



**BENCH MARKS
FOUNDATION**

ActionVoices

WORK IN PROGRESS

AUGUST 2017



SOWETO:

**Exposing the
Environmental Crisis**



ABOUT THE BENCH MARKS FOUNDATION:

The Bench Marks Foundation is an independent non-governmental organisation that focuses on how multinational corporations (MNC) perform their social, economic and environmental responsibility obligations and holds them accountable. We examine their CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) claims. Our starting point is ethics and moral persuasion 'to do the right thing'.

Our local partners in South Africa are the South African Council of Churches (SACC), the Ecumenical Service for Socio-Economic Transformation (ESSET), Industrial Mission of South Africa (IMSA), Christian Development Trust (CDT), and the Justice and Peace Department of the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC).

The Bench Marks Foundation is part of an international alliance of faith-based organisations. Together we developed a corporate measuring instrument, called 'Bench Marks, Principles for Global Corporate Responsibility – Bench Marks for Measuring Business Performance'. It is recognised as one of the four international leading instruments measuring the gap between *policy* and *practice*.

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the new format of Action Voices. This publication was first published by the Bench Marks Foundation in 2015 as a magazine for community monitors.

Its success has led to us expanding it to include reports on other Bench Marks research and advocacy work as well as information on our events and activities.

SOWETO – the iconic birth place of the 1976 student rebellion that led to the unravelling of apartheid South Africa – features prominently in this issue. We focus on a lesser known fact – that of the severe health challenges facing those that live in and around the township due to mining. We feature the first part of the findings of our study on the health impacts on communities living adjacent to the mine dumps that form part of the Johannesburg skyline. It is the story of a township built in the wrong place and its residents ending up on the wrong side of a mining industry that continues to benefit a few. It's another story of how mining impacts on people and the environment beyond the confines of a mine and adds to the misery of 'mining diseases'. The Bench Marks Soweto study will be published in separate parts starting with this first issue.

We also outline the work we are doing on exploring alternative dispute resolution mechanisms to assist communities resolve issues and concerns more effectively. Proposals around this independent problem solving service are summarised.

In addition to our active engagement in the media on issues affecting the communities, Bench Marks invests energy in developing tools to strengthen the role that community movements play in addressing

the problems their constituencies face in relation to the mining industry. We report on our efforts to link activists from communities near mines from across Southern Africa and further afield providing a platform where strategies and concerns can be addressed.

Our community monitors programme, which is close to eight years old, has experimented with new approaches, methods and tools in activist education. These have been documented in our Community Monitors Resources Book. The first edition, published in 2013, has now been updated.

Finally, we publish two stories from two members of our community monitors network about how they got involved and what this has meant for them. Bench Marks is engaged in 40 communities and has set up an innovative community monitors system to record the stories of neglect of communities abandoned by mining conglomerates and governments alike.

Action Voices will be published three times this year. We look forward to your feedback on our work and to engaging with you further about this and the issues raised in this publication. Please email any comment or questions to me at: actionvoices@bench-marks.org.za.

The Editor
Moses Cloete



Houses in Riverlea set on the fringe of the mine dump.

MINING CHARTER: THE DEMANDS OF THE RICH AND POLITICAL ELITE EXCLUDE WORKERS AND POOR COMMUNITIES

Mineral Resources Minister Mosebenzi Zwane gazetted the new mining charter in mid June 2017.

The new mining charter is another most moderate document. It represents the push by a political and rich elite to win further gains for themselves but excludes any really changes for workers in the industry and communities who suffer the consequence of mining operation. It ignores important questions of environmental destruction.

Among other things, the Minister spells out that black South Africans can now look forward to 30% shareholding in the mining industry in the country in which they make up 90% of the population. This sounds awfully like the 1913 Land Act which expropriated the black majority's land without compensation, leaving only 13% of the land to that majority. The mining charter expects blacks to pay for the 30% shares they acquire. The people who buy these shares will borrow from the banks and in effect the shares will be owned by the banks since very few would have their own capital. It would get to the heart of the problem if share acquisition was without compensation.

The new charter talks about 50% Board representation by Black South Africans, 60% representation at management level and 80% representation at junior management level. It says nothing about the cheap, still predominantly

migrant, labour system on which the industry depends and a living wage for mineworkers. It pegs 'mine community' shareholding at 8%. It seems that the community is defined by the largely patriarchal chieftaincy system, again re-inforcing an apartheid bedrock. So in short nothing new and certainly a far cry from what communities affected expect.

The charter requires that the mining industry directs 70% of its procurement to black economically empowered companies. But what is a black economically empowered company? Is it a company that is 70% owned by a minority and foreigners with only 30% black ownership? Sounds like a reproduction of apartheid, cleverly wrapped up as "transformation".

The charter meanwhile is silent on the question of genuine compensation for communities for loss of land, livelihood and economic opportunities. It is also silent about the externalised costs of mining in terms of environmental destruction, pollution and jeopardising the right of near-mine communities to a healthy and safe environment.

Despite the moderation of the Minister, the Chamber of Mines and the old colonial monopolies that dominate the industry are screaming like pigs in an abattoir about how unfair it is for the minister to wipe these crumbs from their sumptuous table to the people of South Africa.



"ACT RESPONSIBLY" SAYS BISHOP JO TO PLATINUM CONSUMER GIANT BASF

Trade unions, miners and NGOs have again demanded that BASF, the biggest consumer of platinum in the world, pressurise South African mine Lonmin to adequately improve living and working conditions of workers in the platinum belt.

Bishop Jo Seoka, Chairperson of the Bench Marks Foundation, was part of a delegation that addressed the annual general meeting of BASF in Germany in May this year.

He was accompanied by miner and community member Mzoxolo Magidiwana, who was severely injured during the Marikana massacre on 16 August 2012, and Joseph Mathunjwa, president of the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU), the biggest union in South Africa's platinum belt.

The Bench Marks Foundation also called on BASF shareholders to compensate the victims of the Marikana massacre.

Compensate Marikana Victims

"We believe that had BASF done proper human rights due diligence as a signatory to the UN Principles on Business and Human Rights, that perhaps this massacre would not have occurred. These principles state that states must protect human rights and corporations must respect these, and there must be access to remedies," the Foundation said in a media release on the trip.

A similar demand was made of shareholders at Lonmin's AGM in London in January this year. Bishop Seoka told shareholders of BASF that the group's demand was not about charity, but a question of justice:

"We are not here as supplicants or beggars. This is about the workers' dignity and integrity of creation, and your credibility as a company that prides itself on its ethical and social responsibility practices.

We are appealing to your consciences to show a gesture of goodwill and what we request from you now is a clear and unqualified indication of your willingness to contributing to sustainable development in Marikana," he said.

Mathunjwa told shareholders on behalf of AMCU that BASF should shift from its lip service of its oft-touted claim of "responsibility along the supply chain" to concrete action.

"You, BASF, as the most powerful enterprise in the platinum business, could support AMCU in this matter. Your corporate identity, claiming that

you combine 'economic success' with 'social responsibility' gives you no other option."

Address poor living conditions

Magidiwana's speech to shareholders was equally hard-hitting: "Even as we speak today, the majority of the people that work at Lonmin live in tin shacks that are infected with rats. There is no running water in the households, just one tap for a lot of families. Not all the areas have electricity and toilets are shared ones and just dug in the ground with no chemical treatment of human waste.

"Under these conditions, a life in dignity is not possible. It is my understanding that BASF is buying platinum from Lonmin for millions of Euros per month. I therefore believe that what we, the workers, are asking for is not unreasonable. We know that the management of Lonmin and BASF is making huge profits. We know that we dig out one of the most precious metals on earth. We just want to live in dignity. I cannot see that this wish is unreasonable," he said.

This is the third BASF AGM that has been lobbied to take action on behalf of Marikana victims. The campaign is organised by Plough back the fruits, a campaigning network of activist organisation in South Africa and Europe, including Bench Marks Foundation. Its aim is to confront Lonmin and BASF with the reality of mining and living in Marikana and in the platinum belt of South Africa and demand the immediate and sustainable improvement of living and working conditions for mine workers, their families and their communities.



INDEPENDENT PROBLEM SOLVING SERVICE

The Bench Marks Foundation is working with communities affected by mining operations to develop an alternative, independent problem solving service aimed at effectively resolving community grievances and issues. The main focus is on the promotion of facilitated dialogue, informed by a social justice vision. This outline of the Service by *John Capel* highlights the approaches guiding this initiative. The approaches are currently under discussion by Bench Marks, civil society organisations, mining companies and other interested groups.

Initially we called this an independent grievance mechanism and then gravitated towards a more holistic problem solving service. Thus we are searching for a way to resolve problems, to get buy in from business and at the same time to offer communities access to social justice.

This Independent Problem Solving Service and the associated approach is informed by the fraught history, both locally and internationally, of the relationships between communities affected by mining operations and mining companies, along with unsatisfactory grievance handling of the resulting problems and disasters. It is also informed by the fact that many communities are fractured, desperate and often disempowered, with low trust levels not only for mining companies but also on occasion, for NGOs, experts, trade unions and other interest groups.

Put very simply, there is an urgent need for a service that will actually act as an effective facilitator for the satisfactory and sustainable resolution of problems experienced by communities, whether long standing and seemingly intractable or recently emerging and of a less conflict-ridden nature.

Principles

The Service is rooted in a stated vision and a set of principles, built around the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. The vision for this initiative is the establishment of an independent, voluntary, multi-purpose, alternative problem solving service for communities affected by mining operations, informed by social justice values and principles.

Key to this is the restoration and maintenance of human dignity and the attainment of human rights.

