our core funders without whose support this project would not be possible:

Bread for the World (Germany)
Christian Aid
Diakonia (Sweden)
ICCO KerkinActie
Norwegian Church Aid

Coordination team



Brown Motsau



Bobby Marie



Caroline Ntaopane



Eric Mokuoa



Nizar Seleman
Utanga



Jethro Phiri



Joseph Magobe

Suite 634, 6th Floor, Khotso House
62 Marshall Street, Marshalltown, 2001
P O Box 62538, Marshalltown, 2107
Tel: +27 (0)11 832 1743/2
Fax: +27 (0)11 832 1750
www.bench-marks.org.za
www.communitymonitors.net



The views expressed in this publication are those of the monitors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Bench Marks Foundation or its funders.

Bench Marks Foundation
2013
ISBN 978-0-620-58973-4



Contents



Foreword	4
Introduction	5
Tunatuzama – We are watching	6
1. Phase One: Monitors' writings	7
<i>Ekurhuleni</i>	8
<i>Vaal Triangle</i>	13
<i>Free State</i>	21
<i>Klerksdorp</i>	28
<i>Rustenburg</i>	34
<i>Limpopo</i>	40
<i>Mpumalanga</i>	44
2. Phase Two: Learning from community action	48
3. Support for facilitators and experienced activists	50
4. Reflections by facilitators and exchange participants	52
Poem by Siboniso Dlamini	55





Foreword



Community Monitoring School Graduation 2012

The Bench Marks Foundation developed the concept of the Community Monitoring School because a vacuum of knowledge exists within communities when dealing with big corporations.

We are now in the fourth year of this school and have over the years trained hundreds of local community members who are part of community organisations.

The message of the Community Monitoring School is “nothing for us without us” and the 2013 school’s motto was “We are Watching You!”

We believe that South Africa has a progressive constitution, laws and policies. However, the value of these is rarely felt by poor communities far away from metropolitan centres. In these communities, the laws of power reign, where power is in the hands of the mine owner and the police, and to a lesser extent, the local state and chiefs who have real power which they exercise

over villages, towns and informal settlements.

For any significant reform in the mines to occur, the present power and knowledge imbalances between corporations and communities need to be overcome.

Government is obliged to support a levelling of the playing field, when it comes to providing expertise to assist communities, whether legally, or to engage with environmental and social impacts assessments.

Very much the way government regulates labour relations and provides free services, it must do the same for communities impacted upon by corporations. This in turn requires something like the CCMA for community dispute resolutions and channels for redress.

At all levels of mining as with other sectors, the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) must be enshrined in the law and violations must be prosecutable.

The Church represents a large part

of the community and must walk along with those who have the least voice in our society. The Church is encouraged to use its closeness to communities and its role of moral guidance to promote the responsible stewardship of creation, i.e. the earth, the natural resources, and humanity born from this creation. The irresponsible extraction of resources threatens this creation for now and for generations to come.

It is within this context that the Bench Marks Foundation supports communities whether in mining or any other sector impacting on our future sustainability. ■



Rt. Rev Dr Jo Seoka
Chairperson, Bench Marks Foundation



Introduction

In 2013 we celebrate the fourth year of the Community Monitoring School.

The school has grown from a total of 10 activists to over 100 activists linked to community organisations.

We work in five provinces, covering over 30 distinct communities, all facing different, yet similar challenges.

The schools provide local community organisations support through a beginner's programme and a more advanced programme.

Our programme, while referred to as a school, is far from a traditional one. It is a space for community activists representing different



This year we worked with:

- ☐ Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance (VEJA) representing 6 communities in the Vaal area.
- ☐ Gold and Uranium Impact Censoring Organisation (GUBICO) representing 6 communities in the Welkom area.
- ☐ Justice & Peace Group in Klerksdorp representing 3 communities.
- ☐ BUA Mining Communities in Rustenburg (a coalition of organisation and representatives of 15 communities).
- ☐ Ekurhuleni Environmental Organisation (EEO) based in KwaThema.
- ☐ Community groups in Limpopo (Sterkwater Gapila, Driekop and Magobading).
- ☐ Community groups in Mpumalanaga (Kwaquqa, Mhluzi, Avalon, MNS, Coronation, Breyten, Ermelo, and Klarinet).

organisations to meet twice a month to reflect on their activities, share ideas, participate in action and get tasks to be implemented for the next session.

In Phase One of the school programme, the focus is on helping participants develop confidence and skills in documenting and analysing community problems. They write short articles on their observations and post these on the project's website. Some of these articles appear in the first section of this publication.

In Phase Two of the programme direct action in the community is combined with school sessions on planning, review and evaluation. In the second section we reflect on the lessons learnt which will shape our 2014 programme.

We devoted time this year to giving facilitators and advanced activists more in-depth training. A group of 14 activists participated in six two-day workshops. In the third section of this publication we present a preliminary report on this activity and some of our early findings.

It has become a regular practice for the Community Monitoring School to have interns from other countries around the world.

In 2012 our intern was Maria Dyveke Styve from Norway. This year we had two exchange participants: Nizar Selemen Utanga from Tanzania and Jethro Phiri from Zambia. Aside from working in the Bench Marks Foundation office, they participated in the coordination team working alongside other Bench Marks Foundation staff. We trust that they will strengthen the Monitoring School in their respective countries. Their reflections and observations and those of a few facilitators are presented in the last section. ■



John Capel
Executive Director, Bench Marks Foundation

Tunatazama – we are watching



Tunatazama is a Kiswahili word that means “we are watching”.

In our first facilitators workshop this year we talked about how we communicate to community activists what our work was about.

This phrase – we are watching – emerged as the best description of what we do.

We observe what is happening, we write about it, we photograph it, we communicate our observations via social media and we make judgements on what we observe, we engage our communities in planning and action to change what we observe.

We know from our experience the power of watching. We have seen how quickly companies and government officials respond when they learn that their actions are being watched.

We chose the Kiswahili word “tunatazama” because our work is common with groups in other parts of our continent. It is a statement that we are first an African movement and only thereafter, South African.

Tunatazama for us means that in the midst of the destructive action of private corporations and the negligence of government officials, we, as community activists, will

remain present, we will watch and we will report.

Above all we draw our local communications into this watching. Conscious and critical watching is the first step in the continuous struggle for change.

Tunatazama has taken on greater significance after the Marikana massacre. The importance of community activists being vigilant is ever greater.

The Bench Marks Foundation’s theme of its annual conference this year therefore was: “Marikana Never Again – We Are Watching”. ■

1

Phase One: Monitors' writing

The writing in this section is a selection of the work of community monitors in the first three months of the programme.

Writing skills development is the most important part of the programme. Our focus is to develop participants' confidence and interest to write freely without fear imposed by grammatical rules.

We hope through this process of skills development that participants grow in consciousness and self-belief and the freedom to write and talk in their own voice.

All writings presented here and more are posted on the project's website: communitymonitors.net



Gauteng Province

Area: Springs

Local Government: Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality

Communities: Tsakane, Duduza, KwaThema, Nyanyathu, Wright Park, New Paynville, Masimihi.

Organisation: Ekurhuleni Environmental Organisation (EEO)

Vaal Triangle

Area: Vanderbiljpark, Vereeniging.

Local Government:

Sedibeng District Municipality
Emfulweni Local Municipality

Communities: Bophelong, Sharpeville, Evaton West, Sebokeng

Organisation: Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance (VEJA).

Free State Province

Areas: Welkom, Virginia, Odendaalsrus, Allanridge, Theunissen, Kroonstad, Henneman

Local Government:

Lejweleputswa District Municipality
Masilonyana Local Municipality
Matjhabeng Local municipality

Communities: Thabong, Nyakollong, Maokeng, Phomolong, Meloding.

Organisation: Gold and Uranium Impact Censoring Organisation (GUBICO).

Northern Free State

Areas: Sasolburg

Local Government:

Fezile Dabi District Municipality
Moghaka Local Municipality
Metsimaholo Local Municipality

Communities: Zamdela

Organisation: Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance (VEJA).

North West Province

Areas: Klerksdorp, Rustenburg

Local Government:

Dr Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality

City of Matlosana Local Municipality

Bojanala Platinum District Municipality – Rustenburg Local Municipality

Communities: Jouberton,

Kanana, Ikemeng, Marikana, Mafenya, Chaneng, Mmaditlhokwa

Organisation: Justice and Peace, BUA.

Mpumalanga Province

Areas: Witbank/Emalahleni, Middelburg, Breyten.

Local Government:

Ehlanzeni District Municipality
Nkomazi Local Municipality

Nkangala District Municipality
Emalahleni Local Municipality

Communities: Coronation, Columbus, Schoonzicht, Klarinet MNS, Vosman, Kwaguqa.

Organisation: Southern Africa Green Revolution Council, Middleburg Environmental Justice Network, Mpumalanga Youth Against Climate Change, Future Leaders and Highveld Monitoring Group.

Limpopo Province

Areas: Makopane, Sekhukhune land

Local Government:

Sekhukhune District Municipality
Greater Tubatse Local Municipality

Communities: Driekop/Diphale, GaPila.



Gauteng Province

Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality

The Ekurhuleni group wrote about:

- ☐ Forced removals
- ☐ Informal settlements
- ☐ Lack of housing
- ☐ Unemployment
- ☐ People living with disability
- ☐ Illegal mining in Paynville
- ☐ A polluted spruit in KwaThema



Forced removals in Kingsway

MESHACK MBANGULA

Kingsway was established in 1989 and has a population of about 21 000 thousand people.

Kingsway is divided into two: those who live in RDP houses and those who stay in shacks waiting for RDP houses to be built for them since 2002.

In June 2013, the Kingsway community was informed by the councillor and municipal officials that houses are to be built in the area where they are and they need to be moved, because they don't qualify for the houses.

They were shocked and did not believe it. They stayed there until July when the government came and forcefully removed them, without giving them time to pack their belongings.

They were taken to a place without basic services, with no



running water and electricity. Old people, the disabled and people with small kids were removed as well.

When I tried to take pictures of the Red Ants, I was chased away and they wanted to take my camera.

We decided to go the municipal office in Daveyton to get more information and met Francis Louw, an administrator there. She knew about Kingsway and was shocked at what happened. She showed us a list for the people who live in shacks,

not people in Daveyton.

She asked us to bring the list of people on the waiting list to compare with the one she had, so that when she called a meeting with the provincial officials who were responsible for the housing, they could see the problem.

She promised that a meeting will be called soon and that she will call the leaders from Kingsway and give them a date.

Corruption in government is on the rise, this means that the poor won't have houses, only those who can bribe can get what they want.

We hope and believe this matter will be dealt with properly since most of the people affected are poor.



Jerusalema in Boksburg

MESHACK MBANGULA & SANDILE NOMBENI

Jerusalema is an informal settlement in Boksburg. People moved to the area because of work in different mines like Anglo Gold and the Trichard mine. Jerusalem in the bible is a place of honey and milk, but here it is waste and tailings dams which cause acid mine drainage.

We spoke to Mr Mthembu and Mr Ndlovu, two community leaders of Jerusalema.

Mr Mthembu said he arrived in Jerusalema in 1997 and worked at Trichard mine for eight years. When the mine closed down in 2005, he worked as a scrap collector. Many around here do this for a living.

They formed a committee to represent the community in discussion with the local government. They wrote a letter to the Boksburg municipality and



raised issues of service delivery and the waste dumped near houses. The waste attracted flies and rats and caused sickness. There has been no response on this issue.

Mr Ndlovu arrived in the area in 1999 and worked at the Anglo mine as a contract worker until 2003. When he was retrenched, he could not get a job and resorted to illegal mining. This did not last long because it was becoming difficult for them to go down the mine and come out. Since then he and others

live by picking up expired food and scrap metals.

In 2008 the municipality responded after a lot of effort the community made to engage them. The municipality provided a bucket system for toilets and water taps in certain places. But nothing else happened.

At the Boksburg Municipality we encountered problems when trying to find out about Jerusalema and developmental problems there. An office worker told us that the community was there illegally, but that the municipality tried to give them water and disposable toilets for now.

We set up an appointment for a meeting with the councillor on 17 April 2013, and they agreed that we could bring the community leaders to the meeting. ■

KwaVezanyawo

MESHACK MBANGULA

KwaVezanyawo is a place where people wait. They wait for their problems to be solved. There are those who were robbed of their houses through housing fraud and here they wait until their problems have been solved. People wait here as long as 15 years.

“It is a place of shame and disgrace. It is a dark place. In short, being in this place tells you that you are not in the right place and not on the map, that you will be moved again. When? Nobody knows?” said Johannes Moyane.

Mr Johannes Moyane and his wife and other families were victims of housing fraud.

Johannes was staying in a shack with electricity in Extension 3 for



15 years. His name appears on the database as one of the people who is officially waiting for a house or land. But on 26 April 2013, the municipality told him that they were moving him to KwaVezanyawo,

which is not on the line, which means that it's not his place and he will be moved again. He questioned the official on how they can move him when he was officially given a place as a promised RDP house. ■

The ward councillor told him that they don't belong in Extension 3 and they were moved by the Red Ants (people hired by the municipality to move people who they believe are in the wrong place).

Johannes was not given time to pack his belongings. The Red Ants destroyed his shack and moved him and his family to a place without electricity and running water and they slept outside for the whole weekend. He had to take time off work to build his shack.

Johannes lost a lot of money at work, because labour brokers have a strict policy of 'no work no pay'. Many people are faced with Johannes' problem, but were afraid to talk to us. Johannes was prepared to talk openly, because as he said, "Enough is enough."

When we went to the municipality to check whether he appears on the waiting list for a house in Extension 3 we found his name on the list. I asked for a copy of the list, but I was told that I didn't stay in Extension 3 and was "not involved in these issues."

People have the right to a decent living place, clean water and electricity. The municipal official said that the councillor had told them that it was his ward and he could do what he wanted. I tried to contact the councillor, but his cell was off for two days.

People feel that the reason why people are moved is that their plots or houses are sold to other people by the councillor who is getting rich while others suffer. ■



Marikana in KwaThema

SANDILE NOMBENI

Marikana is an informal settlement in KwaThema consisting of housing stands for relocated families.

In 2011, the local government of KwaThema announced that they would install water and sanitation services, and give families separate stands.

Some individuals in the community saw this as a chance to make money. They illegally sold housing stands on vacant ground.



They charged people around R1500 or more to build a shack. People were desperate for houses and bought these illegal stands.

When the local government and housing officials went to the area to allocate stands to the beneficiaries, they were surprised to see the area over-populated with shacks.

The Red Ants were called in to forcefully remove all the unlawfully allocated shacks. The battle between the Red Ants and the community began. This led to the community referring to this section as Marikana, after Marikana in Rustenburg, where police killed workers.

Today, community members are crying for help. They live in an area built on a wetland, next to a tailings dam. They have no electricity or other basic services.

Many have connected electricity illegally and this has placed them in further danger. ■

Unemployment is destroying our culture

ZANDI JIYANE



The Ndebele nation still follows the tradition of *ukuwela* and have practised the custom of circumcision for years.