A flexible, multi-faceted approach with facilitated dialogue at its centre will be adopted as opposed to a more rigid procedural approach. As such, a 'one shoe fits all' approach will not be adopted. Each case will have specific processes put in place, customised for its particular circumstances.

The system must accommodate cases with complex histories, dynamics and multiple role players. Community consultation and buy-in is critical and the design of the system will be informed by communities' own conceptions of fair process and just outcomes. This includes the prioritisation of cultural sensitivity regarding all aspects of the process and associated communications.

There will be a focus on achieving sustainable and satisfactory outcomes. This will entail developing holistic, empowering solutions based on a social justice vision. This will include going beyond rights-based remedies and prioritising developmental solutions. Facilitators need to have at top of the mind the question: 'How can the solution contribute to poverty alleviation and reducing inequality?'

Proactive intervention will be essential – including early intervention and quick response times.

Facilitated dialogue is at the centre of the problem solving system. A key aspect of this is the identification of all role players and having them directly involved in the process.

Independent problem solving process:



Capacity building

The service must be empowering for community participants and address the heavily skewed power relations between communities and mining companies. As such, support and capacity building for community participants and the broader community involved will be an essential component. An important aspect is contributing towards building community organisation. This will be carried out through an Independent Capacity Building Fund, which will facilitate access to information, knowledge and expertise. The Capacity Building Fund has two objectives: capacity building and technical support.

A key aspect will be to ensure communities are capacitated to continue exercising their rights and defending themselves once the problem is resolved. This is essential to ensuring sustainable solutions and building community organisation. The ultimate goal in terms of attaining sustainable solutions is for communities to be enabled to conduct ongoing dialogue with the mining sector without the need for third party facilitation.

Proactive intervention

A proactive component to the Service is essential in the long run. In the absence of this, there will in all probability be a never ending treadmill of issues which rapidly escalate into disputes. As such, ongoing monitoring and early interventions will be a key aspect as well. This will also need to entail a staged approach in tandem with the necessary internal BMF capacity being developed.

Ongoing, broader facilitated dialogue with the mining sector which is not reacting to specific problems will be an important, pro-active component of the Service. An example is the BMF recommendations presented to the Chamber of Mines and to Anglo Gold Ashanti, involving categorising common problems in three categories of severity, along with associated interventions.

DEVELOPING IDEAS ON COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING



An important part of the strategy of the proposed Independent Problem Solving Service is to build the capacity of communities so that they can take up issues and grievances.

The Bench Marks Foundation has set up a project involving local community activists to help them define what support communities require when they take up grievances. The project involves seven activists from three mining areas (Rustenburg, Limpopo –Sekhukhune and Mpumalanga). The project started in June 2017 and will end in December 2017.



The aim of the project is to develop ideas on what “capacity building” means in the real world of community organising, what financial and technical support is required and how they should be deployed. It is hoped that the experiences from this exercise will inform the setting up of an independent capacity building fund.

A group of activists from Mpumalanga, Rustenburg and Limpopo mining communities are looking at what is involved in taking up community grievances. This experience will help them make recommendations towards a programme of support for community capacity building.

Work in Progress

THE BENCH MARKS FOUNDATION IS WORKING WITH ACTIVISTS TO TEST HOW THE PROBLEM SOLVING SERVICE WILL WORK. THE TABLE BELOW SHOWS WORK IN PROGRESS IN RELATION TO THIS

AREA	ISSUE/GRIEVANCE	WORK IN PROGRESS
MPUMALANGA	The community suffer respiratory problems from air and dust pollution from the coal mines that surround the Clewar community.	The activist is working with the local community to raise awareness on this issue and to assist the community to understand the problem and formulate a grievance
	The community is unhappy about the relocation of graveyards in Mafube	The activist is working with the community to help them prepare a statement on what they are unhappy about in relation to the relocation of their graveyards to make way for a coalmine.
LIMPOPO	The community is losing cattle rapidly as a result of drinking water poisoned by mining operations.	The activist has collected stories of cattle owners, held several meetings with them, and has met with the Department of Mining to get their assistance in testing the water. The activist, with support from Bench Marks, is preparing a letter to ask for a meeting with the local mine alleged to be responsible for the water poisoning.
	Extensive pot holes on the access road linking two shafts of the Twickenham mine affect the communities of Maotsi. Mine trucks use the road heavily. There is now a risk of accidents. Young unemployed people are filling the potholes and demanding money from motorists. This is creating new dangers.	The activist is consulting wider with all local communities and leaders involved to build greater community power. He is investigating to determine who is legally responsible for this problem. At the same time the community believes the mine must take responsibility since it is the biggest user of the road. The activist is drafting a letter to request a meeting with the mine to start the process of consultations.
	The communities of Monametse/Mokgotho live alongside a busy road used by mine trucks. Two children were killed in an accident on this road. The community wants the mine to set up a safety system to avoid accidents.	The activist investigated the problem and developed proposals for making the road safe. A meeting was called with the mine. However this was put on hold because the mine announced that it was closing down.
RUSTENBURG	In 2011 the local mine promised the Chaneng community that it would pay for two professional nurses in the local clinic. The community believes this has not happened. The clinic is losing staff. They now want to make a new demand for the mine to support the local clinic.	The activists tried to get information from the local clinic but the local staff refuse to comment on the record, and referred them to regional offices. The activist is having great difficulties in getting any one to give them information. Without this information they cannot engage the mine with facts. The activist is looking at other ways of getting the information before asking for a meeting with the mine.
	In Mothlabe village the mining company is providing water to far away communities whilst the local community (Mothlabe) has been left out.	The activist is struggling to get the facts from the municipality and the local traditional council as to why the mine excludes the community. He believes this is important before approaching the mine.

ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS IN SOWETO: A BENCH MARKS FOUNDATION REPORT

This is the first of three instalments that will report on a major study done by the Bench Marks Foundation on the health and environmental crises faced by residents of Soweto who live around large tailings dams left by gold mining corporations.

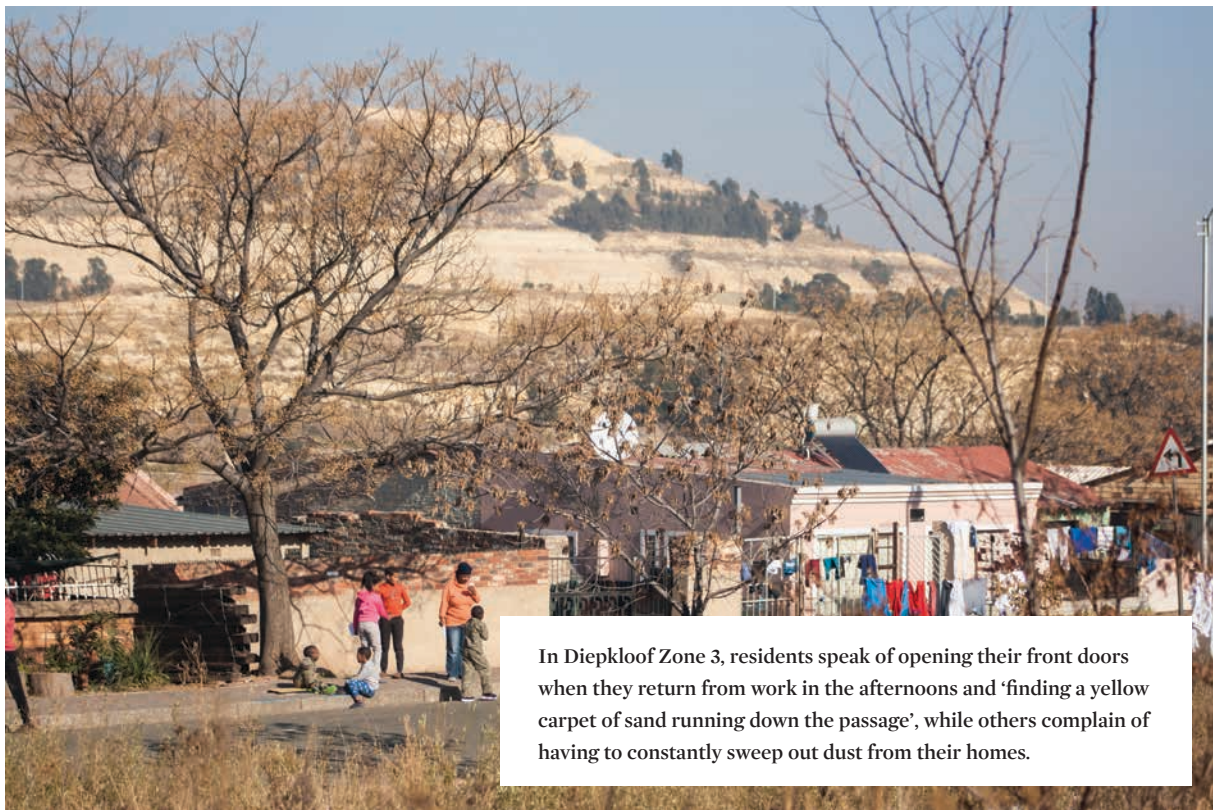
The research will be published at the end of August 2017. In this issue researcher *David van Wyk* gives an overview of the findings of the household health survey conducted.

Coughing, asthma, sinusitis and tuberculosis – these were some of the health issues residents complained of during a Bench Marks household health survey conducted as part of the broader research. Many community members blame the mine dumps for these problems – echoing the findings of other research conducted which have found a link between living close to mine waste dumps and respiratory and other diseases.

The health survey was conducted in Riverlea Extension, Diepkloof (focused on Zone 3 just south of the Diepkloof tailings and Zone 4 dwarfed by the Crown Mines Shaft 17 dump), Meadowlands and the Doornkop informal settlement in Snakepark. It was part of a broader three year research project (see page 19) which started in 2014 with a desktop study into the history of Soweto. Intensive field visits were made to measure surface water quality, look at the impact of dust and the proximity of mine waste facilities to the communities under review. One hundred households in each community responded to the health survey questionnaire.

All these communities live in proximity to tailings – though the tailings waste facilities stretching across Meadowlands are better grassed. All complain about dust and the problems of living so close to the dumps. Houses, schools and a youth correctional facility (prison) are all located within a few blocks of the tailings – with houses often built within the 500m exclusion zone which has been ignored by property developers and government.

The research period coincided with one of the worst droughts in recent memory across the whole of South Africa. The 2015 – 2016 dust season instead of being restricted to the normal August to



In Diepkloof Zone 3, residents speak of opening their front doors when they return from work in the afternoons and 'finding a yellow carpet of sand running down the passage', while others complain of having to constantly sweep out dust from their homes.



Researcher David van Wyk meeting with the Diepkloof Community



Dust Buckets: do they measure anything?

September period went on from August 2015 right through to September/October 2017. During the dust season, people breathe, drink, eat and are coated in dust.

Battling to breathe

During our surveys in Riverlea extension, we found many residents of all ages living on oxygen machines. They claim that their respiratory problems are worsened by the dust from the mine dumps – especially on windy days.

Respiratory problems (including coughing, asthma and TB) combined make up over 66% (66,6%) of the health complaints in Doornklop (just over half of the participants complained about coughing), just over 62% in Riverlea and under half (48,6%) of the health problems of people in Diepkloof. Under 40% of residents in Meadowlands complained of respiratory problems.



The community living alongside a slime dam in Meadowlands



Geiger counter shows high levels of radioactivity in Meadowlands.



Cynical corporate behaviour - cutting out company name and contact details in a dangerous spill situation



Riverlea children living and playing in the shadow of Mooifontein tailings dump



Asbestos roofs and toxic dust from mine dumps impact on household health in Riverlea

Eczema

The BMF study seems to indicate that eczema is common in near mine communities. Just over 9% of respondents in Riverlea identified eczema as a problem – though fewer complained in other communities (just over 3% in Meadowlands and just less than 3% in Snakepark and Diepkloof).

One victim of this is Koketso in Meadowlands. His grandmother was at her wits end when we met her. The public clinics lacked the medicines to help the child, while the public hospitals kept on referring him back to the clinics. After the research team told his story in the media a Muslim doctor offered to help the child free of charge. After treating Koketso continuously for three months with little success the doctor asked questions about his home environment. After learning that Koketso lived in the shadow of tailings waste facilities in Meadowlands the doctor suggested that he relocates to live with his paternal grandmother instead. It turned out that his maternal grandmother also lives in the shadow of a tailings waste facility on the East Rand. The doctor was of the opinion that Koketso suffered from arsenate eczema of hyperkeratosis (scaling skin). We found a number of similar cases in Riverlea and Snakepark.

Poisons

The possibility of exposure to arsenic is worrying – and a potential cause of eczema, nerve damage, higher cancer risk and circulatory problems. Arsenic is produced as a by-product of mining/smeltering of copper and other non-ferrous metal ores including gold. Residents living in the shadow of gold tailings could ingest arsenic, lead or uranium through dust blowing onto kitchen and eating utensils and into cooking pots; or absorb it from dust blowing onto washing that is drying on outside washing lines, or inhale it when walking on the streets, or dust accumulating in their houses during dust storms.

During visits by the Bench Marks research team to Snakepark during the summer months, children were frequently found swimming in the tailings evaporation ponds. This is of concern given that the tailings are acidic and contain heavy metals such as uranium, arsenic and lead. These tailings are entirely accessible to the public, there are no guards, no fences no warning signs.

According to informants, the City of Johannesburg and the Department of Agriculture are encouraging people to invade the 500 meter exclusion zone around the tailings to take up farming.



To the west of Snakepark is Harmony's Doornkop Gold Mine, to the north is the old unmaintained Doornkop tailings

WHY THE RESEARCH

What is Soweto known for today? As the place where Nelson and Winnie Mandela had a modest house in the early 1960's? As a place where two Noble Peace Prize winners, Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu, shared the same street, Vilakazi Street? Where there was a student uprising in 1976, a precursor to the end of apartheid?

Few people know why Soweto – an acronym derived from the name 'South Western Townships' – was created or its relationship to mining activity on the Witwatersrand main reef which forms the northern border of the township. Although 'health' and 'hygiene' concerns about the city of Johannesburg were used to justify the earliest forced removals of black people from Johannesburg to Kliptown in Soweto as early as 1904–1906, very little historical research has been done about the current health status of communities in Soweto, or about the location of Soweto in relation to the 'Reef' and gold mining.

This is why the Bench Marks Foundation (with the assistance of Christian Aid) has decided to do in depth research into Soweto and its surrounds and explore its geology, geography, meteorology, nuclear sciences, chemistry, health sciences, anthropology, sociology, economics, mining, history and economic history.



The slime dams are often used for extreme sports and entertainment. These tailings are completely accessible to the public, there are no fences and warning signs

AN INTERVIEW WITH ZAMA ZAMA'S NEAR SOWETO:

"We are not making a lot compared to the risks but we are proud because we are working. Not waiting for hand-outs."

In the many abandoned mines around the gold belt, unemployed miners continue the search for the mineral. They do this at great risk to health and life. For them, the Zama Zama's as they have come to be known, this is about their children back home. They are regarded as "illegal" and are harassed by the police.

Chris Molebatsi spoke with the Zama Zama's at the George Harrison Park, an abandoned mine on the edge of Soweto. He asked about their health and safety as miners working outside the formal system and how they saw their future.

Q: How does the the rain water affect your mining operation?

A: We don't have a problem with rain water, the only thing is that those who are in charge of the mine open the water in the pipes deliberately to make it difficult for us to work. There are pipes underground. Sometimes we find them opened, by who we don't know, but since the owners of the mine do not want us to work here, we believe they are the only people who can open and shut the valves.

Q: Then what do you do to continue with your work in the case where you find water at the place where you want to work?

A: We have to take the water away from the area, using the towels we buy from the shops. We throw them in the patches of water, when they are soaked we spin into the buckets and spill away from where we are working. We do it repeatedly until such time that the area has been cleared of water. That is why we take so many days underground, we first have to make sure that our working areas are safe for us to work on.

Q: How safe is your work? what about rock falls? Has anyone been injured underground here?

A: Yes but it was a long time back and I was not around. Since that time no one has ever been injured, we insist on safety. As for the rock falls we first check before we start working and

if the place is dangerous we go to the other place. If someone gets ill underground we can't leave him there we bring him up to the surface where he can be taken for medical help. Sometimes to the doctor, clinic or hospital. We know that dust is as well a problem in the mines as it can lead to the lung problems, that is why we bring our cloths to cover our mouths and noses to avoid inhaling dust. Underground water is a problem because we don't have proper safety clothes.

Q: Do you all know one another, from home or here? In some other places where people are working like you are doing here, there have been cases of gun fights at times resulting in death. Is it the case here?

A: Some knew each other from home, others met here. No we are not here to fight, we have agreed and we are working together. We protect one another and resolve our conflicts amicably. The only problems we encounter here are with the police, they are the ones who are trying to create conflict amongst us. What they sometimes do here is unacceptable. They sometime take the stuff from one person and give that to the other person, working with us. That makes people look at each other in a bad way. They

will want you to pay R 2000 when they arrest you. If you don't have that they will give the stuff to the other one who give them that amount of money. If they don't do that they will go and sell the stuff (ore) to our buyers at a very low price. This put us under pressure as it makes it difficult for us to negotiate a better price with the buyers. It is mainly the Langlaagte and the Roodepoort police who are doing this to us.

We are powerless when it comes to the police, but when it comes to gangsters or other people trying to take our stuff (ore), they can't because we make sure that we stand guard here when the other shift is to come out so that no one can come and take their ore. I learnt that people were killed somewhere around here when they came out unaware and unsuspecting that they were waited by some crooks at the exit. That has prompted us to have guards here at the entrance to make sure that no one will go in to attack or kill our people. Again no one can come and wait here without our guards knowing who he is. We work very hard for our children back home, we have to send money every month. Remember we sometimes spent weeks underground to make sure that we come out with more ore.



Zama Zama miners resting after a night underground



A site for informal mining near Soweto

Q: How do you survive underground for such a long time? What do you eat or drink?

A: As I said we work together. There are people up here, they buy food and water and send them down with the others who go for their shift. We also make sure that we take food along when we start our shifts, we also leave some money with others so that when we decide to stay longer we can stay without having to worry about food or water.

Q: Are you making enough/ a lot of money, taking into consideration that you are risking your lives?

A: No, the thing is that we have families to look after and there are no jobs, even in areas like Rustenburg I heard the mines are retrenching workers. So for our children to go to school we have to do this kind of job. It is better than to go and rob other people of their hard earned money and assets. Just look at our numbers here and ask yourself how many people were to lose their valuables if we were all to go out and commit robbery, how many were to die if we were to decide to kill. We are not making a lot compared to the risks but we are proud because we are working not waiting for hand-outs.

Q: Can you tell me any other things that you would like me to know regarding whatever we have been talking about, and please feel free?

A: Well as I said we have children struggling back at home, we appeal to you and other people to assist us to get permission to work here freely. That will make things easier even for our children to go to school. We are not here to commit any crime. There are people like "Izinyoka" who deal with cables, they take cables from everywhere even at road intersections and this can lead to car accidents. We don't want to steal from others or sell drugs.