In winter, the boys go to the mountain for three months and when they come back home their family has to buy a cow, a new bed and new clothes.

After the boy has gone through initiation school he is recognised as a man who is responsible and can have a family of his own.

My cousin is not working. Nobody in his family is working. The time for him to go to the mountain has passed and he cannot participate in the cultural meetings of his Ndebele community, because he is taken as a boy.

The younger boys who have already been to the mountain laugh at him. He wants to have a wife and start a family, but according to his culture, he is still a boy.

My cousin is frustrated, because he cannot get work and he cannot associate with his own people.

I believe in cultures, because they bring about respect, but our people have to loosen up and understand the economy of today. I feel bad for my cousin and others who are facing the very same problem. I think our people should be capacitated and be able to change. Knowledge is power.

Unemployment is destroying families, cultures and the nation. What is wrong with this government? ■

The impact of unemployed men in the community

VUYANI QWATHI

After almost twenty years of democracy in South Africa, not much has changed. Still no basic services for communities and no jobs.

KwaThema is a township with a population of about 48 000. About half the number of men are not working, many are married and living with their families.

Mr Xaba had been employed for three years at a gold mine when he was retrenched in 2009. He has not found a job since then.

“The problem is in our culture, a man is expected to provide for the family and protect them, but if you cannot do that your manhood is taken away,” Mr Xaba said.

“Your wife comes home late and you cannot ask why, because she comes back with money. What kind of life is that?” he asked.

The impact of men not working affects the whole community. The men feel that the country is going to be ruled by women and they will be nothing but slaves.

I spoke to the official who coordinates parks about jobs for men who are unemployed.

He indicated that the problem is nepotism in all the local government departments and it is difficult to solve. The government is telling them to balance things by hiring more women than men even in the jobs that were meant for men before.

The impact of unemployed men in the community is that they have the potential of becoming thugs, drug dealers and/or become alcoholics.

More jobs should be given to men to avoid crime. ■

Vukuzenzele

MESHACK MBANGULA



Vukuzenzele is an association of people living with disability on the East Rand. Vukuzenzele means ‘Wake up and do things for yourself’.

The association was registered in 1997. They meet in a small four-room house without sufficient space for all members.

Dolly, the spokesperson, said they have been applying for funding for five years, but the social department said they only fund one association in the area, an association in Kwatsaduza, called DPKT.

Vukuzenzele found out that the DPKT was closed in 2011 and did not exist anymore. They went back to the department, but were turned down again. They wrote a petition to the social department but did not receive a response.

They raised three problems experienced by people living with disability: transport, housing arrangements and employment.

If you are in a wheelchair you can’t use public transport such as a taxi or bus.

Housing and bathroom facilities are often not suitable. People with disabilities are still not really considered for employment, as very few are employed.

Paulina, who is now 56 years old,

applied for a house in 1994 and in 2011 she was told that a house was being built in Extension 19. When she went there someone already occupied the house and had papers of the house and she went to the housing department to find out what happened. She is still waiting for an answer.

I decided to take this up and went to the housing department in Alberton in Voortreker Street. We spoke with a housing official, Themba Nhlapho, and discovered the house indeed belong to Paulina who is disabled.

Themba is investigating the matter. As it is difficult for Paulina to go to the office Themba will communicate with me regarding the issue of her house.

This matter is showing us how difficult it is for people living with disability to challenge issues that trouble them.

Social workers were approached for assistance and I got a positive response when we had a meeting with them and Vukuzenzele in May 2013. All the problems were put on the table and a process was agreed to that will be followed up to try and bring a change in the lives of all the people living with disability. ■



Illegal mining in Paynville

MANDLA JWILI

Paynville is situated in Ekurhuleni. The population is about 29 000 people. There is a high unemployment rate and the crime is very high as well. Most of the people depend on small vegetable gardens for their food. They also have small tuck shops to make a living.

The problem faced by the community of Lindelane is a shortage of water, because illegal miners are using most of the water and electricity.

The killing of 'illegal' miners is increasing. When the guys go down to get gold others wait on top to rob them.

Most of the people who are involved in this matter are people from outside South Africa, who were working for the Grootvlei mine when it was still in operation. Now, a lot of local people are joining in the mining, because of unemployment and poverty.

They are killing each other because of gold. The police are not taking any action. This suggests that they might be involved as well. Many community members are now involved in crime.

People are disappearing in the mines. Last year in March 2012, 24 illegal miners died because of rock falls inside the mine. The question is how many more have died, and nobody knows about them?

Urgent government and police intervention is needed. ■

Betrayed by mines in Paynville

LEBO MAKUA

Paynville is highly polluted by mines and big corporations. People moved here with the hope of a brighter future in the mines, but the opposite happened.

The Grootvlei mine and Gold One started in 1905 and many people moved to the area for work. They thought they would have a better life, but discovered that the mine was concerned with profits not with the safety of people.

Over many years studies have shown that mine workers were treated badly and lived in hostels where living conditions were harsh in the apartheid era.

In 1994 mine workers hoped things would change for them. But, workers and communities continued to suffer, because the leaders of the ruling party became mine owners and did what the apartheid leaders did.

Grootvlei mine was bought by Zuma's cousin and Mandela's niece, who later liquidated the mine and workers were not paid their pensions which led them to lose their houses.

In 2010, in a democratic South Africa, people were taken out of their houses to informal settlements where there is no water and electricity.

We must teach the youth that mining is not the future. Mining pollutes the land and enslaves our people. ■

Polluted spruit

THABO MOGAFA

Two lives have already been lost in this spruit, but still nothing has been done.

KwaThema has a population of 50 000 people and high rates of unemployment and crime. Most people live by selling vegetables and opening small tuck shops.

The spruit starts between Benoni and Brakpan and passes through Wright Park and a few factories. It then flows to KwaThema where it passes through the Laban Motlhabi High School.

In 2006, two school children drowned trying to cross the spruit.

Students from the school who daily cross the spruit, are not aware of the dangers.

Nothing much has been done to make sure that what happened in 2006 does not happen again.

There is an informal settlement next to the spruit. The people there depend on this spruit, since they don't have water in their yard and no sewerage system. They use this water for drinking, washing and cooking. This community is also not aware of the dangers.

A paint company called Veref, is situated close to the spruit. Someone who works there showed me where they spill chemical residue into the spruit.

The KwaThema municipality officials asked me to write down my concerns. They gave me a date for a meeting with the person responsible for the spruit. I hope something good will happen. ■



Gauteng Province

Vaal Triangle

The Vaal group wrote about:

- ☐ Challenges for youth
- ☐ Community protests
- ☐ Crime in the community
- ☐ The abuse of women
- ☐ Service delivery protests
- ☐ School drop outs
- ☐ Water quality issues
- ☐ Energy issues
- ☐ Community victory in the case against ArcelorMittal



Q & A: Challenges for young people

SIPHIWE BUSISWA MOLOI

Q: What are the challenges faced by the youth today, particularly in terms of youth initiatives?

A: Today young people are living in open times where almost everything is available to them. Yet the youths are reluctant and not effective in sustaining their initiatives. The youth need to be groomed on how to be self-sustainable instead of relying on government grants and subsidies. We need more youth-led organisations that benefit entire communities. Fundraising strategies are needed for initiatives and to do away with the culture of begging.

Q: Are there enough youth-led initiatives that address the needs of the youth?

A: In the community that I come

from there aren't enough initiatives that could be regarded as effective e.g. out of maybe a 100 youth-led ideas, one would probably find that only seven ideas are practical.

Q: Are there any challenges faced by these youth-led initiatives and what are possible solutions?

A: Part of the challenge is getting support to get these initiatives off the ground, such as access



to start-up capital. We need to generate more ideas that would help mobilise youth and to bring effective and immediate change. Young people need to come out of their comfort zones and be effective in capturing the local council or funders' attention. In this way more could be achieved by unionised or group-led initiatives.

Not a single young person should be sitting at home doing nothing. Mentoring of young leaders is a priority.

Our youth organisations need to be united and establish networks to combine all our constitutions to represent one identity. By doing this the youth will achieve more positive results and will be empowered. ■

Protest against Sebokeng ward councillor

HLONI



On the morning of Tuesday, 21 May 2013, all the residents of Zones 6 and 7 in Sebokeng began to protest against their ward councillor and his committee, demanding better service delivery for their area.

Despite negotiations with the councillor and his committee, the residents felt that the councillor had failed them. For example, they had asked for tarred roads but this did not happen. The residents decided to put forward their demands through a protest.

They expressed their anger by closing all the streets with stones and burning tires and they also closed a public main road, which was used by taxis and buses.

They marched to the councillor's house and office singing and toyi-toying against those who were part of the local authority. While on their way to the councillor's house, the police came and tried to stop them, but they refused to stop and continued protesting. Then the police began to shoot at them with teargas trying to disperse them.

The people went back to their area where they continued their

protest. They were very angry for not accomplishing what they wanted, because the police disturbed them.

On their way back they took out their anger out by looting the Pakistani shops.

They said that in doing this they wanted to send a message to the ward councillor and the Sedibeng municipality to respond to their demands.

They wanted to send the message to government saying that they are failing them as the citizens of South Africa by not fulfilling their mandate of the *batho pele* principle.

When they attacked one of the Pakistani shops in Zone 7 there was a young boy in the crowd of people who was trying to attack and loot the shop. He climbed on top of the roof of the shop and the Pakistanis who were inside the shop started to open fire and the boy was killed. This made the residents of Zone 6 and 7 angrier.

Then the residents started to attack and destroy all the Pakistani shops and the whole thing spread to other zones in Sebokeng until it went to Evaton and reached Orange Farm. ■

Crime in my community

KIDO MAFISA



On Friday, 5 April 2013 at around 15:45pm, seven men armed with guns robbed a Fidelity security vehicle that came to collect money from the Shoprite store at the Evaton plaza shopping centre.

They attacked four guards and escaped with four bags of money. The men started shooting in the air to scare people away so that they could escape. An old lady who was walking with her grandchild was shot and she died on her way to hospital.

Crime in Sebokeng has grown worse. It has spread to neighbouring areas such as Small Farms, Evaton, and Orange Farm.

The most common crimes are house breaking, bank robbery, shoplifting and rape.

Crime is a common problem across the world. Crime is controllable, but it depends on each country and its government.

Government leaders must show commitment and work hard and serve its citizens by implementing the law that governs their country. Criminals must be put in jail.

Crime is very bad and its fruits are very bad to human beings and the world. ■



Sebokeng Zone 11 park

KEDIBONE DITHEKO



Sebokeng Zone 11 Park was built in 2012 and the community was very happy, because everyone could visit there and have fun.

Today the park is not looking good, there is no maintenance and it is no longer safe for children to play. Water stands in pools. The park is an unhealthy environment for the community.

One of the community members who was employed in the park project said that he was not proud of the park.

"I am disappointed, because the place is not as good as it was supposed to be," he said.

He added that the community should learn to take care of their environment and teach the children to respect and play well and not to mess around when they are in the park. He said that they broke the water taps.

The Sebokeng Zone 11 Park was supposed to be an environment for heritage and entertainment, not to be a community threat.

Our government is also responsible. It should do a proper job of looking after the park. This is not about money, it is about loyalty and satisfaction for everyone. ■

The abuse of women must end

ABIGAIL MAFATE

When will the hideous and cruel abuse of women end? Many women are victims of abuse and live for years in abusive relationships.

Women never talk about it, because they think they are in love and scared of losing the men.

Someone I know is in the same situation. She has two daughters. While she was pregnant with the third child her boyfriend was abusive. He used to beat her up. Sometimes he would kick her out of the house and other times he would tie her to a chair and beat her with a shambok.

Afterwards he would clean her scars and make some food for her. He would do that for a week, as if nothing had happened. This was so that people would not see what happened.

He would apologise and say that he did not mean to hurt her. Then my friend had a miscarriage. It was a very painful thing.

She called him to tell him what happened and he just shouted at her and did not care. Yet my friend says she loves him.

What is love that makes people blind? You caught him cheating and you still care for him, you've been told that you're useless and you still cherish him, you're being abused but you are still tender to him.

It is time to stand up and fight against women abuse! ■



Bophelong community cannot afford electricity

PORTIA DLAMINI

Eskom's prices have led the community of Bophelong to connect electricity illegally. The community is very poor and most do not have jobs.

The majority of people in Bophelong are using illegal connections because the Eskom power is too expensive for them.



Eskom has been told about this and no action has been taken. Houses burn down because of unprotected electrical wires as kids often play with the wires.

This illegal connections affect members of the community who are paying for electricity. People pay more than they expect for electricity because the vouchers they buy do not last for a month as the number of people who use illegal connection increase. If one household bought a R250 voucher for a month this is now insufficient.

Eskom increases its prices every year yet it still sells electricity to big companies like BHP Billiton at a low price. It's about time Eskom puts people before profit.

The community must also take responsibility and stop using electricity illegally. ■

Demarcation massacre

LEBOHANG MOKOENA

Concerned residents from the Metsimaholo Municipality gathered at the Moses Kotane Stadium in Zamdela on Sunday 20 January 2013.

They wanted to know from the mayor and his council if the municipality was going to merge with the Ngwathe Local Municipality. The community wanted to voice their concerns on the issue. They believed that their services would grow worse.

No government official came to address the community and people got angry. They carried placards with messages such as 'No Demarcation No Problem' and 'No to Parys'. They sang struggle songs and formed groups to mobilise people who were not at the gathering. The word got out as far as Deneysville and Orangeville.

The groups agreed to meet at the municipal offices. When they arrived in Sasolburg they gathered in the parking lot in front of the police station with messages like 'Ace ha o modimo wa free state' (Ace is not a Free State god). Ace Magashule is the premier of the Free State Province.

People began to riot. Clothing and jewellery shops were broken into and windows broken. The police managed to get the crowd out of the shopping complex and in the direction of the municipal offices.

While the police and some of the leaders tried to address the angry crowd, another group of youth managed to get into the municipality offices and trashed the place. In the meantime they also started a fire in the parking lot and danced and sang around it.

Eventually they all agreed to go back to the location. On the way back police cars marked 'Welkom Tactical Response Team' arrived.



Pic: Mail & Guardian

These police opened fire and threw what looked like hand grenades into the crowd.

This made the people angrier, because Sasolburg and Zamdela police were just standing around. One of the community members said, "Our police understands why we are fighting," referring to Zamdela and the Sasolburg police. As soon as the crowd got into the location they started looting shops again. They targeted the Indian and Bangladeshi shops. They also broke into ATM machines.

On the Monday, no school was open and people did not go to work. There was no transport. People now looted the big shops.

One of the groups went to Zio Cash & Cary, others targeted Save Right and Cash Build that were next to the Zamdela police station.

Municipal cars were burned and the streets were closed with burning tires. The only cars moving were the police, trying to call for order. People were arrested and shot at by police.

The next day we heard on Karabo FM, the community radio station, that Ace Magashule was coming to address the community.

People attended in large numbers.