DOORKOP INFORMAL SETTLEMENT AND THE TAILINGS DAMS

The residents of the Doornkop informal settlement housing have to suffer the inconvenience of tailings polluted water bubbling up through there floors during the rainy season.

They are living within the flood plain of a stream into which run-off from the Doornkop tailings is spilling.



A photograph showing a group of people walking along a muddy, rocky stream bed. In the foreground, a man in a grey jacket and maroon pants is talking on a mobile phone, and a woman in a green jacket with 'THANKS MATEUNJWE' on the back is walking next to him. In the background, there are makeshift buildings, one with a sign that says 'SALON', and a large tree under an overcast sky.

Government/mines ignoring problems?

Things seem to have deteriorated since 1994 for people living near the dumps.

The Chamber of Mine, for example, had a 'tailings maintenance unit' that saw to it the tailings were grassed and vegetated during apartheid. This unit, like many other important units at the Chamber of Mines, simply fell away after 1994. Unmaintained and unsecured tailings waste facilities erode and break down and at times also encroach on residential areas.

In focus group discussions in Diepkloof, residents complained that no one from the mining operations around had ever bothered to come and meet with them to explain the implications of the mine dumps and mine operations in close proximity to their homes.

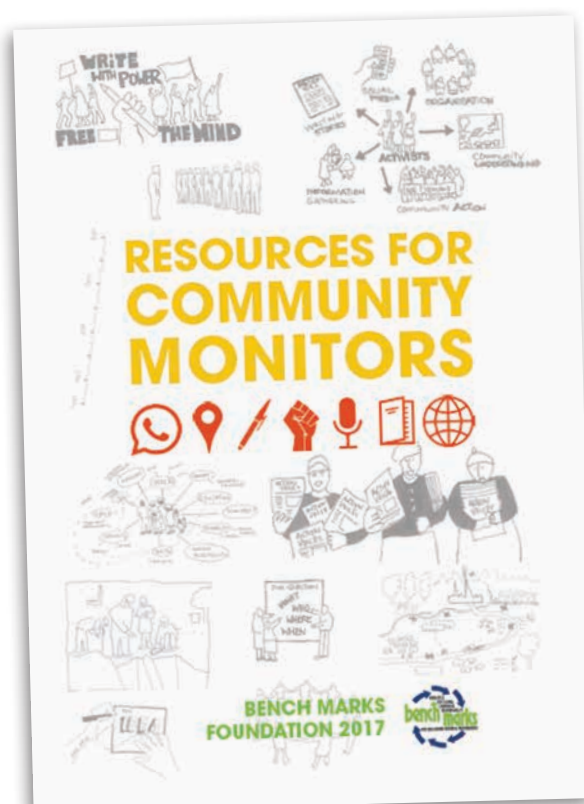
There are no government or mine sponsored education programs for communities living in close proximity to mine operations or mine waste facilities. Toxic streams are not secured, fenced signposted, and there is evidence of frequent breaches of storm water containment channels, containment and evaporation ponds. During school holidays and weekends kids play in and around the streams.

RESOURCES FOR COMMUNITY MONITORS

The Bench Marks Foundation has recently updated its book **Resources for Community Monitors**. We summarise what is included in this book.

This resource book emerges out of the work of the Bench Marks Foundation Community Monitors school. The resources included in the book were identified through working with the community monitors from mining affected communities in South Africa – and tested by them before being included.

The school has been in operation since 2010 and focuses on building and sharing skills of activists in communities affected by mining. The resources in this book aim to inspire and support community activists in exploring new ideas and tactics so that they can more effectively disrupt unequal power relationship.



Ideas, guidelines and tools

The book includes the following resources and tools:

- Writing tools to help activists develop and record powerful ideas.
- Mapping tools to help activists build a shared understanding of their communities.
- Information on developing tactics to assist activists to enhance community action.
- Ideas on how to gather information and evidence to monitor what is happening in communities.
- Communication strategies to get information out to the public and the media.
- Mechanisms to assist activists to critically reflect on their style of work and how they structure and lead organisations so there is ongoing review of how best to promote community participation and control.

Using the book

This resource book is a store of ideas, guidelines and tools which can be used in activism. It is not a manual with defined steps on what to do. Community action does not follow a single or predictable pattern. It requires innovation and adaptation.

In the Community Monitors school, groups select relevant sections of the book and read them as a support for reflection. At the end of their meeting they structure tasks which help them explore the guidelines and the tools offered. They return a few weeks later and talk about their experiences.

Where you can get the Resource book

You can download a PDF copy from
<http://communitymonitors.net/indexcommnet.php?p=4209>



The 2016 Facilitators team who developed activities in Resources for Community Monitors



GUINEA CONAKRY: SOLIDARITY IS A TWO WAY STREET

The Bench Marks Foundation (BMF) has been working with activists from Guinea Conakry who have been challenging South African company, Anglo Gold Ashanti. *Hassen Lorgat* highlights what this has involved and how communities facing similar issues in different countries are working together.

In January this year, the Bench Marks Foundation (BMF) got a call from our friends in the Legal Resources Centre in Johannesburg asking for our support for a mining community that was evicted and forcefully relocated in Guinea Conakry. The LRC had been asked for help by comrades in Washington from an organisation called Communities First, who were working with a foundation called the 11th Hour Project which provides support to address human rights violations and issues of sustainability.

The community of Kintinian in the West African country were relocated in September 2016 by Anglo Gold Ashanti which has its headquarters in Johannesburg. The comrades in Kintian wanted to make contact with Anglo Gold Ashanti (which is known as SAG in French) and wanted us to join them in obtaining information from Anglo Gold Ashanti that they needed to resist the injustices. After a few teleconferences, the BMF agreed that it would be worthwhile if the Guinean comrades could visit South Africa at the same time as the Alternative Mining Indaba in Cape Town in February 2017 and meet other NGOs and mining affected communities. The Indaba was to be held two weeks after the decision was made to invite the leaders from Guinea and the BMF office worked overtime to get them to Cape Town on time. That was the first time we saw Yacouba Camara, a community leader, and Aboubacar Diallo, the programme director for Le Centre du Commerce International pour le Développement (CECIDE), one of the NGOs taking up this issue.

Land grabs and broken promises

At the Indaba, Diallo spoke about the unjust relocation of the community of Kintinian.

"The mining sector in Guinea has been plagued by land grabs, labour violations, broken promises, and even massacres, and AngloGold has perpetuated this pattern at Kintinian," said Diallo.

Camara spoke about how the local population were treated as if they were the enemy: "Red Berets stormed the village to force us to sign documents and move us from our homes. We were intimidated to sign." He added that the company had promised them there was "basic infrastructure in the new places" – which was untrue. "When we try to get answers from the company" he said, "we cannot find them!"

Diallo said that Anglo Gold Ashanti in Guinea had brought in consultants to "talk" with the residents of Kintinian – but community members did not fully understand what these consultations were all about.

Camara added: "The villagers were forced to sign documents in French, which very few of us understand. Also these consultants had a meeting in Area one of Kintinian, and the whole meeting was only with adult men. They did not include women and children. The women confirmed to us that they know anything of the process to move us – as the company pushed all this responsibility to the sons or the husbands, and as a result women – mothers, sisters, lost their land without fully participating or even a warning."

The two activists said that they wanted to meet Anglo Gold Ashanti to ask that they conduct an audit of the procedure for moving the community and remedy the involuntary resettlements. They also wanted the company to stop such illegal actions. Forging links

While in South Africa Diallo and Camara were able to forge links with others resisting illegal actions by mining companies and forged links to enable them to work together. They also met Dr Barry Kistnasamy, a trustee from the Government Employees Pension Fund (GEPF) which had invested in mining in their country and told him to make sure that corporations they invest in adhere to human rights.

Kistnasamy noted that he is one of 16 trustees – eight of who are chosen by public sector unions and eight by the Cabinet. He further indicated his intention to invite the Bench Marks Foundation to further presentations in this area of work. Diallo and Camara described the meeting as "good" and fruitful. "He promised to raise the concerns of the people of Guinea at the next investment meeting. He noted that mining is an important part of the investment strategy."

Ashanti Big Fish school of digital film making made a documentary on their relocation in Guinea. This is available on a mobile TV channel– Pokotong – run by the school which is available from Google Play.



TETE, MOZAMBIQUE: BUILDING A COAL COMMUNITY NETWORK



Communities living close to coal mines across Southern Africa share the same problems. There is much they can learn from each other. Recognising this, the Bench Marks Foundation has been working with these communities in Mozambique and South Africa to build networks.

In both areas, the policies and activities of mining companies have brought devastation, pollution and destruction of the natural habitat without bringing any solution to the poverty in the regions.

Communities living near coal mines in Tete Province in Mozambique and in Mpumalanga in South Africa face similar problems: water pollution, noise, dust from trucks, displacement and broken promises among other things plague all these communities.