The government officials present did not address the main reason for the protest – the issue of demarcation. The premier did not show up until 12.00 when the minister from the demarcation board, Minister Baloyi, was in town. He arrived at the police station and moved to the local radio station next to the stadium, not where the people were gathering. The people got angrier and decided to move from there to the police station where they claimed that he was hiding.

They were outside the police station singing and wanted to burn it. The police opened fire on the crowd. Pule Thulo, a young man, was shot dead while he was trying to climb over the wall of the station. Police continued to use live ammunition and killed other people and arrested over 100 people. The number arrested increased when the police did a house to house search for stolen goods from Cash Build.

A committee was selected to speak on behalf of the residents. They were given a meeting with the Demarcation Board. The matter still continues. ■

Metsimaholo council is bankrupt and corrupt

LEBOHANG MOKOENA



Community wants corrupt municipality officials to be arrested.

Young people and the community in the Metsimaholo Municipality in the Free State joined forces in April 2013, to take up corruption issues in the local municipality.

One of the organisers, Kopano 'player' Mokoena, a former monitor from the Monitoring School in the Vaal Triangle said: "It is only through the efforts of people that Metsimaholo can be liberated and it is within this context that people decided to go on a march."

The masses gathered at the Art and Culture Centre at 11.00 am to march to the Zamdela police station to hand over a memorandum and open a case of fraud and corruption against the municipality. From there they marched to the Metsimaholo municipal offices to hand over a memorandum of demands.

The community was upset by the local government and the mayor contracting a security company without following proper procedures and spending more than a million rand to guard the mayor's house without council resolution.

"The municipality's response was that they did not follow the procedures because it was an emergency. How can such an issue be an emergency after two years? The officials who authorised the use of this money knew that they were breaking council procedure," said Kopano.

The people believe that this money must be redirected to install electricity in Amelia, one of the sections that has had no electricity for a period of time.

The ANC Youth League chairperson said, "Credit cards are misused by our executive mayor, former speaker and the current speaker to buy liquor. We demand immediate investigation and arrest of those who are found to be on the wrong side of the law."

Community leaders say that the executive mayor owed the municipality about seven hundred thousand rands.

The community says if the allegation is true they demand his resignation within seven days and the money to be recovered. ■

Why school children drop out of school at an early age

RHONA RIET

We have a problem in our community with kids dropping out of school at an early age. This affects our whole community as a whole, because they engage in negative activities.

There are many reasons why kids drop out of school, some because of financial problems, others because they have to take care of their families and others just drop out because they keep failing at school.

The biggest challenge is for girls, because they start dating older men for material things such as phones, clothes and money to try and improve their social status.

These girls go to taverns in search of older men and are known as 'weekend specials' because men have money to spend on weekends. As a result, girls fall behind at school, or worse, fall pregnant or contract STIs.

Most boys drop out for short-term employment just to make a quick buck for a beer or a smoke, especially in September, because Sasol has shutdowns around that time of the year. Because most of these are short-term contracts, when the contracts expire, most of these boys have nothing to do, because they did not invest their money wisely.

Not having matric they end up roaming the streets looking for money. Often these boys end up stealing just to find money to buy drugs and alcohol. ■



Corruption in the allocation of houses

LEBOHANG MOKOENA



Most people in South Africa still need houses, but corrupt individuals within our government are making this process difficult.

People stay in informal settlements, hoping that they will get houses or their settlements will be improved. Most people here were robbed of their houses.

Miss Mokoena has been staying in Boiketlong, an informal settlement in Sebokeng, for seven years after being removed from a house she bought from a person working in the Department of Housing.

She bought an RDP house in Thsepiso in 2004, but in 2006 the real owner of the house removed her.

“How many houses were given to people not the rightful owners and how many rightful owners of a house are still waiting for a house after it had been sold to someone else?” she asked.

Miss Mokoena bought the house because she believed that it was something she could do for her family.

In tears she said, “I no longer have hope to get a house.”

The Department of Housing must fix this issue and look into corruption by individuals.

The community must also stop buying houses without valid proof of ownership. ■

Water quality tour

MDUDUZI TSHABALALA

(BOTLE BA TLHAHO ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP)



A water quality tour of our local area started at the Leeuspruit upstream just before it feeds into the Rietspruit.

Samson Mokoena from Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance (VEJA) talked about the impact on the water by mining companies that discharge their effluent in the river and of raw sewage being dumped by the municipality.

Nearby, some residents were praying next to the river. They said they considered the river a sacred place. They did not know that the river might be polluted.

As we drove away from the Leeuspruit catchment, across the N1, we saw a raw sewerage stream running directly into the Rietspruit River. We bumped into some of the residents staying on a farm where the Leeuspruit cuts across.

Two men were riding on horses carrying buckets on their daily trip to Evaton West to get clean water, because their water is polluted from the sewage spillages. They told us how the people had to pay the farm owners to bring them water.

As we passed the Sebokeng Waste Water Treatment Care on the Rietspruit River, there was another sewer runoff which was channeled as a wetland flowing into the Rietspruit River.

This sewer stream comes directly from the Sebokeng hostels and most probably has the new Golden Gardens housing development stormwater runoff channeled into this wetland.

On the banks of the Loch Vaal Dam we were accompanied by Thomas Du Toit of the Save the Vaal Environment Campaign. We found a few ZCC members praying on the river banks.

The Vaal Barrage gates allow the Vaal River to flow into Parys in the Free State Province. We also visited the Parys Waste Water Care Works, which was less than impressive.

The most concerning issue here was that maturation ponds were neglected and not properly treated and raw sewerage was decanted into the effluent stream flowing towards the Vaal River.

The tour was enlightening on the dynamics of the water quality of the Vaal River. It showed how misinformed the general public was about water pollution and brought into question what the local authorities were doing in terms of governance.

We need to see all parties being responsible and accountable and allowing for an equitable share in water supply and demand. ■



Give us a better source of energy

THANDI NGCANGA

Isaw smoke rising in the air, flames every morning and night and I smelt the bad odours from the industries. No one in my family knew or understood the impact of the chemicals.

When I became a monitor and started to attend workshops organised by the Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance (VEJA) and other organisations, I learned about pollution.

I learned that for many years Sasol provided jobs for the community but left them to deal with the pollution while they were making profit. As a result, communities suffer from many respiratory illnesses and cancer.

Sasolburg falls under the Metsimaholo municipality in the Fezile Dabi District in the Free State. It shares boundaries with Vanderbiljpark. These areas have been declared as pollution priority areas by the Department of Environmental Affairs to come up with a plan to reduce air pollution.

For many years Sasol claimed to have spent millions on the reduction of pollution. They blamed communities for using coal. Sasol, Eskom and government shifted the



blame and came up with a strategy for communities to stop polluting.

This is how the strategy works: Many communities in informal settlements use braziers to make fire for cooking and heating. You start with paper, wood and coal on top.

Now Sasol and Eskom said there is a new way of making fire using the same low-grade coal, but the new way will reduce coal emissions. You start first with the coal, then wood and paper.

Communities are not changing their old way of making fire. They don't see the need because nothing is different, you still use the same materials and they are not saving money on the bag of coal.

It is unfair because the people who are imposing this strategy on

community have electricity. To me it sounds as if they say there is no need to get cleaner source of energy.

Sasol took some members of the community to demonstrate how to use *Basa ngego Magogo* (make fire like an old woman). At the meeting the Department of Environmental Affairs presented the high level of particulate matters in Zamdela.

VEJA raised concerns about this strategy as it was seen as a short-term solution to a bigger problem of addressing energy needs.

This should be a lesson that we as communities should be consulted and we should be part of decision making on the kind of energy we need. The methodology that was imposed did not make sense to us.

We all need to reduce pollution starting from the industries. Government also undermined the right of communities to access better and clean energy. This should stop. The energy and money should be directed at finding alternative sources of energy in the communities that are not only based on coal, like using solar panels when building houses. ■



ArcelorMittal loses a case – victory for local communities

SAMSON MOKOENA

A long battle was waged between communities in the Vaal Triangle and the giant steel producing company, ArcelorMittal, to disclose the company's pollution master plan.

The company consistently refused to share the plan with the community.

In December 2011, the Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance (VEJA) worked with the Centre for Environmental Rights to use the Promotion of Access to Information Act to force the company to release the document.

In a number of applications ArcelorMittal refused to comply, saying the community was not an enforcement agency.

Amongst other things in the plan

was information on the amount of pollution and plans to rehabilitate the waste dump site.

ArcelorMittal said the document was not relevant as it was outdated. But the community said they wanted it just the way it is. If the plan was not relevant anymore, why was it a secret to the public?

ArcelorMittal enjoyed bullying the communities. They polluted the groundwater in Steel Valley where hundreds of workers suffered from occupational diseases and refused to compensate them. Arcelormittal did whatever they wanted to do without accounting to anyone.

So, this small organisation, VEJA, took ArcelorMittal to court. And the court confirmed that organisations like VEJA are entitled

to protect and exercise their right to a healthy environment by seeking information to enable them to assess environmental impacts, and to exercise a watchdog role.

Section 24 of our Constitution gives us the right to live in an environment that is clean and not harmful.

By monitoring corporations we are making sure that those rights are respected. We believe many communities can use this way to hold corporations accountable.

It's not easy because companies like ArcelorMittal have expensive lawyers and can win the case easily. But this outcome showed that our justice system still remembers the importance of a clean and healthy environment. ■



Free State Province

Welkom area

The Free State group wrote about:

- ☐ Crime and violence
- ☐ Service delivery protests
- ☐ Sewage and sanitation
- ☐ Water quality
- ☐ Illegal dumping
- ☐ Mining impacts
- ☐ Taxi drivers' strike



Crime, unemployment and mining in Thabong

MOTHOBI TSHABALALA

The South African Police Services in Thabong, a township in Welkom, created a statue with weapons that they have collected from criminal activities in our communities.

The statue shows that criminal activities are increasing in our community and we are in danger.

The common crimes in Thabong are murder, rape, theft, robbery and housebreaking. The township areas most affected are Themba, Mshenguville, Putswastene and the G Hostel.

The cause for the criminal activities is the huge gap in income between the rich and the poor struggling to survive. The community members

say this is caused by the high level of unemployment. Young people resort to theft, housebreaking and robbery as they can't find work.

People in the community say that to get work in the mines they have to bribe high-ranking officials. But they can't do that when they have no money. People from neighbouring countries get these jobs in the mines and this leads to resentment towards

them in the local community.

The gangsters say that they are motivated because they can't stand seeing themselves and their families going to bed on empty stomachs.

Some indicate that they stay in informal settlements where there is no hope so they steal.

The resources of our land are not being used to benefit our people. The community does not see any benefits

from the mines. Instead they see chemicals and other environmental impacts causing ill-health.

The mines are a cost to the community and we call for a discussion with the mines to implement programmes which will benefit the community. ■





Maokeng Township residents voicing their concerns in the Moqhaka Local Municipality

Residents take service delivery issues to the streets

LERATO MPHALE

After twenty years of democracy in South Africa there is still a crisis of service delivery.

Moqhaka Local Municipality is one of the municipalities where electricity and water accounts are combined into one account.

Community members of the Maokeng Township said if their bills for water were high the municipality blocked their electricity. When residents complain the officials say, “There are water leaks, so pay before a reconnection must be done.”

Just like many towns in South Africa, people are complaining about poor quality and service of water.

The municipal official disconnects without giving warning. Sections such as Senzela, Phomolong, Snake Park suffer most from regular water cut-offs.

The tar roads of Kroonstad are full of potholes in the central business district and in the townships. Recreational facilities are not available. Young people do not have safe places to be.

The historic community parks

that used to be in Kroonstad are now dumping sites. The swimming pool in the township of Gelukwaarts area has been turned into a dumping site.

The youth of Maokeng Township in the Moqhaka Municipality stood up for what is right for them and their community.

They organised a protest from Maokeng Township to the office of the Moqhaka Local Municipality to hand over their memorandum.

When they arrived at the offices of the mayor, they found that he was not available to receive the demands of the community. His deputy met the people.

The people refused to give him the memorandum. They stood there singing shaming songs directed at the officials. They were angry and threatened that if the mayor did not come they will burn down the offices.

After an hour the mayor, Mr Jihad, arrived. He took his time before he came out to address the people and receive their memorandum.

By this time tensions were high. The mayor said he was afraid to be

near the people. He did not address the people. He signed a receipt of the memorandum at the gate where he was surrounded by police and security personnel.

As a result of this community protest action, we witnessed the municipality calling workers back to work at the municipality. They were given new protective clothing, then started to patch the roads closing the potholes.

The community see it as a short-term victory. ■



Community march against municipality and mining houses

MANANA MAFUTHA

The community of Theunissen went on a legal march on 4 October 2013. They were protesting against poor service delivery and unfair labour practices by the municipality. The march started at the stadium in the location to the municipal offices where a memorandum was handed over to the municipal council.

In the memorandum the community indicated that the municipality had advertised posts for general workers, security guards and municipal traffic officers, but they were not considered. The Curriculum Vitae of local applicants who had applied for the jobs were found at a dumping site.

What made residents more upset was that people who were employed in different sectors were not residents of the municipality and most came from Parys and worked as general workers and cleaners. The community felt that the municipality treated them unfairly by employing general workers from as far as Parys. Were local people not capable of cleaning and did general workers have to be transferred from Parys to their municipality?

The municipality decided to put all the advertised posts on hold as the community was so furious with this unfair recruitment procedures.

The memorandum also dealt with the issue of the accountability of mines to the community, their



Theunissen community protesting poor service delivery in the Masilonyana Local Municipality

corporate social responsibility, listening to community voices and beneficiation.

The community demanded that the municipality organise a meeting with mines that operate in Theunissen so that they can ask them to present their plans on economic development as well as any projects they have done to empower communities.

The three mining houses that are located in Theunissen are Beatrix mine (Sibanye Gold), Joel Mine (Harmony Gold) and Star Diamonds (Petra Diamonds).

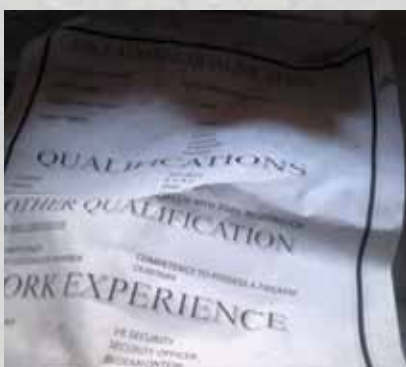
The reason for this request was that the mines never had meetings with the community. There was also no feedback from the meetings between the mines and

the municipality. People who were getting employment preference in the mines were those who had money to bribe or those who came from areas far away.

The community requested to be treated as key stakeholders in the mining industry.

The community said that they did not want politicians and other structures that turn a blind eye on community interests and issues in mining. They said they wanted to see how their minerals were used.

The community gave the municipality seven working days to respond to their grievances. If not, they will apply for another march and picket to voice their concerns and dissatisfaction. ■



People take land by themselves

MOTHOBI TSHABALALA

The residents from Welkom and Thabong started a programme to occupy any unoccupied land and the process is continuing.