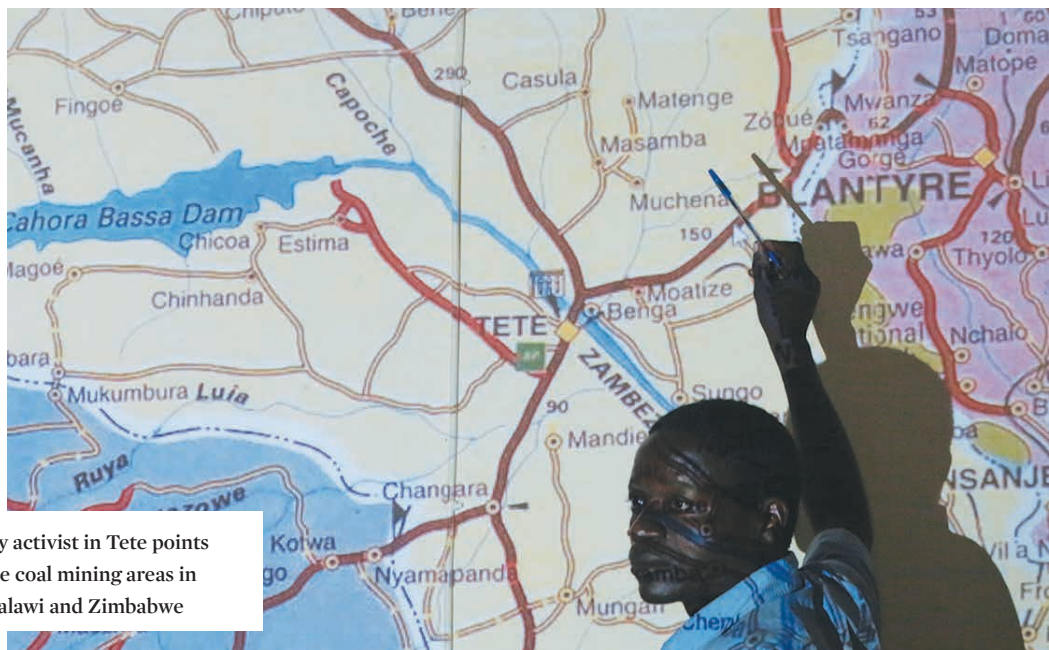
The BMF has therefore been working with activists in communities living near coal mines in Mozambique and Mpumalanga for a few years. With the support of the Canadian Steel Workers Union Humanity Fund, we have set up exchange programmes so that activists can share each others experiences. We have formed networks with the Associação de Apoio e Assistência Jurídica às Comunidade (AAAJC) from Tete Province in Mozambique and Sekelekane from Maputo to establish an exchange with activists in South Africa's biggest coal mining area.

In 2015 Bench Marks Foundation (BMF) and Sekelekane helped AAAJC build a network of community activists and gave them training in documenting their community problems and using different media to share their stories. In 2016 activists from Mpumlanaga coal mining communities visited activists in Tete Province. The exchange laid the basis for both groups to form a solidarity network.

Engaging mining corporations

The work so far has largely centred around sharing research, documentation and production of media. This year this is extending to assisting activists in both Mpumalanga and Tete to engage the mining corporations directly. The activities will include investigations targeted around a single problem with follow up action on a campaign to engage the mining corporation responsible.

The groups will document their work on a blog site and make a short video explaining the processes they have followed. These experiences will be the subject of an exchange programme later this year when both groups will meet in Mpumalanga, South Africa.



Community activist in Tete points out the Tete coal mining areas in Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe



Tete community activist group

WE ARE ACTIVISTS: BUILDING A SOUTHERN AFRICAN NETWORK



Communities living near mines across the region are active in their resistance to mining corporations. Over the years, working closely with local and international NGO's, these communities have developed innovative approaches and tools for resistance, but little has been known about their work. The activists themselves, while they attend many regional conferences, do not sufficiently share their experiences in a way that would lead to a common movement in the region.

The Bench Marks Foundation working closely with Southern African Resource Watch (SARW) with support from other NGO's such as the Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association (ZELA), brought together activists from seven countries in November 2016 and February 2017 and began a discussion on setting up a regional network of activists based in communities near mines.

At these workshops, local activists from the different countries were supported to tell their own stories as opposed to using expert researchers and writers to document the work of the community. It was intended that the activists, through this participatory process, would lay the groundwork for building a regional network.

This process was then documented in a book – We are Activists. Key reflections which emerged include:

- There is a remarkable similarity in the impacts of mining on the community life and the environment across countries.
- The differences among communities relate to different legal and political conditions and different approaches by government officials to implementing (or not implementing) laws, policies and rules.
- While these differences have led to different strategic approaches between local communities, there is lot in common among communities in the organisational methods, tools and tactics they use.

Moving forward – Phase 2 of the project

We are ready to begin Phase 2 of our work to share ideas experiences and build a southern African network of local community organisations. This next phase will include the following activities:

- Creating a Southern African website linked to a mobile app. A draft design for the website can be viewed on www.communitymonitors.net
- Expanding the WhatsApp chat group “We are Activists” to include reports on activities and events from other countries. This will be an expanded platform for local activists to report and post.
- Assist each country to set up a blog site and train them to use it. The blog site will be the place local organisations will post their country material. Activists will be trained to post on the

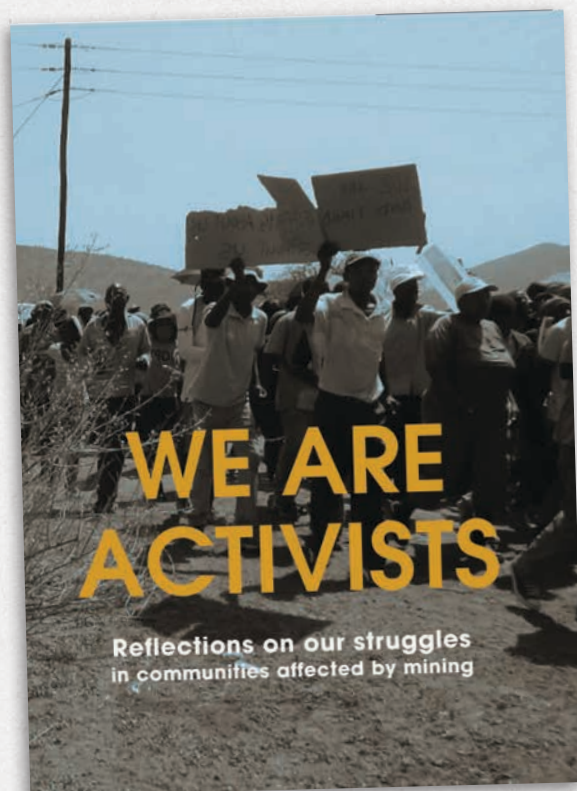
blogs. This will be done with the support of local NGO’s such as SARWA, ZELA, Bench Marks and others.

- Regional Workshop: representatives from across the region will meet in a workshop in Johannesburg in November 2017 to evaluate progress and plan for 2018.
- Publish a book. A review of work in communities over 2017 will be published. This will be based on the posts made by communities on their blogs
- Publish a booklet on Models of Community work. Country organisations will be invited to write about models they use to give support to independent local community action. A seminar will be held during the regional workshop and the presentation and discussions there will be published in a booklet.

WE ARE ACTIVISTS - THE BOOK

The discussions and writings in the first phase of the project were edited and published in a book *We are activists*. This is available online at <http://communitymonitors.net/indexcommnet.php/?cat=38>.

Three hundred copies of the book were printed and distributed mainly at the Alternative Mining Indaba in Cape Town in February 2017.



The presentations: key issues

The presentations across communities and countries highlighted the heartless profit making ethic of companies and the collusion of governments. They highlight the total disregard of companies and governments for the lives of the women, men and children who live on land rich in minerals. Once companies decide to start mining this land they move in with government's blessing without a care for the plight of the communities who live on the mineral rich land.

Communities are relocated or fenced into land taken over by mining companies. Their lives after mining are in most cases worsened. While companies make huge profits from precious minerals, poverty increases in the communities living close to the mines. Promises of jobs and other benefits do not materialise. The mining companies completely disregard any care for the environment – their operations result in air, soil and water pollution and makes farming and other livelihood activities almost impossible.

The presentations showed that mining companies make huge profits while the communities living on the edges of the mines are poverty stricken and without food. The Letseng Mine for example sold the three largest diamonds in the world, yet next door to the mine is a community without food, causing the Maluti Community Development Forum to provide food relief to vulnerable community members. As Letebhele Pae, from Maluti Community Development Forum, Lesotho said: "They are unemployed, they live in poverty, even though there is a mine nearby."

This reality was echoed by Malvern Mudiwa from Marange Development Trust in Zimbabwe who said: "We have no benefit from diamonds. For the community there is only poverty. They have nothing to survive on."

The mines came into the communities' areas without consulting them. In many cases the communities became aware of mining in their area only when they saw the machines that were brought in. As Susan Moraba

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and Zanele Msibi, from Mpumalanga Community Monitors in South Africa said "Communities are not consulted before the mines come. We just see machinery without knowing what it is for".

Mining companies made deals with government and in many cases governments allowed the mining companies to do as they pleased. Mining companies can evade the law and the rights of communities. They become a law unto themselves. As Zakue Nhachi – SOCNET, Zimbabwe said: "We now understand that the government departments do not have much power over the diamond mining companies."

Many government officials, politicians and local leaders made private deals with mining corporations, and they were the ones who gained from mining. The impact on communities and their environments was negative for all the communities. Whether the mine was owned by a private corporation or by the government, it was local politicians, traditional leaders and local businesses that gained from mining, and the community that suffered.

The community initially had expectations that mining would bring jobs for their large numbers of unemployed community members. But the mines preferred to recruit migrant labourers from outside the community, and there were no jobs for the local community.

In some cases, communities living very close to mines were waiting many years to be relocated. They suffered the effects of mine explosions – dust all over their homes and in their lungs, cracks to the walls of their houses.

In other cases, communities were relocated from land that was taken over by the mines. However, in most cases the relocations were badly done. People were moved to unsuitable areas, into very small houses of poor quality. Their family graves were moved causing enormous emotional and spiritual loss.

Before mining most communities had access to land, fields, and rivers. People engaged in economic activities such as agriculture. They reared cattle and in one case they made bricks from local clay. Loss of land meant that they were no longer able to carry out these activities. Their livelihoods were destroyed and they were driven into poverty. As Solomon Mwapikita, from EITA, Zambia said: "Before mining the mainstay of the community was

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agriculture. People grew cassava and maize, and they kept bees. They are no longer able to do these activities."