They occupied land near Bongani Regional Hospital and Tosa FET College. People marked allocated sites and cleaned the ground to make way for occupation with shacks.

The residents said they had applied and registered for land more than 10 years ago without any response by the municipality.

Thousands of people are registering themselves by appointing people who will lead the programme of registering sites without municipal approval.

On Sunday, 18 August, the municipality sent a delegation to a meeting held in the Lebogang Secondary School.

The municipal representatives told people to wait for a while before they occupy the land, but people said they can't wait. The municipality will find them busy with the occupation of the land before they approve. The representatives went away without any resolution.

The residents said they have heard empty promises for the past 19 years. They led the programme to see how serious the municipality take them. They did it strategically because the government will be coming like usual demanding votes and making empty promises, until the next elections. They said no land, no votes.

Both the young and old, and even people from neighbouring towns adopted the programme and said they are working on doing the same in their respective towns. ■



Sewage water pumped into the Sand River

BROWN MOTSAU AND PULE LEDAKA

We have recently uncovered that as much as we celebrated the pumped up water from Klippan Sewage Reticulation works, that our challenges are far from over. We discovered that the untreated water from the sewage works is discharged into the Mostert Canal and the effluent discharge from mining operations is carried into the Sand River in Virginia.

We uncovered evidence that the poisonous discharge from the mine tailings dam near Bronville Township was carried via the Mostert Canal into the Sand River. We followed the canal for kilometres and saw pipes clearly from Bambanani gold mining plant directly discharging water into the canal.

At the time we did not have our water testing equipment to check acidity levels from the leaking pipes.

We will engage the municipality so that we can put a stop to these hazardous activities by the mining corporations and the municipality.

This reminded us of the Allanridge dams near the community where we discovered a similar incident which related to the Harmony gold mine. ■

Environmental problems in Theunissen

MOTHOBI TSHABALALA

Theunissen is a town 50km from Welkom. In this town the waste dumping site is located next to the dam that supplies water to the community. The dumping site is not fenced off and waste spreads into the community. This has affected the water quality and has created environmental problems for the community.

When it is windy the waste from this site is blown to the same locations from where they were collected.

Masilonyana Municipality, in which Theunissen falls, has been listed as one of the municipalities with the lowest level of water quality by the Department of Water Affairs.

It is clear that the waste dumping site must be separated from the water supply dams as it has a negative impact on the water and environment.

Community members say that the problem lies with the municipality not employing people who specialise in water and who have the skills to do their jobs.

These people have to be sent for training and development so that they learn how to improve the level of water quality. ■



Neglected sewage plant

THABANG MOTSAMAI

The Allanridge and Nyakallong sewage plant is situated north-east of Nyakallong, close to the railway line. Two pump stations, push their sewage to a sewage plant that is not operating and all the machinery is at a standstill.

A local councillor said, “I wonder why they would give a tender to fix a pump station and forget about the sewage plant?”

We found that this plant had no electricity. The sanitation workers complained that they talked to the relevant stakeholders, but to no avail.

They said that the water cleaning process had stopped ‘for donkey’s years’. The plant just harboured sewage for a certain period of time and discharged it into the nearby slime dam. The plant is just ten feet away from houses in the community.

People in nearby houses complain of the unbearable smell.

The sanitation workers say they long for the days when they used to have three-monthly health check-ups at work.

Our study of the health problems caused by sewer gas shows that sewer gas is a serious threat to the health of residents of the Nyakallong community. Sewer gas normally contains ammonia, methane and hydrogen sulphide, all of which are toxic when inhaled in high concentrations.

The councillor we approached said that he has taken the Matjhabeng Municipality to the sewage plant but without any response. He said his hands are tied; he has nowhere else to go.

The people living close-by are talking about this to anybody they think can help. ■



Blue Drop challenges in Welkom

MOTHOBI TSHABALALA

A sign welcoming one to the town of Welkom says the water is not safe for drinking. We have to boil water before we can drink it. Is the Matjhabeng Local Municipality working towards improving the level of drinking water?

As a community organisation we have tried to raise concerns on this matter. The problems that lead to the poor level of water quality are many, however we are sure that the source of the problem is that untreated sewage is channelled through stormwater pipes which ends up in the Sand River, the major water supply source for the community.

Some of the residents indicate that there is a lack of trained and qualified people in the municipality’s water department. It is alleged that the workers are not sent on training sessions that will help them improve their skills and knowledge.

Gold and Uranium Impact Censoring Organisation (GUBICO), our organisation, is in the process of calling a Central Free State Water Hearing with 12 municipalities in Lejweleputswa District Municipality to report and engage on the status of Green and Blue Drop assessments in our areas. We are concerned that lives may be compromised because of ignorance and loss of accountability from our municipalities. ■

Mining footprint never easy to deal with

NOXY NONDLELA

Anglo Gold operated a mine in Welkom for 20 years, then simply abandoned the mine when it could not make any more money.

“Do mines really have community interests at heart when they operate? Why do they operate like a spaza shop, opening and closing at any time?” ask community members.

The community believes mines are quick to open shafts and do prospecting, but after extracting profits they don’t care who is affected, as they don’t return the land to its original form.

This in turn leaves the same community and the government with the responsibility of cleaning the mess that was caused by these mining houses.

Taxpayers have to foot the bill if the company is not compelled to clean up.

What we see, is a picture of mine dumps, tailings dams and abandoned buildings which are a danger to our community. Mining houses do not care for the environment.

That is why we find ourselves living in communities with minerals worth billions of rands and yet our community is suffering unemployment, underdevelopment, lack of infrastructure, poor healthcare facilities and no skills training.

What remains with us as proof that mining houses existed in this area is the chemicals and the mine dumps. These things affect our health as a community as these mines are close to the area where people live. ■

Nationalise the mines

MOJALEFA RABOLINYANE



Mining operations in the Allanridge area.

Living in a mining community, one would think, is the best thing ever. Well, not when you are living in the Free State Province in the Matjhabeng Local Municipality in small towns like Allanridge and Odendaalsrus.

Despite five decades of mining, these towns are two of the poorest in the Lejweleputswa District Municipality.

Mining communities benefit nothing from the mining houses who extract the natural resources of the land. There are no economic improvement in the towns. The mines contribute no social responsibility or development programmes to the community.

Because of the high level of unemployment, individuals engage in illegal mining to feed their families and to survive. Is it still right to call these men and women 'illegal' miners since they don't use heavy machinery or chemicals that are harmful to the environment and the community?

If the issue of social development was thoroughly addressed, the high levels of unemployment and poverty would be addressed and if there was full functionality of skills development centres in the communities, the negative impacts of mining would be less.

There is poor infrastructure in the towns, there are no colleges or special schools for the handicapped and hospitals operate like clinics, offering limited services and patients have to go long distances to the big hospitals such as the Bongani Hospital in Welkom, Thabong.

After 1994, communities from these and other towns hoped for things to improve. But the situation got worse with the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer.

Is this the freedom we hoped and fought for? Did we fight for freedom so that government officials and political leaders and MPs can enrich themselves? What is the difference between the apartheid era and freedom? Is this a change of power from white supremacy to black supremacy?

It is high time the community calls for the nationalisation of the mines. These are our resources and we also want to benefit from them.

Why can't the government take note of the example of Zimbabwe? Yes, in every war there is collateral damage, and in this fight for nationalisation by the community against the capitalists and the ANC government, there will be collateral damage. But we will be leaving a good legacy for generations to come in this country. ■

Drivers strike for their rights

COMMUNITY MONITOR

Taxi drivers in Welkom and surrounding towns took their demands for better treatment and payment to the street.

No transport was available for workers to get to work. Most ranks were not functional, including Manny's taxi rank which is the biggest.

The Free State Taxi Drivers Union, representing the workers, indicated that they have been silenced by owners who made empty promises for too long.



The demands of the taxi drivers were:

- Union recognition – Their union is not recognised by the Department of Transport and owners and they are not granted platforms to participate on issues affecting them.
- UIF and Pension Benefits – without these benefits they serve in the industry for 20 to 40 years and retire without a cent.
- Fair Disciplinary Procedures
- A living wage
- Accident Cover
- Allowances to buy petrol

The drivers said that negotiations were continuing even though employers were responding slowly.

They also said they did not want the passengers to suffer. ■



Violent children of South Africa

TEBOHO MOKOAKOA

Violence in the Thabong community is everywhere. It has one of the highest crime rates in the Free State Province.

Young boys have organised themselves into gangs and when they meet they cause violence.

They kill each other, they treat each other with no respect and they walk in the streets with huge knives which they use to bully the community.

The community members don't feel safe inside their own houses and in their streets.

They don't even have trust in the South Africa Police Service anymore.

The community is not safe in their own land. ■



Mines not a legacy for our communities

MOTHOBİ TSHABALALA

People may think that living in a mining town, communities are blessed with mines, but not in our area. These mines create a mess.

When you walk around towns such as Welkom, Odendaalsrus, Allanridge, Virginia and Theunissen, the mines are close to where people live. The residents are surrounded by tailings dams of closed and existing mines.

Government structures, both local and national, contribute to the problem. We all know people like Cyril Ramaphosa will have shares in Lonmin and Baleka Mbete in Sibanye Gold and our mayors will be

promised money to turn a blind eye.

The farmers around the goldfields area have also been complaining about the damage to the soil. The mines and tailings dams are right next to the agricultural crops.

Our area was for years known for its rich maize, wheat and sunflower farming. It has turned into a dry place and an infertile land.

So these mines are shutting down, but also killing the possible employment in other sectors. We call on them to do more corporate social responsibility as these areas are turning into ghost towns because of mines. ■

Illegal dumping

MOTLOKGELWA MATLABE

The Green Scorpions will inspect a site where tons of illegally dumped medical waste was found in the Free State. According to the DEA, they inspect the site at Maximum Bricks in Welkom for compliance with a clean-up and rehabilitation order.

Maximum Bricks were raided in November last year and a huge amount of medical waste was found buried in the sites, including syringes, drips, dirty bandages and general medical waste.

Communities should initiate cleaning these dumping sites and create parks in their place and force the municipality to collect rubbish weekly, as scheduled. My wish is to live in a community that is clean and healthy for everyone. ■





North West Province

Klerksdorp area

The Klerksdorp group wrote about:

- ☐ CSR
- ☐ Electricity deductions
- ☐ Houses built on wetlands
- ☐ Mass dismissals at a mine
- ☐ Informal settlements
- ☐ Theft of drain covers
- ☐ Illegal dumping
- ☐ Housing
- ☐ Pollution problems



Corporate social responsibility doesn't apply to primary health care

MXOLISI DADA



Zoleka Rantsu is a gorgeous, and humble 35-years old project manager of Regola Mmogo 'we grow together', a non-profit organisation in the field of HIV/ AIDS.

Zoleka is openly and positively living with HIV. She and her colleagues work in the community of Umuzimuhle in Orkney where they serve the mining communities doing home-based care and managing chronic diseases such as diabetes, TB, HIV and AIDS.

The organisation depends on the Department of Health for the supply of medical kits for home-based caregivers and the payment of stipends for its workforce.

When asked about any assistance from the AngloGold Ashanti mine Zoleka said, "They once assisted with the home-based care kits. They

argue that in Umuzimuhle at least one household member is employed by the company."

The organisation deals on a daily basis with the poverty and unemployment in the areas where Aurora mining company used to mine.

"We sometimes find ourselves contributing to our clients' food and transport costs. It is sad to see a face of poverty on a person who is sick and needing medical attention," said Zoleka.

These care-givers are an extension of primary health care, and they deserve better.

Corporate social responsibility should be prioritised by mines and help organisations like Regola Mmogo to deal with health issues in communities surrounded by the mines. ■

Pre-paid electricity deductions

ELBY NKULULEKO DEE

Electricity is a basic necessity. Poor community members of Jouberton seem to be paying for the services rendered to the communities of Tigane, Kanana and Khuma.

Morongwe Phakedi is 52-years old, unemployed and lives with her mother, uncle and five children. No one works in the family and they all depend on her mother's pension grant and her two children's social grants.

She said, "We struggle to make ends meet and the municipality rips us off, because Khuma residents do not pay for basic services and they purchase electricity directly from Eskom.

Mr. Tony Meiring of the Ratepayers Association said, "The residents of Jouberton are supposed to get 70 free units if they have registered as indigents, not 50 units the City Council provides. The Matlosana Municipality is committing a crime by deducting electricity units from prepaid users' accounts."

He stressed that basic services should not be confused with electricity. There are separate billings for refuse removal, water and sanitation.

People who become victims of the whole system are poor members of the community, like women and the elderly.

So far the Matlosana Municipality has treated the residents of Jouberton with disrespect and did not consult when they imposed this system.

With the current financial state of the municipality being

declared bankrupt, it was placed under provincial government administration. On the 12th of September 2013, the municipality has again embarked on an electricity cut-off programme where they send young people to observe if residents have tampered with their electricity meter boxes and if they discover such tampering, they cut off electricity supply.

In other households they have removed meter boxes, and in order for the municipality to reinstall their meter box, an amount of R5 000 must be paid.

The root cause of why people resort to desperate measures such as bridging their meter boxes is because the municipality has left them with no choice.

According to all the residents whose accounts are in arrears, for an example, if a resident purchases pre-paid electricity of R20 instead of them receiving 19.6 kilowatts, they only receive 8 kilowatts meaning

that a resident is sold electricity worth R8 and R12 is reserved to service arrears for their basic services.

This puts a family of six to eight people in a difficult situation, because with such limited electricity they cannot cope with their day to day energy requirements.

The City of Matlosana needs to understand what makes people behave like that and come to a common ground with them.

For people to be heard what exactly must happen? Protest and burn tyres or must people be violent to express their frustrations? ■



The Matlosana Municipality is deducting electricity units from prepaid users' accounts

Houses built near wetland

DISEBO NTISA

Kanana Township is one of the communities of the Matlosana Municipality in Klerksdorp. In Kanana Ext.3 Lesedi section, the municipality built houses on a wetland.

The people in the area experience a number of problems. The walls of their houses are cracked as the moisture expands around the house and weakens the foundation.

After heavy rains, people are likely to experience floods, because this wetland is not able to absorb all the water underground.

The grass on the wetland grows very tall and around the houses there are snakes, rats and flying creatures which the people are afraid of.

Dineo Malefo, a resident, said: "During summer, mosquitoes breed there and go straight into our houses. We can't sleep at night."

According to another local resident, Maserame: "Cold air arises from the wetland. In winter we use more blankets and heaters to warm up our houses."

When asked about the problem, Mr. Ratsietsi, a municipal official, responded: "The issue of this section has been discussed over a long time. At the time of building these houses, the municipality had the land, and people wanted the houses."

People staying near that wetland don't want to move even if they experience problems. The place is advantageous in the event of water shortage.

All residents agree they don't want to lose their right to a house, even if it is on a wetland. ■



Mass dismissal at the Moab Khotsoeng Gold Mine

MXOLISI DADA (VAAL REEFS)

Anglo Gold mine at Vaal Reefs no 11, also known as Moab Khotsoeng Gold Mine, embarked on a mass dismissal programme aimed exclusively at members of the Association of Mine and Construction Workers Union (AMCU).

The union challenged a 2002 collective agreement entered into by the National Union of Mine Workers (NUM) and the company.

The collective agreement allows for workers to work Saturday shifts bi-monthly with a 5% incentive.

Mr. KG Ntsane (shaft deputy secretary of AMCU) argues that the agreement was for two years and is no longer binding. Workers are therefore at liberty to negotiate a better deal or revert back to the normal working arrangements as before the agreement took effect.

Mr Ntsane argues that AMCU put forth a proposal of a 15% incentive. The company refused to go above a 2% increase on the original 5%.

Khwezi Thafeni, an AMCU member said, “When the committee reported on the intransigency of the company, we as workers decided not to honour the night shift of Friday, the 19th of April 2013 (for Saturday) and Sunday morning as an indication of displeasure.”

A brief was circulated and signed by the general manager, Mr. Moses Masondo, informing employees that they were on an “illegal and unprotected strike”.

As workers came from the underground shift that afternoon, some AMCU workers were interrogated and intimidated with expulsion by the management.

At the same time NUM was on a serious recruitment drive and tried to force AMCU workers to re-join the union.

On Tuesday, the 23rd of April 2013, all executive committee members of AMCU (the Top 7) were blocked from going to their work stations and summoned to a meeting. Present in the meetings were the mine management, the head of security of the company and the private security. Management told them that it was a disciplinary meeting. The Top 7 walked out.

Two full-time shop stewards were arrested as they came from underground.

The AMCU chairperson and treasurer were also arrested on the same afternoon on charges of public violence.

On the 24th of April 2013, members were prevented from going underground and taken to a remote

area where they were told of their mass dismissal. They were then given exit forms and R400 cash per person for transport to go home. They were also given seven days’ notice to vacate the premises of the Anglo Gold accommodation.

Mr. Phumlisa Arosi, who is the chairperson on education of AMCU, said that he was given notice to vacate the company premises, even though he was on leave at the time. Clearly, this was a purge on the AMCU membership.

How does one explain that at the disciplinary meetings, NUM membership forms were distributed?

The AMCU says that this was a collective effort by both NUM and the mine management to contain and subsequently get rid of AMCU in the Vaal Reef Mine.

The matter has now been referred to the legal department of both AMCU and the mine management.

The situation is very tense and members of AMCU are adamant that they will be vindicated.

As it stands, the Anglo Gold Ashanti, Moab Khotsoeng Mine’s general manager has since ordered that the employees should have vacated the mine premises (the hostel) by the 27th of May 2013. ■

From Kafferskraal to Ratanang

VINCENT SHOMOLEKAE

In the old dispensation, the farm known as Kafferskraal or Kgapa Mado Plot 38, was the home of farm dwellers who used to work for the late Mr. Coeks.

Mrs. Elna Elizabeth Coeks, his daughter, inherited the farm and at the time an estimated number 39 to 49 people stayed on the farm with their children.

‘Kafferskraal’ means ‘slavery’ kraal – a place where animals are kept. The people who lived here also gave this area a second name, ‘Kgapa Madi’, meaning “mopping up blood”.

Gerard Petrus De Cleug, a neighbour of the plot, threatened the employees with eviction and still continues to do so.

The employees of Plot 38 met with Elna Coeks about the money owed by her father to them. She did not come back to them, so the workers approached the Department of Land Affairs in Klerksdorp about this matter.

They asked for advice on how they could become a trust and the possibility of them creating an agricultural project for them to be able to survive.

At the Land Affairs department they met a consultant who advised them that the owner of the plot or farm should agree on this project.

In January 2012, this critical information from the Department of Land Affairs spread wrongly in Kgapa Madi and the neighbouring farms and ended up in Jouberton Township.

The misinformation was that

60 people were needed for an agricultural project and they will also be given stands. This story spread to homeless people in Jouberton who were desperately in need of residential stands.

People flocked to the area with a view of getting residential stands. Today, an estimated thousand people are living informally in the area, and a massive number of shacks have been erected.

Based on this information, the Matlosana Municipality realised that there are many people who are in desperate need for residential stands and houses.

The community in the informal settlement resolved to change the

two evil names and called the area “Ratanang” which means “love one another”.

An interim executive committee was formed by the Ratanang community. The committee engaged the Matlosana Municipality to

intervene as they have acknowledged their mistake for occupying a private property through wrong information. The community had nowhere to go as they arrived with their families and their belongings.

The community is continuing to suffer, particularly because they have no water.

The community depends on a single source of water, a borehole which needed to be repaired four times, thus demanding that the people join hands financially to do the necessary repairs.

An eviction will destroy the lives and future of the children and their loved ones. ■



Storm water drains

MASODI MOSENA

Iam a resident of Jouberton. In the past two years I have noticed an increase in the theft of the metal covers of storm water drains in the section I live. The cement slabs are left open, unbalanced and are a danger to kids and pedestrians.

People are also using the open water drain to dump their domestic waste during the night.

Mr Tladi, a resident, said, “The reason the metal theft has increased is due to the market for scrap metals and the high unemployment. There is a lady who buys scrap metals from the people, and in turn sells it to bigger companies.”

Selina Sefako a neighbour said, “These open holes are dangerous, maybe the municipality is waiting for an incident where someone dies before they can act.”

Myself and four others temporarily fixed the drains and talked to a few people in our neighbourhood about their responsibility to report to the municipality when there are problems and to report to the police in case of theft of steel covers.

Mmono Modise, a scrap metal buyer in my neighbourhood said, “I have the children to feed, I have to do something for survival, I don’t ask people who are selling to me where they got the metals.”

Our councillor, Mr. Lefa, said he will raise the matter with the municipal manager and the municipal department of road works to rehabilitate the open storm water drains. I suggested that they replace the steel covers with concrete slabs to avoid the theft of metal for recycling purposes. ■

Illegal dumping near the St. Paul Catholic Church

NOMAINDIA GAJI

Istay in Jouberton next to the Catholic Church. Illegal dumping next to the church is a big problem.

I spoke to a neighbour, Rachel Sediti who said, “We are sick and tired of this dumping, because it affects us on a daily basis, it brings rats, bad smells and sickness.”

Illegal dumping is a huge problem in Jouberton Township, despite the efforts made by the Matlosana Municipality to collect domestic waste on set days for different sections of the township.

People continue to dump where they wish. I am not sure whether this is because of a lack of education on the importance of the environment, or maybe there is something which the municipality is not doing right on matters related to waste removal. Perhaps it is simply ignorance and a lack of responsibility on the part of the community members.

According to the ward councillor, Mr Goitsemodimo, “The municipality is doing everything in its power to condemn the illegal dumping. Efforts are made to fine those found guilty of illegal dumping, and instituting financial rewards for the whistle blowers, but the problem still persists.”

I am deeply disturbed by the way institutions, such as churches, are treated by community members who in turn are expecting the church to help shape the morals of their children for a better future. ■



Open spaces turned into illegal dumps

NDADE SEBOLAI AND JOHANNES PULE

In Jouberton Township any open space is turned into a dumping area. This is because the municipality fails to collect household rubbish on time and on the days they are supposed to collect.

All municipal councils come into power promising to collect the rubbish once every week. The municipality put signs prohibiting the illegal dumping in areas such as government and private owned areas. If someone is found dumping illegally they will get six months in prison or pay a fine.



There was a tender to clean and put together the rubbish in all areas. But the municipality failed to collect the rubbish and the rubbish started to collect all over again.

Miss T Leshage, a local resident, said, “This dumping area is hazardous for us living nearby. People dump whatever unwanted material from their yards, and they even dump food, medicines, dead dogs and cats.

The municipality must take full responsibility to clean and collect the rubbish from the households as they promised, because the community is paying the municipality for refuse removal.

Everybody deserves to live in a healthy environment.” ■

Health problems Ext 9 Jouberton

PETRUS MOSHE

In Jouberton, RDP houses were built in Extension 9, next to a sewerage bulk drainage system, which receives sewage from surrounding areas.



The sewage overflows everywhere around the area and poses a health risk. The smell affects all the people in this area.

The RDP houses were built in 2003. The Matlosana municipality did not notify the people that this area was unsuitable for human settlement.

A community leader said, “The poor are still subjected to inhumane conditions even after 18 years of democracy.”

Mama Sara, a resident, said, “There was no proper consultation about this area, but people were happy to move into the new RDP houses. Beggars cannot be choosers, but we did not anticipate the related health problems.”

Another resident, Mr Dlamani, said, “My two children have tuberculosis, I believe it is the environment that caused this.”

Through house to house consultation, our Justice and Peace group found many people sick from TB and asthma.

People must be consulted and allowed to participate in any decision that might affect their lives. ■

Kynoch plant creates ill health

VUYELWA MCEYA



Kynoch is one of the biggest companies in our town and produces fertiliser for plants and soil.

At first it was a good intervention for the unemployed and people were excited. But later this company brought so many problems to our community.

People who stay near this place get affected by diseases such as TB, because of the chemicals which get into the air.

“This company damages our houses and even the lives of our people are in danger,” said a resident.

Another resident nearby the company said, “Since this company came to our area, we have not noticed any good from it, only the ill health experienced by our community members. Jobs benefit people from other places, not the local people.

“The government doesn’t care about the people’s health and the environment as they say in the country’s constitution.

“We have complained on many occasions and asked for government intervention regarding the ill health of people, who we believe are sick due to the company’s chemicals.

But the government never bothered to conduct even a single study on the company’s environmental impact.” ■



Where are the beneficiaries of these houses?

JOE MASHILO

It is now nine years, and the beneficiaries of a number of houses can still not occupy their houses, because they are not completed by the contractor.

The uncompleted RDP houses in Extension 24 in Jouberton were built by the Matlosana Municipality’s contractors.

Why was the construction of the houses not completed, while the subsidies were approved by the provincial government? Where did the subsidy money go?

A resident in the area, Tebogo Hlalele, said: “These uncompleted houses are used by juveniles at night for criminal activities and are dangerous.”

The roofs of the houses built in Extension 24 were tiled, but according to a source, a group of people were roofing some of the houses with corrugated sheets.

It is sad to discover that an RDP house worth forty thousand rand is lacking running water, a toilet system, window glasses and plastered walls.

Where are the beneficiaries of those houses? Surely, they are somewhere renting other places, staying with their families, or maybe homeless.

It is shocking to realise that they do not stand a chance to apply for another RDP house, because their housing subsidies have long been approved. Our government is not treating its people equally.

The construction of the 3,000 houses in Extension 24 commenced in 2004, people started occupying houses in 2006; however, many houses were not occupied by the rightful beneficiaries and this is a big problem today and evictions are on the way.

The municipal housing officials were corrupt, they sold houses which belonged to other people. In some cases people were given double allocation (two people for the same house).

All the problems associated with the Extension 24 housing project clearly suggest that the Matlosana Municipality is lacking the requisite skills for the project management of its housing delivery process. ■





North West Province

Rustenburg

The Rustenburg group wrote about:

- ☐ Illegal electricity connections
- ☐ Housing issues
- ☐ Sewage and sanitation
- ☐ Alcohol and drug abuse
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Police brutality
- ☐ Informal settlements
- ☐ Delivery of basic services
- ☐ Mining impacts



Izinyokas in Ikemeleng

BUTI BOTOPELA

“It is all about favours and who can afford the monthly R50 fee paid to the supplier,” says an Ikemeleng resident.

The community supports the use of illegal power as they believe it will force the authorities to install electricity in Ikemeleng.

The community of Ikemeleng has lived in the dark for years and lived on empty promises with no service delivery.

The power comes from the hostel that accommodates employees working at Kroondal Spar.

Others get their source from the community Apollo lights which supplies the taverns, bottle stores, butcheries and tuck shops.

The wires are loosely connected



and not dug in deep. This is dangerous, especially during rainy days.

One household using illegal power had the following to say:

“We use illegal power because it’s a need like water and money. We are tenants and pay the R50 monthly fee for the power to

our landlord who is unemployed. This is his only way of earning money, and he pays the supplier as well.

“Illegal power connection is wrong, but we are not to be blamed for using it. Our government has to do something about it, we pay taxes and still live in the dark. ‘A boer maak ‘n plan’, and that’s exactly what we doing.”

There was a community meeting held regarding the approved budget of R16 million for electricity installation in June/July this year.

The ward councillor and other local municipality officials were there, but we are still waiting for the project to kickstart. ■



Overcrowding in Ikemeleng

STEVEN RAMOKHULA

The mining community of Ikemeleng is in Kroondal, and in the centre of five mining companies: Xstrata, Samancor, Lanxess, Aquarius and Anglo American Platinum. One of the main issues facing the community of Ikemeleng is overcrowding.

The surrounding mining companies play a big role in the increasing population in Ikemeleng. People come from all over to seek employment. We have people from Ghana, Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Lesotho and Botswana and nationwide.

Job seekers flock towards the community because of the surrounding mines.

Every month the population within Ikemeleng increases. The place is about twelve square kilometres, but accommodate around nine thousand people.

The living out allowance is the key cause of the overcrowding problem. The mining companies do not provide accommodation for their employees. They give money in the form of a living out allowance, meant to pay for accommodation, food and transport. The employees find life

easy in Ikemeleng and they save some of their money.

Due to this overcrowding, Ikemeleng has experienced a lot of problems.



Crime has increased. In May this year a man was shot and injured on his way from a tavern. Again in May another man was found dead just a few meters from the entrance of Ikemeleng and his private parts were cut off.

The abuse of substances also has increased the spread of HIV/AIDS and other STDs.

Some people buy liquor and drugs for women in exchange for sex.

While under the influence of alcohol and other substances they don't use condoms and this leads to unwanted or unplanned pregnancy. Rape is sky rocketing.

We urge all mining companies surrounding Ikemeleng, to work with the community in managing the population.

We also urge the companies to build hostels to accommodate its employees who are from other parts of the continent and country.

The living out allowance should be given only to local employees.

Mining companies and all stakeholders must help existing local organisations to host awareness campaigns on social issues such as HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, rape and safe sex.

We further urge the community to build strong and active structures that will help community members gain confidence. Structures that will benefit the community teach members their rights and help put them into practice. ■



Sewers create havoc in Marikana West

TAKATSO TONTSI

A sewer or sewerage is the underground infrastructure for transporting sewage from houses and commercial buildings for disposal or treatment. The system of sewers is called a sewage system.

The sewage system in Marikana is a problem, because the system breaks down and there is water everywhere on the streets.

I spoke to Mrs Mphahlele about her neighbour's yard which had large pools of standing sewage water. Her yard might be a dam of sewage water, and the smell goes a long way.

She has reported this problem to the municipality offices and they promised to help.

"But every year it's the same problem. The smell is just all over the place. We are literally living in a smelly toilet. We can't smell our food; we can't open windows for fresh air," she said.

Mr Albino Cuna thinks the smell is the least to worry about.

He said, "We hardly go out into our yards. We reported this so many times and even gave up and dug furrows to open a way for the water to go the streets. Never mind the smell – it just gets too messy with dirty water all over the yard.