Mining operations polluted the communities water supply and left them without an adequate water supply for domestic and agricultural use. Acid mine drainage from the mine shafts contaminated the ground water. Boreholes dried up and in some areas people were cut off from the dams they had used in the past. Wetlands are drying up as a result of mining operations. Agriculture and livestock keeping are affected by water and dust pollution. Water and air pollution caused by mining leads to ill health in the community, often affecting children most heavily.

The mines create many dangers for the community. Children are exposed to disused mine shafts which are left unfenced and which fill up with water. An increase in the numbers of motor vehicles passing through or close to villages has led to an increased number of deaths from road accidents. In Lesotho a community lives under the perpetual threat that the dam walls built by a mining company will burst.

Police and mine security pose a threat to community life. The mines fence off roads, pathways and land that the community had access to. When people cross these fences they are attacked by mine security and their dogs.

In all communities people realised the need to come together to organise, to make their voices heard and to resist. As Stela Malola, from AAAJC, Tete, Mozambique said: "We can't do anything alone so we come together with other groups and organisations so our voices can be heard."

Community protests are more often than not met by violent responses from mine security and police. People are beaten up and detained. The ruling government sees protestors as belonging to opposition groups. People fear and distrust government. As Stela Malola, from AAAJC, Tete, Mozambique said: "Communities are frustrated and mobilise in demonstrations. All demonstrations are peaceful but mining companies are linked to government, they come with heavy arms to restore order and they attack and injure peaceful demonstrations".

At times the force used is extreme, as in the case of the massacre in

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Zimbabwe in 2008. Labelled "Operation Hakudzokwe", which translates as Operation "You Shall Never Return" this was a full-scale military operation ordered from senior levels in Zimbabwe's military where soldiers encircled, trapped and fired upon civilians with automatic weapons. These civilians were among the thousands who had flocked to the diamond fields in the hope of finding diamonds. The military was given orders to clear the diamond fields of freelance diamond diggers to pave the way for the military to take charge of the area. The massacre resulted in a reported 150 deaths.

Many social problems arise from unplanned settlements of mine workers. Many casual workers or work seekers are attracted by mining activity. There is a sudden unplanned increase in population and when many of these workers are from other towns and countries this has the potential to result in xenophobic conflict.

Among the social problems on the increase with mining are an increase in HIV infections, STIs, sexual harassment, rape, teenage pregnancy, and crime.

As participants shared and discussed their experiences, there was the feeling that while development is needed, this kind of 'development' makes life worse for the communities living close to mines. As Izak AS Sibababa from the Associação dos Oleiros de Moatize, Mozambique said: "We are not against development but against the activities which affect our lives badly." These thoughts are echoed by Buda Lentswe from BUA Mining Communities, Mathlabe, Rustenburg, who writes that: "Affected communities do not see any benefit from mining. I am not supporting 'mining must fall'. Economic growth depends on mining. I am saying mining must be owned by the communities – lets hire them before they hire us."

In the following pages of this section the presentations from each of the organisations highlight in greater detail the challenges faced by communities affected by mining and the actions these communities have taken to address their challenges.

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The Presentations: Key Issues from We Are Activists, p19-22 demonstrating the key issues discussed in presentations



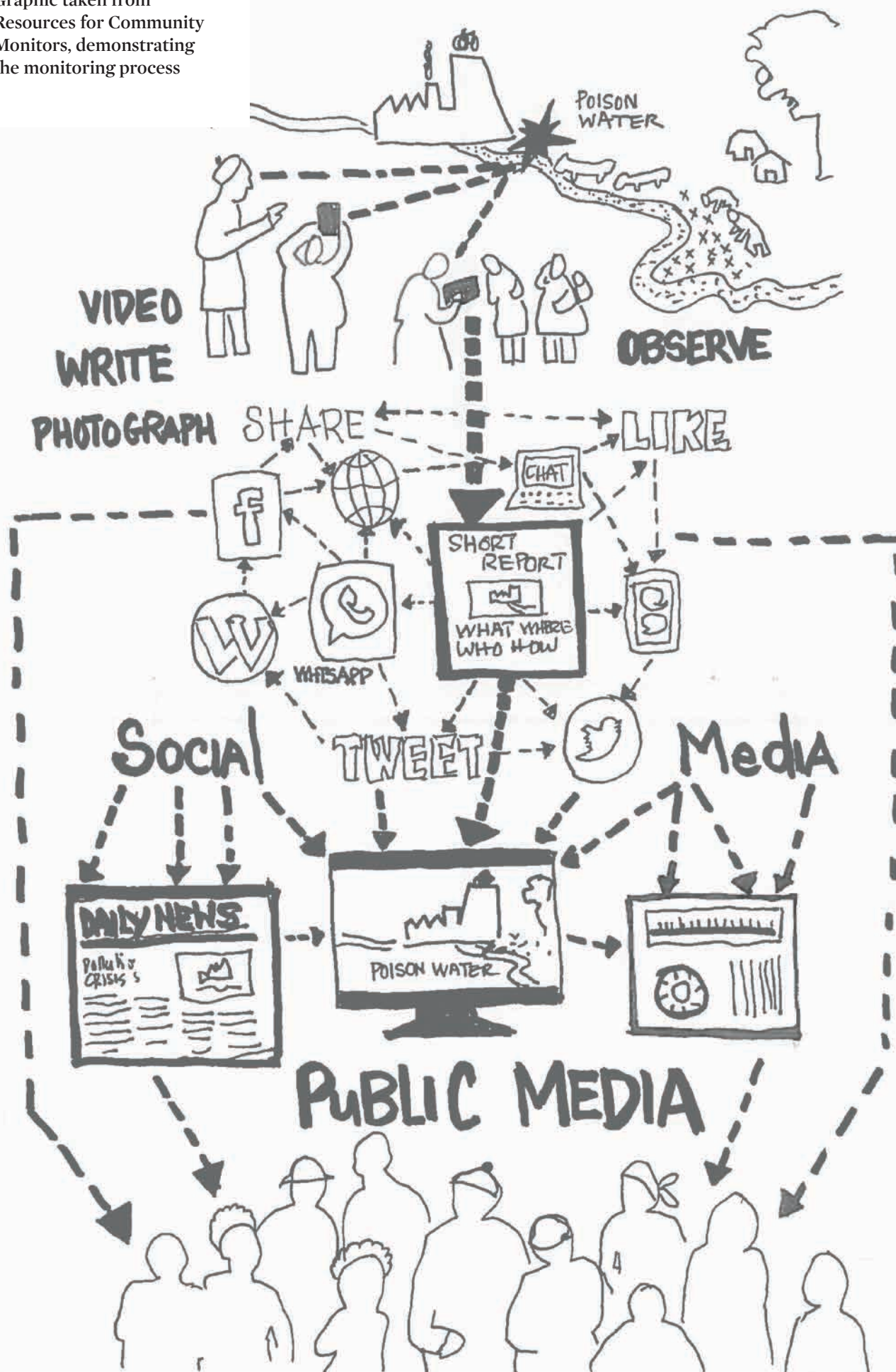
Participants in the Southern African Activists Workshop in November 2016

TUNATAZAMA: POSTS FROM THE MINEFIELDS

‘TUNATAZAMA – WE ARE WATCHING’ –
is the name of a community monitors project recording
the observations of over 100 community monitors
about the impact of mining on their communities.

The Foundation set up the Community Monitors School
in 2009 to assist local activists in mining affected
communities to take the lead in their struggles by
developing their core organising skills. Pages 38-39
highlight a selection of community monitors posts.

Graphic taken from
Resources for Community
Monitors, demonstrating
the monitoring process



MINE POLLUTED WATER IS KILLING OUR CATTLE:**INTERVIEW WITH MRS TELEKI****Mathapelo, Limpopo 17/05/2017**

Mrs Teleki from Mantjekane has lost 10 cattle and three goats since the start of mining operations. Two of the cows she lost were pregnant now she is left with 7 cattle and 2 calves. On one day in August 2014 she lost three goats and one cow. She told me that the mine has not helped her at all. In November 2016 she found her cow very weak at the mine stream. She went to the mine security but they told her to take the cow home. She had been told by people that the mine would compensate her but they just sent her away. She took the cow home and slaughtered it to feed her family.

Mrs Teleki said that she is certain that the mine water is the cause because the last cow that she took from the mine stream was found with lots of brownish water in its stomach by her family. Her family now buys grass to feed their livestock and made a small dam of drinking water. They buy water and fill the dam so that the cattle may drink. She said that this hasn't helped though as her livestock still go to the stream to drink the polluted water.

MINING CONFLICT IN SEKHUKHUNE LIMPOPO**HUNGER PUSHES THE MAN TO DIG CHROME IN HIS OWN YARD****Katlego Malesa 23/04/2017**

Makgopa village is situated in the Fetakgomo Greater Tubatse municipality of Sekhukhune in Limpopo province. This unemployed man was found digging the ore in his own yard in Makgopa village in the Fetakgomo, Greater Tubatse municipality yesterday. When asked why and whether he is aware of the danger and health risks to himself, his family and the neighbourhood, he said he really does not care because he does not have a choice.

LOOTING OF MINERAL RESOURCES**Gilbert Moela 01/05/2017**

Looting of mineral resources has become the norm in Sekhukhune district where illegal chrome mining is on everyone's lips. Everyone wants a piece of land to enrich themselves illegally. Our communities are not even aware of the environmental impacts this is bringing to the land. Our government seems to be doing nothing or is powerless. An environmental roadshow to create awareness is needed.