"Now the water goes straight to the streets. Children play in the sewage waters. The roads have pools of water and cars splash this water around when they drive past."

People who fix the sewage pipes are far from Marikana, they work in Rustenburg and they work at many places all over town.

"If we had someone locally to fix the pipes, we would not have to wait so long," says Nomxolisi Macokocoko from the municipal office in Marikana.

The only way is to install bigger sewers in Marikana as the number of dwellers has increased. The health of the community depends on this. ■

Different tribes bound to one language by the education system

TAKATSO TONTSI

Marikana is a diverse mining town with people from different language backgrounds. Parents send their children to school expecting them to be taught in their mother tongue, but local schools only offer Setswana.

In the Marikana primary school there are children from seven different languages in one class.

Mrs Mpungwane, a parent said, "I do not have any choice, schools around here only teach Setswana."

Another parent, Betty Letswalo, said, "Before I came to live in Marikana I lived with my children in Soweto, and in Pimville we had plenty of schools for different tribes and they teach different languages in one school. Now my child is forced to learn Setswana as her second language, now she will lose Sesotho."

Mrs Mautsane, a pre-school teacher at Marikana Primary School said, "The department knows about this and as from January, the school has a teacher that specialises in isiXhosa. Next year there will be an isiXhosa teacher in Grade One, and in 2015 there will be isiXhosa in Grade 2, it will go just like that until the learners who started with it are in Grade 12."

The problem with this is that children who start school somewhere else tend to fail when they get here. Parents are forced to send their children to expensive town schools.

Children grow up not learning their mother tongue. They will not know much about their culture.

A good future lies in good roots. The only way is to hire more teachers to come to Marikana schools who can specialise in other languages that dominate.

How long is it going to take before the department makes development? And how many would have been forced to have Setswana on their matric certificates? ■





Alcohol and drug abuse in Mafenya village

EMMA MORAKE

Alcohol and drug abuse is on the rise in Mafenya. Young people are often seen early in the morning consuming alcohol or smoking dagga.

High levels of unemployment are one of the main causes of alcohol and drug abuse. Young people also say there is a lack of activities for them in the area.

Despite having four mines surrounding this community, unemployment remains high.

The four mines surrounding Mafenya village are: BRPM, Styldrift, Maseve and Xstrata.

High levels of unemployment lead to hopelessness in young people and this leads to the abuse of alcohol and drugs to escape the reality of their situation. It is very disturbing to see young people in taverns instead of being in classes or even working.

There have been rumours of dagga and nyaope being sold and smoked at a local tavern in the area. Community members refuse to reveal details of the activities that go on at the tavern. The owner was not available for comment.

Peer pressure also leads to the abuse of alcohol and drugs. Lack of activities for young people was also the reason for most of them seeking entertainment in alcohol and drugs. Because there is no community centre and no youth activities, there is nothing to keep them busy.

The abuse of alcohol leads to high levels of crime and school drop outs.

The Mafenya Youth Club has come up with ideas on how to keep young people occupied.

Love Life has agreed to hold workshops in the area. The youth committee of Mafenya Youth Club meets twice a week to discuss how they can create activities for young people. Other planned activities include workshops and film festivals from Workers World Media Productions.

A leadership workshop will also be held to give young people leadership skills.

We hope that these planned activities will put a stop to the abuse of alcohol and drugs. Young people are the future and we must work together to ensure that their future is bright. And mines must also be pushed to hire local young people and not import cheap labour. ■



Police brutality and detention without trial on Human Rights Day

MPHO MAKGENE

Iwas one of six young females from Chaneng who were arrested while participating in a peaceful march.

The youth of Chaneng took to the streets in the early hours of 21st April barricading roads with burning tires, trees and stones on the village main roads, making sure there was no movement in the village.



The Public Order Police blocked the group, encircled them, set off the teargas and shot rubber bullets.

The protesters were frustrated by actions of the Mmakgosana (village headman's mother) who stole a stamp needed by the village council to validate certificates when people applied for jobs on the mine.

They were also angry with the Styldrift mining explorations on community land with no consultation with the community.

Youth blocked the roads leading to the mine and would not allow the drillers to continue to work.

The police came to stop the protest.

During the negotiations with the police one young female from the community was kicked by mine security in the presence of the South African Police, while she was taking pictures for a community programme.

When she informed the warrant officer who was present at that time he said, “Don’t teach me how to do my job, if you want to lay charges go ahead.”

The community action managed to temporarily stop the drilling machines. The public order police and mine security fired teargas and rubber bullets. Many youth were injured and many more were arrested.

My fellow cell mates were also shocked to realise they were arrested on Human Rights Day while exercising their human rights.



Nelly told us how she was injured, “I was shot with rubber bullets and my arm joint was dislocated and my knee was bleeding. When I told the police they drove their van even faster and didn’t provide me with medical attention for the whole seven days.”

Lorraine said she had lost all faith in the police.

We were charged with public violence and detained for seven days with no trial at Phokeng police station. We are now out on bail. ■

Mmaditlhokwa community

RUSTENBURG MONITORS

The Mmaditlhokwa community was relocated by Tharisa Minerals to make way for mining activity. People are most dissatisfied with their new housing conditions.

Mr Mthobeni and Johannes Motlhoki, both residents of Mmaditlhokwa, complained about the fact that they had no title deeds to their new dwellings, and the yards were too small and there were no water taps. The communal water tank is far from their houses.

There was no electricity so they were forced to use gas or paraffin. The shack is not partitioned inside and there is no privacy. He does not believe the mining house will do anything to improve their situation.

There is a lot of corruption in the management of the housing settlement. There are allegations that people buy stands with shacks for about R5000 paid to the councillor. There is a rumour that the councillor has lavish accommodation at Mooinooi, and a luxurious car and house. The recreational facility maintained by the municipality is exclusively used by the 24-year old councillor.

This is an example of the mines oppressing the people and how corrupt councillors make their position worse. ■



Lack of transport in Mafenya

KAGISO MOLEFI



Mafenya community is a small village surrounded by hills near Chaneng and Robega. People from this community experience a lot of problems, especially a lack of transport.

People who use public transport daily said the problem can’t be solved until the potholes on the roads are fixed.

The problem is Mafenya is small, so taxi drivers neglect the area as it has no business for them.

People are unhappy because this problem restricts their movement.

One commuter said he works at Sun City and if he misses a taxi to Mafenya at 3h00, he has to take a taxi to Chaneng and walk to Mafenya without any luck of a taxi.

A pregnant woman said when she goes for her check-ups at the clinic, she is forced to take school taxis and sometimes a learner is left behind due to lack of space in the taxi. The learner will then not go to school that day.

Issues such as lack of transport and damaged roads are not easily recognised by our leaders.

We should come up with solutions and these must be added to our priority demands. ■

Segwaelane has a new hazardous neighbour

BAKANG TLHAPANE

Afpplats mine is one of the mines that produce platinum. The Afplats company is opening a new mine at Leeuwkop area near Segwaelane, about 1km away from the Segwaelane community.

This mine will start to produce platinum in the year 2019-2020. The mining operations have already started with the mine sinking the shafts.

In August 2012 a community meeting was held at Segwaelane Community Hall. The Afplats representatives were there and the community thought that they wanted to ask the people's permission to use the land.

But the mine was already operating without any community consultation or agreement. The mine had an agreement with government only. They came to the community to create a smokescreen and compile a report that says they did meet with the community and that the community agreed that the mine can start mining operations.

This report will then be given to government officials as proof of this consultation. This is incorrect.

One point on the agenda was environmental damages. This



point is one of the things that the community was worried about.

The community asked the company who was responsible for cracks that occurred in houses after heavy blasting. They also asked about the destruction to the community roads as a result of the heavy mine trucks.

A mine representative said that they did a survey of cracks and were still trying to get to the root cause of these cracks.

The community could see that these people were lying. Some community members were concerned about damage to the soil

and land, others about the sound of blasting and air pollution.

Some were sad because vegetation will be cleared, which meant that livestock would be moved or die.

The community understood little of who was responsible and who should be held liable for all these injustices.

But the community said that at the next meeting they wanted answers to who would account for the damages and for what will occur in the future.

The mine representatives said they will call a meeting soon. ■

Poor service delivery at Segwaelane clinic

TSHEPANG SARAH RAMBAO

The Segwaelane clinic is the only place where you can get medical attention in Segwaelane Village, which is located in Brits town.

Community members of Segwaelane Village find it hard to utilise their clinic, the reason being long queues and not getting any attention from the nurses.

The ill-treatment that patients receive from nurses is outrageous, and makes it difficult and impossible for patients to ask for and get help in this clinic.

The ignorance and rudeness of these nurses make community members uncomfortable to go to the clinic.

People are forced to go to town

or nearby villages for medical attention, all because of lack of supervision and laziness. ■





Limpopo Province

The Limpopo group wrote about:

- Increase in HIV/AIDS rates in mining communities
- Community representation
- Mining impact
- Mining and community relations



HIV rates increase pain in Driekop

LUCIA MOSOMA

Driekop farm is also known as Diphale and many people die here as a result of Aids.

Diphale is a small rural village in the Sekhukhune district in Ward 8 of the Tubase Municipality.

It is surrounded by the Madikwa and Marula platinum mine.

The village is so close to the Marula mine, we hear its operations on a daily basis, especially when they blast underground.

"It is bad, we still live with dusty roads and undeveloped areas even after 12 years. People around this place are still in denial about HIV/Aids. Both young and old are infected by the disease," said one of the victims.



He takes ARVs, as does his young daughter and his girlfriend. They all get social grants. He said that 50% of the people around this village are HIV positive, and he knows, because he collects his treatment at the clinic together with everyone else.

"The fact that we are close to Marula mine makes it easy for Marula employees to reside in and around the village, and as a result, young girls and adults end up in relationships with the mine employees in exchange for money," he said.

He continued, "It saddens me to see my fellow

people dying from this disease. Poor people are not using condoms. Is this because people are ignorant or are mine workers infecting our people?"

We wouldn't have this high rate of people living with HIV/Aids if there were no mines in our village."





Why is everything about chiefs?

AUBREY MANGENA

The mines at Driekop and Maandagshoek do not engage with the entire community, but are only focusing on talking to the tribal chiefs.

Our tribal councils today are no longer discussing community issues, instead they are discussing business.

Modikwa platinum mine and Marula platinum mine are among the many mining companies that have invaded our communities, and are not helping to improve local lives.

The community holds a 17% partnership stake in African Rainbow Minerals (ARM) at Modikwa platinum mine, which is owned by Patrice Motsepe. This arrangement has seen the donation of seven expensive 2012 Toyota Hilux 4x4 Double Cab SR Diesel cars worth R300,000 each for the chiefs, building two tribal office mansions worth millions, and in June 2012, continued giving Tsidintsi (the chief's company) 30% in Leko Mining Service Pty Ltd.

Everything is a donation from ARM to communities and a way of setting up the chiefs against their communities. At Marula platinum mine one of our local chiefs was given a sub-contract with Nkulula and two chiefs were given 33% in the Platcro mining company.

In 2010/2011, Modikwa donated a tar road that connects Maandagshoek village with the R37 road. But just 15 days after the official opening of the road, the road was as if it is 40-years old, because it had construction defects and because of the damage done by mining vehicles.

The situation is that the mine can't declare dividends, because of a loan that was offered to the communities when the operation started. The loan was worth R300 million and ARM funded the loan and the community is still trying to settle this loan.

Where does one take out a loan without agreeing on a repayment plan and where the lender takes out everything from your income?

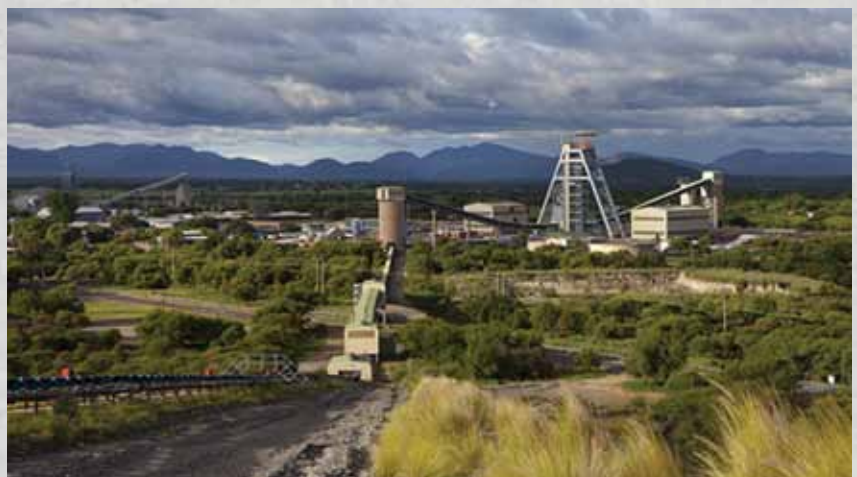
The money should be used to ensure that the needs of communities

are taken care of, such as ensuring good healthcare for young and old and education and business opportunities for local people, not just for the chiefs.

There have been complaints from communities that Section21 is not working in their favour and should be dissolved, that there are people working for ARM, but on paper they are working for Section21.

ARM's Modikwa and Marula platinum mines must take responsibility for the broader society in which they operate. Fair engagement is when they listen to community representatives, as they are the ones who present our demands and report back to us.

We've don't see chiefs reporting back to the community. ■





Mines are parasites

LIMPOPO MONITOR

The hairworm is a parasite that lives on grasshoppers and pumps the insect with a chemical that makes it commit suicide. Once in the water, the hairworm swims away from its host, leaving it dead or drowning. This is how the big mining companies deal with communities.

These big companies are parasites in our communities and the Twickenham platinum mine is one of them.

Its operations started in 2001, and initially the people thought it would be a mutually beneficial arrangement, with job creation and revenue invested in the development of communities with better health care and education, and local economic development.

This changed at the end of last year when about 200 local people were retrenched.

The Community Engagement Forum tried everything in their power to challenge the retrenchment, but the company said it was part of a survival plan as the company was not doing well. Only local people were retrenched.

This year the mine brought in more than 600 people from outside the community and did not reinstate those retrenched last year. The community was upset and tried to engage with the mine to know their excuse for not hiring back the locals and why locals were not given

training. There were no answers from the mine and the community decided to march to the mine.

Everybody knows that mining companies are using police services as their private security and there are allegations that some of the police officers appear on the mine's payroll. So, a heavily armed police force were called in to humiliate the community members and to shoot at them, which resulted in a pensioner being killed. The mine didn't feel any remorse.

In October 2013, community members handed over a memorandum to the mine, demanding recognition of the community forum, a fair share of benefits (a tar road was a priority), corporate social responsibility programmes, local tenders, learnerships and bursaries and the removal of the mine manager, as he was seen to be creating divisions in the community.

The community emphasised that if their demands were answered, they would welcome the continuation of the mine in their community, but if not, they were willing to die for their land.

Who shall defend the poor? Our traditional leaders have let us down; they are ruled by greediness. We have no defender, we are oppressed in our motherland by big companies like Anglo, ARM and Platinum Australia. ■

GaPila relocation

TEBOGO KOLOTSI

The relocation of the GaPila community by the Anglo platinum mine left this community landless.

In 2010, an environmental resource management agency found that: "The land needed by Anglo for mining at GaPila is owned by the state. None of the individual community members living on these farms had legal ownership rights to the land."

All, however, had property rights to their homes and structures as well as customary rights to use the land.



Some of the GaPila village falls within the traditional jurisdiction of the Mapela Tribal Authority (MTA). The Kgoshigadi, as the custodian of customary and land rights, was party to the agreement with the government to lease the land to Anglo in 1991.

The community argued that by negotiating with only the traditional authority and the government, Anglo Platinum failed to recognise the potential for this transaction to be disputed by those individuals who had customary rights to the land, as a communal resource under the custodianship of the Kgoshigadi.

Consulting only with the MTA or the Kgoshigadi on land acquisition on behalf of the community raises questions about the fairness of the negotiated settlement. ■



GaPila community and Project Alchemy

DANIEL MAPHOTO

Project Alchemy is a community empowerment transaction from Anglo American Platinum Limited (Amplats).

This R3.5 billion transaction is aimed at ensuring long-term sustainable development of labour-sending areas and four host communities, those within an approximate radius of 15km from the Amandelbult, Rustenburg, Twickenham and Mogalakwena mines.

Amplats claims this project will strengthen its relationship with local stakeholders and ensure that host communities benefit from the mine's presence.

The Lefa La Rona Trust was established to act as a conduit between Amplats and four development trusts. The project's name 'alchemy' means adding value to minerals. It is in line with government's Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment policy and the Mining Charter.

In 2011, Jacob Zuma, Minister Suzan Shabanga of the Department of Mineral Resources and the Limpopo Premier, announced that affected communities will have a 26% share in Amplats under Project Alchemy.

Project Alchemy will work with the proposed development

trusts and with local government through Integrated Development Plans (IDPs). The trusts and local government will be partners in community development.

In our research we found that most of community residents were not aware of this white elephant and others did not understand this, because it was announced in 2011.

At GaPila, it has never been officially introduced to the community. ■

Twickenham respond to communities

NGOATO AUBREY MANGENA

Finally, Anglo American Platinum Limited (Twickenham mine) responded to Twickenham communities.

Twickenham mine has decided to increase its production profile in 2014. This, according to the mine, provides opportunity for local employment.

This sounds good, but hey, wait until you hear the full story.

Twickenham has gone out locally to recruit what they call 'highly skilled labour': auto electricians (2) electricians (5), fitters (3), different skills level experience required.

Community members see this as adding insult to injury.

How do they come here. It doesn't end there. They have again decided to hire at least 90 local people for cadetship in December, with 268 more cadets planned for next year. Which is very good.

Twickenham also committed itself on completing the remaining Makobakobe and Magobading houses, construction of Makgopa road (including bridges), training of local businesses on tendering, making sure that residents have access to clean water, bursary opportunities for local learners and ensuring that alchemy processes happen.

Now, everything so far looks beautiful for the Twickenham communities.

But my question to you is: do you think it is the first time this is said to communities?

No, no they said the same thing when appearing for the first time. They were just playing a cat and mouse game.

They haven't trained even one fitter or electrician. The mine doesn't feel any shame to announce that their search in communities found nothing.

Why wait for the communities to revolt before the right things are done? ■





Mpumalanga Province

The Mpumalanga group wrote about:

- ☐ Evictions around Middleburg
- ☐ Impact of mining on water resources
- ☐ Coal mining and pollution
- ☐ Service delivery problems



Evictions

BAFANA HLATSWAYO

Evictions are a serious problem facing communities in Middleburg.

People used to have access to land for farming, but this freedom ended, because of greediness. The land was taken away from people without their consent. People were forcefully evicted.

In 1994 after the African National Congress won elections, many people were promised land, but the government failed to deliver on their promises.

One of the reasons was that evictions made way for mines to come and exploit our natural resources.

People lost their way of living; they had to

adapt to urban life and hunger and poverty.

The people from Arnot were evicted because of the Arnot mine expansion. People protested and refused to be removed, but with no support from the government they were moved.

The mine built the two-room houses with a small yard.

The government betrayed us in terms of the property clause included in the constitution of the country.

The solution to fight against against these evictions is to mobilise the communities.

Mines have no right to come to our areas and take over our land. They have polluted our water and left the land unrehabilitated.

We, as the community, are not benefiting from the mines, no jobs are created for us.

No more to mines taking over our land. No more! ■



Impact of mining in our water resources

ZANELE

Mining is bad for our food production and seriously impact our soil. Most of the rivers start in Mpumalanga. The water is now polluted. The rivers flow into many streams and our families use that water to drink, wash clothes and for cooking.

Farmers use the water for producing the food that they need to sell at the market. Now some of the farmers stop producing vegetables and fruit because of polluted water and they have lost their sources of income and jobs have been taken away from the farm workers.



We are losing our indigenous plans. The western part of our country is like a desert. In the south, there is a lot of rain and the soil is fertilised, but there are mines.

The mines are good liars when it comes to communities' rights. Acid Mine Drainage will force us to migrate to other countries. The question is will they be able to welcome us in their countries? Already people are buying water because water is polluted in Witbank.

We need clean water in order to survive. In our area 44% of people are unemployed.

Mines have to be stopped, they can't take profits and leave us with illness, no employment, no water and no clean air. ■

Another coal power station

LUCKY MAISANYE (MPUMALANGA YOUTH AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE)

Witbank or Emalahleni, is an economic harbour of Nkangala Region in Mpumalanga Province. Its rich coal is the main source of electricity supply in South Africa because of many power stations in the area. Emalahleni is known as an employment destination for many.



Emalahleni is situated in an area that was declared as a Pollution Priority area because of its bad air quality. Despite government recognition that Emalahleni and the whole Mpumalanga is polluted and has the world's dirtiest air, they went ahead to build one of the largest coal power stations, Kusile, in the area. Kusile is set to become the fourth largest power plan in the world in terms of greenhouse emission.

Since the area was declared a priority area, very little meaningful change has happened in the pollution loads in these areas.

The question is, why do we have this Kusile Power Station in an area that is already highly polluted?

Government is failing to reduce the existing emissions. People don't see Kusile as destruction because they lack information and education on the negative impact of coal power stations to our health and the environment. We are already facing climate change because of the use of coal in South Africa. Why is it so

difficult for our government to say no to the polluting big companies?

The public should be informed and educated about the negative impact of mining. They should not let mines and consultants lie to them by promising short-term jobs at the cost of their health.

Mines violate human rights every day. Government and Eskom claimed that they built Kusile for the benefit of the poor.

How many poor communities don't have access to electricity or can't afford it?

Mining will never be sustainable, it is greedy and not responsible to clean up the mess they make. ■

The cleanest town in our province

DUMA KUTUMANE

Middleburg is the cleanest town in our province. Yes, it is clean.

In the location, our municipality collects refuse twice a week. We have community parks that are looked after and cleaned after every event that takes place there. Our grass is cut every time when it gets overgrown. Our community also puts in an effort to make sure that we have a clean town. Our community has regular cleaning campaigns.

Because our municipality takes care of our community and delivers services to us, they won the Masakhane National Award in 1996 for the best clean town.

In short, this is an example of a good relationship between the municipality and the community. This shows that it is possible to work together and progress. ■



Black mountain: Who do we run to?

SWEETNESS M. KHOZA

Coronation is an informal settlement in Witbank. It was built next to an old 1980s mine dump which was never rehabilitated.

Coronation has a very high crime rate. In this area, there is no electricity, water or sanitation. In order for people to get water they walk a long distance to use communal taps. The quality of this water is not good. There are no proper roads in Coronation. This area is not fenced off from the old mine dump. People walk over this hill of coal when they go to work, going to town and collecting water.

People in the informal settlement still dig in the old mine for coal to sell and for cooking and heating. There are no warning signs to show that the place is dangerous. There has been a number of deaths and injuries in that place.

The Southern African Green Revolutionary Council members asked the municipality to put a fence and warning signs around the old mine, while they try to locate the company responsible for rehabilitation of the area. The biggest issue is that nobody knows who should take responsibility for this abandoned mine. We were told the municipality says they don't have money to rehabilitate the mine or to put a fence.

We have more questions than

answers. The councillors collect votes in the area, but nothing changes. We cannot afford to buy land while our land has been destroyed by mines. This proves that the companies see money as more important than life. The most affected are the black majority.

I am starting to believe that this is a curse. Mines were supposed to bring employment, but we are dying and getting sick.

The big question is why do we have a councillor in the area if government does not want to recognise the problems faced by the community?

It is not like they don't know what is happening here. We also don't know what their plan is, because they don't discuss it with the communities. ■



Water justice in Nkomazi

WEST NKUNA

The Nkomazi Local Municipality is located in the Ehlanzeni District Municipality

The municipality is strategically placed between Swaziland in the north and Mozambique in the east. It is linked with Swaziland by two provincial roads and with Mozambique by a railway line and the main national road (N4), which forms the Maputo Corridor.

One wonders if there will ever be justice for people in Nkomazi. They have all the resources, but the municipality is failing the community due to poor service delivery.

People in our community are struggling to get access to water. Even though we have the Nkomazi River and the Driekopies dam, the taps are almost dry.

In Steenbok they receive water twice a week or they have to buy water. There are so many poor people who can't afford to buy water.

We are told that we have access to water in the river, but our rivers have been polluted and there is limited access.

Many people, including women and children, have to walk long distances to a shared tap. Where is the justice? ■



Big polluter in Middleburg

BERNARD SIBANDE

Middleburg is the home of Columbus Stainless Steel, one of the biggest producers of stainless steel in the world. It is also the biggest polluter in the area.

The stainless steel production process uses high temperatures and lots of chemicals that produces hazardous pollutants. Columbus uses about 11 times the electricity used by the entire Middleburg town.

Residents around Columbus are exposed to different types of illness and they suffer the consequences of the pollution.

Rockdale, Nazaret, Hlalamnandi and Minglalia are areas that are clearly visible a kilometre away from Columbus. All kinds of fumes are visible around the area.

People suffer from tuberculosis, asthma, sinus, heart disease and headaches, far worse than those who manage and own Columbus Steel.

We have never seen a mine manager living in the same areas as us, drinking the same water as we do and breathing the same air.

They are staying away from pollution, yet they benefit more than we do.

Columbus does not help the community; their corporate social responsibility is non-existent. ■

Water is life

BERNARD SIBANDE

MNS is an informal settlement situated in Emalahleni, Witbank in Mpumalanga. There are three big mines in the area.

The arrival of migrants who work on the mine made the area overcrowded with shacks and pit toilets. The rate of crime and substance abuse has increased.

Some people build more than five shacks in their yard to rent these to mine workers.

In winter, many shacks burn down, leaving people homeless. People use coal, wood and paraffin as sources of energy for cooking and heating.

Many people have no access to water and sanitation. There is a pump next to the mine which is supposed to supply water for the mine workers and more than 100 households.

Other members of the community have to walk a long distance pushing their wheelbarrow to collect water.

Government is aware of the situation, because a municipality water truck comes twice a week.

The water from the rivers is polluted. Many people are buying water in the area.

Because we are approaching elections, we have seen the ruling party promising us houses, but they have done that before and nothing happened. We are tired of the empty promises.

We need help. ■



Lewe met die myne

BRENDA

Alles was eers mooi in Schoongezicht voor die Benicon myn bevestig was in Witbank. Ons het 'n kliniek, 'n park en 'n slaghuis gehad in 'n klein pragtige plek wat ons almal liefgehad het.

Die inwoners van Schoongezicht het geen waarskuwing gekry van die ongenooide myne.

Die myne het gekom met baie beloftes, hulle het die gemeenskappe 'n goeie lewe, werk en ontspanning sentrums belowe. Ons het nie geweet oor die gesondheid gevolve nie.

Ons was verras toe ons die wolke van stof sien waai in ons huise, toe ons huise begin kraak het van die myn se skietwerk.

Die inwoners het begin vrae te vra, maar met geen antwoorde nie, het ons besluit om na die myne te gaan en hulle vra.

Een dag het ons die myne gevra wat hulle doen en wat se planne hulle gehad het om die gemors wat hulle geskep het in ons gemeenskappe op te los.

Ons het baie probleme in ons gemeenskappe as gevolg van die myn. Dit gaan nou aan vir 22 jare, en ons weet nog steeds nie hoe lank dit gaan aanhou nie. Die regering is meer verantwoordlik aan die myne as aan gemeenskappe.

Ons het gehoop dat the myn sal ons ryk maak. Maar nou het ons meer armes, siekes en werkloses. Wat gaan die regering doen, want dit is nie soos hulle nie weet wat besig is om te gebeur nie?

Myne besluit vir ons waar om te bly, die gehalte van die lug wat ons moet inasem en die gehalte van die water wat ons drink.

Die myne gedra hulle soos 'n regerende party. ■

2

Phase Two: Learning from community action



How do we shape our programme so that reflections in the 'classroom' sessions follow participants' real life action in the community?

In the second phase of the programme, August to October, monitors worked in small groups, identified an important community issue, and engaged in action to resolve the issue within the time limit set.

During a planning session the group identified the issues, analysed the causes and possible solutions, and developed a plan of activities. These activities were implemented over a period of three months. The monitors met a few weeks later for a review session, where they gave each other feedback and made new plans.

At the end of the three months they evaluated their actions and talked about the lessons learnt.

Issues chosen varied across the schools

- Residents in Jouberton in Klerksdorp believed that their municipality unfairly made deductions for other services when they purchased pre-paid electricity.
- Houses built on wetlands in the Kanana community of Klerksdorp created health problems for the residents.
- Residents in Kanana, Potchefstroom who were officially promised RDP houses did not receive them. Residents believed that these were fraudulently allocated to others.
- Residents in a street in Bapong, Rustenburg were concerned about the rising levels of house break-ins and crime.
- Residents in one section of the informal settlement of Ikemeleng in Rustenburg were concerned about the terrible bucket toilet system.
- The group from Chaneng in Rustenburg wanted to assist families who had no food in their homes, due to long periods of unemployment.
- The group in Mafanya in Rustenburg wanted to develop a programme to assist school drop-outs to return to school.
- Residents in Marikana, Rustenburg were concerned about the health problems caused by breathing dust created by mine trucks on the untarred roads.
- The group in KwaThema wanted to improve conditions for disabled people in their community.
- KwaThema residents were concerned that the polluted spruit flowing through their community was a danger to children and a health hazard to their community.
- Women monitors in the KwaThema community were concerned about the high rate of teenage pregnancy and the increase of rape.
- The group in KwaThema wanted to get local authorities to close down an abandoned mine shaft which posed a serious danger to community safety.

Experiences and lessons from the exercise

Time

The most obvious lesson was that taking up community issues was often a slow process, delayed especially by the reluctance of officials to meet and respond speedily to community problems.