COMMUNITY'S CHANCE OF SURVIVAL IN JEOPARDY**Gilbert Moela 30/05/2017**

Many households around Sekhukhune District, Tubatse-Fetakgomo local municipality are facing a month without their only means of survival. The "illegal" mining that was helping put food on the table has been dealt a harsh blow by the law enforcers. Police have raided and taken big machinery used to help dig out the chrome belonging to the traders and local entrepreneurs thus leaving the community stranded and hopeless. Most villagers are complaining about the treatment they are getting from the government and its departments. With mining as the main source of employment in Sekhukhune District, everyone was dependant on the Illegal chrome mining for survival. According to my source community members will protest if they are not allowed to mine. The department of Minerals Resources is also refusing to issue communities with mining/prospecting rights. Again the government continues to fail the communities by flirting with the biggest mining companies.

Eunice Mampa, Limpopo 20/05/2017

Ga-Mampa community had a general meeting to discuss and plan a protest towards Sefateng Chrome mine we needed to strategise as we intend to apply for a legal march at Tubatse-Feta Kgomo local municipality. Our greatest challenge is that the mine conducts its blasting daily without notice and we don't know if it is against the law or if they are allowed. I still remember it was in 27th November 2011 when we had a meeting at Phasha community hall and they told us that they will give people who are residing next to mine R2500 for blasting; today we were told they must work for it. I shared a light regarding the application to a march I wish they listened to me when I told them that they will never give us permission to protest or they will tell us to wait for 21 days plus 14 days.



MINE VEHICLES ARE DESTROYING THE ROADS

Francina Nkosi, Lephalale 10/05/2017

In 2014, 250 potholes were identified on the D175 road which leads to the Boikarabelo Coal Mine in Steenbokpan. The community complained about this. Then they put up a sign board to say that they were repairing the roads and the mines promised they will fill these potholes. But till today it has not been repaired. Boikarabelo Mine is an open cast coal mine under Lephalale municipality in Limpopo province. This road is used by mine trucks to take the coal to the railway yards from where they will be exported. Potholes affect the community because they sometimes cause accidents or damage to cars. Taxi drivers complain that they spend lots of money fixing their taxis. To avoid the bad roads, they drop people half way.

THE DEATH OF TWO CHILDREN IN THE MOKGOTHO FAMILY

Moshabi Selowa, Sekhukhune 24/04/2017

I visited the Mokgotho family of Monametse village. They told me about the deaths of their two sons on 13 February 2012. The accident occurred 200–300 meters away from Braakfontein shaft on the road to the Bokoni Platinum Mine. The road that leads to the mine cuts through the two villages of Mokgotho and Monametse. School children and villagers regularly cross from one village to the other to visit family and friends and to buy from the local shops. Their sons, Mohomotsi and Chester, lost their lives on their way from the Monametse river to fetch water. They were aged seven and twelve. The truck which knocked down the children belonged to a contractor of the name of Zizwe working for the Bokoni Mine. The community members suspected that driver was under the influence of liquor as beer bottles were found inside the truck. The driver managed to escape before community members arrived. The road leading to the mine is unsafe. There are no road signs or speed humps. The communities of Monametse and Mokgotho at the Malengine section tried to do some speed humps but the mine removed them. When the community protested, mine security shot them with rubber bullets. Since the opening of the shaft in 2005, there were no fences or road signs. After a lot of community protest, signs reading SAFETY ON CROSSING THE ROADS were placed and safety officials helped children cross the road. This does not solve our problems.



YOUTH SET UP THEIR OWN EMPLOYMENT PROJECT

Bonolo Modise Robega, Rustenburg 10/04/ 2017

The youth of a village called Robega that is under administration of the Royal Bafokeng nation have come up with a solution to improve their standard of living by focusing on creating a sustainable environment in the community. They are reinventing the Old Agricor that was opened by the then Bophuthatswana Minister P.H Moeketsi during the Bophuthatswana on the 12 February 1993 in the Village. They have realised that in their community there is no organic crop farming and that our generation buys things from supermarkets instead of producing our own and selling to the big retailers. So by reinventing the Bophuthatswana corporation we will try to produce and sell fresh vegetables to those big retailers and so create jobs in community and encourage the youth to be entrepreneurs and make a mark for themselves and for the village Village.



SAPS PROTECT THE INTEREST OF THE MINING INDUSTRY AND NOT TAX PAYERS

Collen Raphata, Chaneng–Rustenburg 30/03/2017

On 10 February 2017 in the North West province near Sun City community members of the village called Chaneng marched to Styldrift mine. Community members have been trying to march legally for the past two years but the public safety department has refused all applications. Now the Economic Freedom Fighters applied on behalf of the community and the protest was approved. On the day of the march we saw youth dominating. When the community arrived at the mine they found that the police had already barricaded the entrance with razor wire and that they had dogs as if the community were in an illegal march. Leadership asked for mine management to come and receive the memorandum, unfortunately no one came and they responded by saying they didn't know anything about the march. I Ironically then they had jacked up security even without knowledge of the march?

Each edition of Action Voices will highlight writing or work done by the monitors. In this edition Lorraine Kakaza, one of the coordinators of the Mpumalanga/Tete Mozambique monitor exchange programme and Boledi Susan Moraba, coordinator of the WhatsApp and alerts group, share what it means to them to be a community monitor in a community affected by mining in South Africa? Their stories were first published in a Canadian labour magazine, *Our Times*, in December 2016.

Left With Scars:

by Lorraine Kakaza

I am Lorraine Kakaza. I was born in the province of Eastern Cape, South Africa, and moved with my family to Mpumalanga province where the sunrise is known for its beauty. Mpumalanga is also known for its farming, timber plantations, mining and tourism.

We were living in a small town called Kriel, where my father worked for a coal-mining company called Matla Colliery. The company's name was later changed to Exxaro.

I started schooling there and matriculated in the year 2007. That year I started looking for work, as my parents couldn't afford the university fees.

I later moved to Carolina, another mining town in Mpumalanga. I still couldn't find a job. I was working temporarily, but I lost my job and my life became more difficult. I then joined a group of young people involved in drama, and we used it to express our daily experiences, I dedicated myself to working with communities instead of roaming around looking for elusive work.

ACID MINE DRAINAGE

It was hard for me because people in these communities were not aware of the sicknesses they were facing: asthma, eye problems, stomach problems, and many more. In my community, Chief

Albert Luthuli Local Municipality, we would go for days without water. This started early January 2012 when we were experiencing heavy rain that caused the run-off ponds from coal handling facilities to overflow. Acid mine drainage then flowed into the municipal Boesmanspruit Dam, which supplied our community with drinking water. The water became toxic. Water is good; it is life. But the colour of the water changed and fish at the dam began to die. There was no response from the municipality.

This went on for seven months whenever there was rain, and then we protested. Some of the community members were shot.

The municipality provided some water by trucking it in, but they were collecting water contaminated by a coal mine called Mimosa, and the water tanks were not regularly refilled. The municipality was

**“I
dedicated
myself to
working for my
community”**

instructed to provide the community with clean water, but they failed to provide clean water and failed to involve the community in addressing our needs. Even after tap water was restored, it was brownish in colour. When we used it to bathe, it caused infections and diarrhoea, forcing us to go to hospital.

WORKING WITH BMF

I dedicated myself to working for my community and began working with the Bench Marks Foundation, assisting in monitoring and measuring corporate social responsibility. I worked at different levels, international and local, and trained to become a community monitor. I went to Brazil and took part in the Landless Workers' Movement for three months for political education. I travelled to Mozambique on an exchange program and also to Hawaii. There I took part in the World

**“...the colour
of the water
changed and fish at
the dam began to
die”**

Conservation Congress, which is held every four years by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN).

Now I monitor the impact of mining on the environment and on the health of communities.

Bench Marks provides us with skills and different tools, like modern technology to link us together and to disseminate information to communities and the world. We use WhatsApp, which allows us to communicate with each other via group chat. We send out alerts and we also post written and audiovisual reports and images to our blog. I'm working with young women who are keen to serve their communities and take action.

Getting involved with the coal-mining industry has changed me and left me with scars.



Lorraine presenting her research on issues created by mining in Mpumalanga

We Are Suffering:

by Boledi Susan Moraba

Living in the city of factories, coal-fired power stations and coal mining felt good once. The lifestyle was easy, affordable and full of hope. It was a place where women and men went to work every morning. A place where the environment was alive, clean and full of adventures, where we used to go to school, play sports; and where culture was respected by all.

I am talking about Emalahleni, “the city of coal,” in Mpumalanga province. Those were the days of new democracy in South Africa and everyone was happy to be free from the apartheid government and its system.

My name is Boledi Susan Moraba. I was born in Limpopo province, in the municipality of Burgersfort in a small village called Setlopong–Gamamphahlane. I am the sixth of ten surviving children of the late Mr. Joseph and Mrs. Enny Moraba. We are five girls and five boys.

Raised by my step-parents (my father’s brother and his wife), I grew up just south of Limpopo, in Mpumalanga province – ‘where the sun rises’. We lived in the municipality of Emalahleni, previously known as Witbank. I attended Edward Matyeka Primary School during the early 1990s and Witbank High school during the late ‘90s.

After I completed my matric in 2001, I volunteered with the South African Police Service (SAPS) at Vosman Police Station in Mpumalanga. I worked with the community policing forum as a secretary in the communications and liaison office, where I took minutes, organised meetings and did general office administration. It was my hope that one day I would become a qualified police detective.

I studied private investigations, security management and occupational health and safety part time during my eight-year contract with the department. After my contract expired I joined an organisation called the Foundation for Victims of

Crime where I worked with victims of crime, gave court support and counselling, and took part in offender dialogues and mediation. I developed an interest in working with victims of crime and decided to change my stream of study to counselling, but, due to financial difficulties, I was unable to enrol.