Community reluctance and fear

In general people in the community don't easily get involved in community issues, unless the issue is very big.

There is a lot of fear among residents, especially those who are waiting for housing allocations.

The monitoring group must learn how to work with people who are fearful.

Community image and profile in the community

Young activists do not easily get the ear of older members of the community, especially if they are traditional leaders or councillors.

People in authority disregard groups who do not have a high profile or who are not properly constituted.

The need for community coalitions

Small groups alone cannot solve big issues. The small group has to build coalitions with other community groups. These coalitions bring information and resources, which the small group may not have.

The problem with councillors and municipalities

Local councillors and the municipality hold the key to solving a lot of the problems faced by the community. Some councillors, when persuaded, become important partners in community action.

However, there are a lot of problems:

- It is difficult to get a meeting with a councillor and more difficult to get an interview with a municipal official.
- Getting information from councillors and municipality officials is extremely difficult. It appears that they fear giving information to the community. Some feel that communities do not have a right to the information.
- Many councillors are ignorant of what is happening in their area and on key municipal issues.



ITJ	(HOW) COLLECT EVIDENCE	WHEN	WHO	RESOU
S/	Cameras Interview Photos Challenges Their servi- ces Recommend Hous Benefit	19 th 21 st Aug 13	As a Group	- Camer - Taxi - Food - Ariste Communi Cintere
IM	- Report Back	30 Aug 13	AS A GROUP	- Cam - Taxi - Food - Venu
my	Recommend relations?	2 Sept	All Sta keholders	* Venu - Food - Camer

The way a group works is important for success

Action can fail if the group relies on only one individual. Writing a detailed factual statement on the problem the group is trying to solve is very important for action. This statement can be used when meeting people in authority and to use in publicising the issue.

The group must work systematically on the problem they want to solve and not in a loose, informal way.

The group must have a common understanding of their plan and when they have to change, they must discuss this, and know why they are changing their strategy.

The group must be careful when working with bigger organisations with a lot of resources, not to hand over the control to them, but to work as an independent partner.

The group must always keep people in the community they are working with informed on the progress of the activity. People lost trust when they did not hear from the group after several weeks.

The Phase 2 activity has a powerful learning experience on how we can develop the programme of the school from writing into action.



3

Support for facilitators and experienced activists



The Community Monitoring School programme is facilitated by a team of activists from the local community.

This team plays an important part in making the education programme of the school interesting and meaningful.

The quality of the education activities in the school depends to a large extent on the skills and knowledge that the facilitators and coordinators bring into the process.

This year we set up an Advanced Course to give support to this team.

A series of workshops with the facilitators, joined by a few experienced activists, explored new ideas and developed new skills.

The course consisted of six workshops, each two-days long. In between workshops participants were given a short writing assignment.

Workshop 1: Critical thinking perspectives

Participants were challenged to take a closer look at how class, race and gender differences in the community gave some advantages and disadvantaged others.

The discussion in this workshop led to a lot of debate on how women were disadvantaged and suffered within the family and community.

Participants wrote a report about how men and women in their communities responded to questions on marriage, single-parent families, lobola, sharing housework and why men run away from their responsibilities. These articles are available on our website: communitymonitors.net.

An interesting reflection emerging in the discussions was that as mining and environment activists, we tended to focus less on people and the unequal relationships among them. Instead we focused more on policy and structural changes, as if these changes will benefit all people equally.

Workshop 2: Power tactics

Workshop participants focused on the extreme inequality in power relations between community organisations and the authorities they are engaged with, such as private companies and government officials.

Community organisations have limited access to money, information and technical skills.

Participants were challenged to work out how they could change this imbalance of power using innovative tactics.

Participants read brief articles on the work of tactical theorists such as Tsun Tzu and Saul Alinsky.

They studied community and trade union experiences of building power to outmaneuver powerful organisations.



Workshop 3: Digital mapping

This workshop was set up with the assistance of the Centre for Sustainability in Mining and Industry (CSMI).

Participants had an introductory workshop on the use of maps to analyse environmental and community problems and how to use Google maps to document community problems.

The workshop gave us a glimpse of the wealth of information available in universities and government archives. It was exciting to learn that we did not require years of university education and a lot of money to access this information.

Our challenge was to develop a practice of using maps and build the basics skills required.



This programme was presented by a team of experienced facilitators and resource people: Ingrid Watson (Mapping for Community Activists), Indra de Lanerolle (Media and Communications Strategy), Sonwabile Mwana and Jacklyn Cock (Community Activist Research), Karen Hurt (Writing Skills), Shamim Meer (Critical Perspectives), Bobby Marie (Power Tactics).

Workshop 4: Media and Communications Strategy

In this workshop participants reflected on how they used media and communications in their community organising work. They learnt how to deepen their practice through developing a media and communications strategy.

The workshop helped participants shift their focus from the use of social media instruments such as mobiles, to thinking about the underlying communications strategy.

This required careful thinking about what change we wanted to bring about, who we wanted to change and what media people used.

These workshops gave us useful insights into how to design education activities for more experienced and advanced activists. In our evaluation we will be talking about how we build on this level of training in our 2014 programme.



Workshop 5: Community activist research

This workshop was set up with researchers from SWOP, Witwatersrand University.

Participants were introduced to the basic research framework:

- What is your research question?
- Why is it important?
- What information do you need and how will you get this information?
- What are your findings and what are your recommendations for action?

Participants used this framework to design a short research project.

On returning to their communities they conducted their research and wrote a draft report. In the second workshop participants were given feedback and guidelines on how to complete their reports.

Workshop 6: Writing skills

Throughout the course participants were introduced to tools and techniques to make their writing more powerful.

4

Reflections by facilitators and exchange participants



OLEBOGENG MOTENE

Chaneng community

I have been a Monitoring School facilitator in Rustenburg for two years working with seven communities. Through the school I have developed as a person and the challenges I encountered have pushed me out of my comfort zone.

My thinking and reasoning capacity has broadened, my creative edge has been sharpened and my shyness and low self-esteem is out of the window. I am more confident, innovative, outspoken and conscious of issues affecting me as a young woman.

In the Monitoring School I had to work with representatives from seven communities, all who are affected by the same issues as my community. In every session my self-doubt and shyness disappeared.

I have also gained skills in writing and internet research. All these skills I've shared with my community, and this has led to our community being more active in sharing issues on the ground.

I believe in a small way I have been able to share a light in a dark place. So through the programme not only do individuals develop

and become more conscious, but communities do as well and therefore we are more aware of working together for change.

I see the Community Monitoring School programme as a wheel of change for the masses in this beautiful continent, Africa. ■



MESHACK MBANGULA

Ekurhuleni Environmental Organisation (EEO)

The Monitoring School teaches community monitors about writing with confidence and power.

I have learnt to analyse local problems and understand how to deal with them effectively by gathering

information and to do research and take photographic evidence.

I have learnt about digital mapping and to be strategic when dealing with environmental community issues like mining, pollution and basic human needs.

I started as a monitor in 2009 in Ekurhuleni having no idea of what to expect, as I was just an ordinary community member. Today I am a facilitator of the Monitoring School and we have started the Ekurhuleni Environmental Organisation (EEO) which is assisted by the Bench Marks Foundation in dealing with environmental issues.

Our monitors write articles about the problems that are faced by communities and the challenges of facing corporations and local government to try and bring change.

The Bench Marks Foundation's Monitoring School plays a big part in capacitating the communities on environmental issues and making sure they can speak for themselves.

I am grateful to the Bench Marks Foundation staff for their crucial role in developing monitoring in communities and for their great coordination skills. ■





MOJALEFA RABOLINYANE

GUBICO, Welkom

I have learned a lot from the monitors I work with in Welkom. The community has the power to change things through simple things like writing articles and the use of social media.

I have developed personally in the Monitoring School; I have gained more knowledge and understanding of government, public participation and how to work with people.

I have seen the Monitoring School change people's lives, not just the people who are part of the school, but the whole community.

With programmes like this from the Bench Marks Foundation, we can give power back to the people and let them decide the things that involve them.

Women, too, are part of the community and we face the same struggles for better service delivery, good health care centres, education and to benefit from our natural resources. We do not want to inherit a legacy of acid mine drainage, tailings dams, contaminated rivers and chronic diseases.

The Bench Marks Foundation has laid down a foundation for the communities and citizens of South Africa to fight for their land and minerals and to say no to capitalism.

I am honoured to be part of this programme and wish it could cover the whole country and in future the whole of Africa. ■



JOE MASHILO

Klerksdorp, Justice and Peace

I am an active member of Justice and Peace, a faith-based organisation of the Catholic Church. As a result of the partnership with the Bench Marks Foundation, I became a Monitoring School facilitator in March 2013.

As a facilitator I create a link between the Monitoring School coordinators and the communities where my organisation operates.

Activists are recruited from communities and organisations to participate in the Monitoring School.

As a facilitator I organise workshops on behalf of the Bench Marks Foundation, arrange the venue for the Monitoring School workshop, and ensure that the participants are kept abreast of the date and time of the workshops.

Being a facilitator I have learned to facilitate workshops and to do thorough planning before and after activities.

It gives me joy and strength to realise that I am able to stand in front of people and share thoughts, experiences and insights.

As a facilitator I have to be well organised. The Monitoring School participants bring along with them a wealth of information from their communities. My role is to ensure that such information is used productively to the advantage of our communities. ■



JETHRO PHIRI

Exchange Participant from Zambia, Youth Association of Zambia

Being an exchange participant at the Bench Marks Foundation was a great opportunity that gave me a platform to make a positive change in various communities through the Community Monitoring School project.

The Community Monitoring School project is a Bench Marks Foundation initiative that teaches youth writing skills, how to identify problems in their communities, understand political and economic systems and come up with strategic actions that can bring about positive change in their communities.

Participating in the project provided me with the privilege of seeing the real image of various South African communities in places like the Vaal, Mpumalanga, Ekurhuleni, Rustenburg and Welkom.

These communities, like most, are affected by environmental and social issues, often hidden behind the beauty and glamour of the country.

The impact of mining operations, and the effect of pollution on the communities that host huge industries like Sasol and ArcelorMittal, are severe.

How the government, through the local municipalities, industries and mines, responds to queries tabled before them by these communities, impact on the social issues experienced by communities.

For example, in the Vaal I was staying in Sasolburg; I did research in a community called Zamdela.

For the people of Zamdela, one of the biggest problems is that of respiratory diseases as a result of air pollution caused by Sasol. Most of the people in this community suffer from diseases such as asthma, sinus infections, TB, etc.

Because of little or no media coverage, most of these issues are rarely noticed unless you are at the heart of these communities.

The Bench Marks Foundation has the perfect initiative to identify these issues from the grassroots and make them noticed through this project.

The Community Monitoring School is really providing a voice for these communities through the publication of *Action Voices* and through its community monitoring website.

My participation in this project has helped improve my writing, research and organisational skills, and also helped build my character.

Going back home, I look forward to putting my newly acquired set of skills to action in various communities in Zambia.

My heartfelt gratitude goes out to the staff of the Bench Marks Foundation for giving me this rare opportunity of being a part of them and the community monitors for welcoming me in their communities and helping them make a positive change.

I am proud to be a benchmark! ■



NIZAR SELEMAN UTANGA

FK exchange participant from Tanzania under the Economic Justice Programme

The Bench Marks Foundation's Monitoring School aims to empower youths to be the voice of the voiceless in their community.

It's amazing to be able to organise youths and capacitate them with different research, writing and communication skills, so that they are able to deal with different problems in their communities.

Coming from a donor perspective, it was challenging in the beginning to cope with what Bench Marks was doing. Being with the partner organisation that is actually doing the implementation of the project was so tough.

I have learned to appreciate the work our partners are doing and this is the experience that no one will take away from me. I am confident that I will use this experience to establish a monitoring school back home in Tanzania.

Throughout the year I have been working closely with the community in Ekurhuleni, and with an upcoming organisation called the Ekurhuleni Environmental Organisation (EEO).

Working as the coordinator for the EEO has been a very interesting learning experience for me, to see how we grow together as a group and as individuals.

In terms of capacity I gained experience in how the Monitoring School sessions are conducted and the tools used.

A thing that strikes me is the number of public demonstrations that take place in South Africa. It has been good to take part in a number of public demonstrations to demand justice on various issues that affect the community. These issues included gender justice and holding mining companies accountable for their unjust actions on people and the environment.

It was very exciting because in Tanzania we rarely have public demonstrations and it was a good experience for me to participate in these.

It is very impressive to see how youths come up with different community actions to exercise their freedom of expression.

I believe youths are the future and therefore organisations need to invest more on training the youth.

As it is almost the end of the year and the end of my FK exchange experience I can't help but wish to extend my stay.

This has been a great learning experience. I would like to thank the entire Bench Marks staff for the support that they gave me throughout the year.

Many thanks also goes to the Ekurhuleni Community Monitoring School and to everyone who has made my FK exchange experience easy. It was memorable and helped make the world a smaller and a better place. ■





Let them be told that we are watching...

POEM BY SIBONISO DLAMINI FROM MPUMALANGA YOUTH AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE

Cry beloved workers who were paid bullets as hard earned peanuts by commissioned pigs with guns but no guts ... I laughed as the nightmare was televised. But slowly, unlike Rwanda genocides, these news night pictures are not new...in black man history are pinned tight by newspaper titles whispering the massacre was a live showbiz replayed by capitalists in coordination with trade unionists synchronised to handcuffed poor workers rights towards hindering the tales.

They thought views were dead with their lies of media interviews ..who unveiled new targets to be killed by pigs..in quenching the tales, but we uncovered the spells watching a blue crane singing no more marikana no more marikana.. no more paid pigs with guns but no guts shooting poor workers with bullets.. as peanuts.. for.. hard earned labor no more politically supported lies..altered by offendant lawyers and prosecutors in relay of that day where ladies were robbed of their spouses ...no more... false statements of brave victims inscribed by biased commissioners..and independent investigators.... no more...expired medical prescriptions...rescribed... by... bribed forensic surgeons and private doctors... we are watching pigs brutality ravaging the parents of sons and daughters...these vandals, vultures have vandalised our cultures...enemies of indigenous...driven by legacy of immorality..to steal our humanity.. privatise our dignity...and gamble our integrity to suit their illegitimacy!...let them be told that we are watching beyond their point ... of their confused climax...let them be told we are vigilant of their vicious refrigerated and cooked lies... let them be told of heroes who were buried by bastards... unwritten by scribes... unpreached by modern pastors.. let them untie us to sneeze the truth to seize the blood of their atrocities .. .let them read our tales of their bloody footsteps that dragged a black man's carcass after a planned office caucus... certainly our tales have uncovered.. the spell of lost pages... let the blue crane sing... we are watching... we are watching..no..more..marikana..no..more marikana...no..more..paid pigs with guns but no guts shooting... poor workers with bullets... as peanuts for hard earned labour... for hard earned labour!

Cry beloved workers... bite the evil hand that feeds your pocket

Blink the mine dust from your eyes

Work for the betterment of the world, not for shiny caskets ...





Community Monitoring School 2013