YOUTH AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE

In 2013, I joined the movement called Mpumalanga Youth Against Climate Change. I met the group at a youth centre while I was taking part in a skills development programme for young people. At the time, I had no idea whatsoever about climate change and its impacts.

In the youth movement they were teaching each other about the effects of climate change — the air pollution caused by the coal-fired power stations and the water pollution caused by acid mine drainage, which is the waste water from the mines and industries that is drained after it is used for cleaning minerals. They talked about noise pollution caused by industries and the machinery from the mines and on the streets. They also taught each other how to create awareness campaigns in the communities, and about surviving the impacts of climate change. I was not only learning information. The movement also used the arts, such as drama and poetry, to show the impacts of climate change. We planted trees during Arbour Week, to promote an understanding of the need to plant and preserve indigenous trees and we planted small vegetable gardens at schools.

JOINING BENCH MARKS

My knowledge of environmental justice grew even stronger when I joined the Bench Marks Foundation Community Monitors School in 2014 as a facilitator. The school uses online resources and local media, and helps activists develop their information-gathering and communications skills. I started understanding the impacts of mining — especially coal mining, as I resided in the coal area.

I was facilitating writing skills for monitors, to enable them to do research and to understand the areas they live in, and the problems in those areas, so that they could write articles. I was also trained in radio podcasting: doing community interviews, editing them and then producing a podcast. We also learned how to use an interactive digital mapping technique called crowd mapping.

I also started doing my own research on the history of coal mining in Mpumalanga province. I studied the booklets on coal mining to try and understand the impacts of mining, the use and the importance of coal in the communities, and especially the issue of acid mine drainage — its cause, what it does to the water, soil and how it impacts animals, humans and trees.

In the monitoring school I was able to do fieldwork by interviewing people who are affected by mining and climate change. I was able to tour around communities in the mining-affected areas and learn how people live and what challenges they are facing.

BLACK DUST

During the early 2000s, communities started complaining about black dust particles on their windows, their doorsteps and in their surroundings. The dust was coming from Evraz Highveld Steel and Vanadium Limited, a steel and vanadium factory. The black dust was also coming from Transalloys, a factory which produces silico-manganese and is a neighbour of Highveld Steel. The factories are five kilometres away from the residences in a section of the community called Zone 14, Ext 12, and also five kilometres away from another community called Clewer, which was a mining area before it was owned by government.

The dust was black with silver grey when rubbed, and some of the community members complained of having sinus issues. At Ext. 12, the community was affected every minute of the day, every day of their lives. The dust was all over their houses. It settled in their household water and even on their washing whenever they hung their clothes outside.

In 2013, the local community-based organisations banded together with United Front (a national coalition that includes workers, social and environmental movements, women's and youth organisations as well as others) and launched a complaint against Highveld Steel. Throughout its years of production, Highveld Steel dumped a stockpile at Ferro Bank, which is located near the communities of Santa Village and Ligazi. The stockpile consists of metals, such as iron, steel and vanadium, which are harmful and dangerous gases like carbon dioxide. Chemicals are causing diseases in the people living nearby.

The organisations launched complaints and protests against Highveld with the help of the Centre for

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Environmental Rights, activist lawyers in Cape Town who advocate and litigate for environmental justice. The case was filed for court proceedings, however, the company declared bankruptcy. In 2015, Highveld Steel announced that it was under business rescue and started retrenching workers. The factory closed down permanently in early 2016, leaving more than 2 000 workers without jobs. The environmental case was never continued, due to closure of the company.

ACTIVISTS THREATENED

I saw that problems were becoming bigger when I started visiting Santa Village, Coronation, the Mining Neutralisation Settlement (MNS), Clewer and surrounding areas in 2015 to explore how communities are affected by mining. The companies and our local municipal government didn’t seem to care until complaints were launched, and then the activists behind the push were threatened. I never thought mining companies could be so cruel and care only about themselves.

The communities in the mining areas are suffering even more than those in my area, where we struggle with water, electricity, unemployment, crime and



Susan interviewing a community member.

substance abuse, especially the drug called nyaope. At the Mining Neutralisation Settlement (MNS) and Coronation they don't have running water or communal taps. They have no proper infrastructure, no electricity. They have no life. But the mine nearby has everything.

Some people live in corrugated steel and iron sheet houses, some in mud houses; and others in boxes and plastic houses. Sometimes the municipality sends out water tankers once or twice a month, but in Coronation the community members needed to connect an illegal water pipe to get water. The municipality told them that because the area is full of sinkholes, no water tankers would be sent out. The sinkholes are from an abandoned mine which belonged to Anglo Coal many years ago. Because of the mine, the area was left with a coal dump. Now the area is sinking, but people are still flocking to Coronation to settle and to look for employment. The Mining Neutralisation Settlement (MNS) is in an even worse situation because of a mine operating less than 200 metres away from the community's houses. The road used by the mining company is a dusty gravel road covered with black coal dust. When the road is not watered the dust fills people's houses and gets into their household water – even though they keep their water buckets closed. That shows how strong the dust is.

CHRONIC DISEASES

Some of the houses are not safe for human habitation, as they could fall apart anytime, especially during windy and rainy seasons. The people in this community suffer from chronic diseases such as tuberculosis, asthma, and black lung. They have skin rashes, diarrhea, and sinus issues. Their health always gets worse because the government system is not working for them, even though they protest and lodge complaints.

Not only do they suffer from these injustices, they also don't have a clinic or a school nearby. Many

people are unemployed: those who are not working anywhere survive by getting piece jobs from those who are able to give them work. In other areas,

people collect coal slates to make fire, which is dangerous for their health. Others collect dirty coal dumped by the mine next to their shacks.

“They have no life. But the mine nearby has everything.”

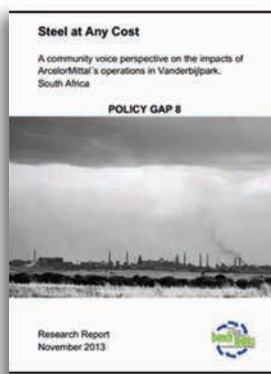
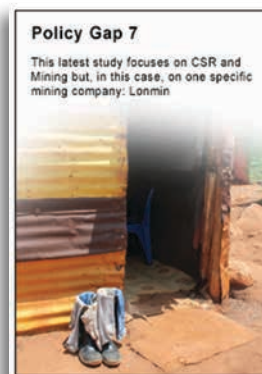
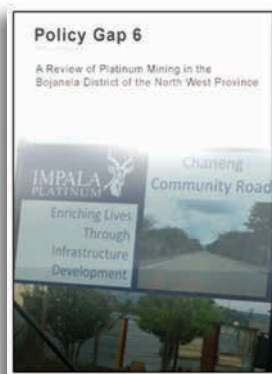
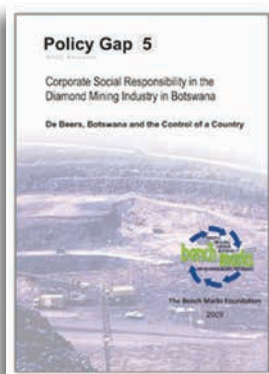
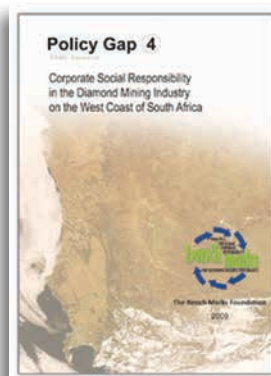
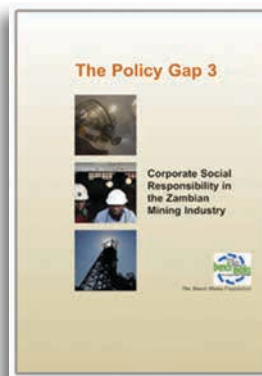
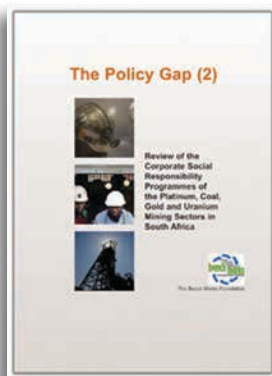
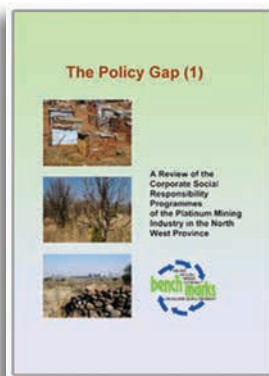
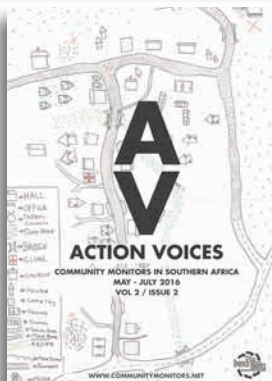
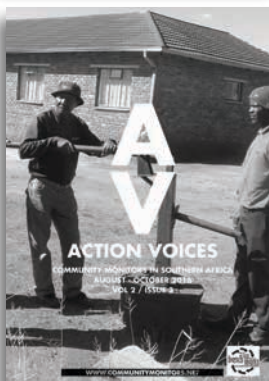
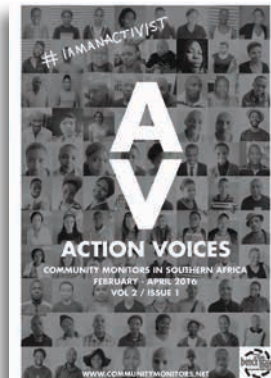
The communities of Emalahleni, especially the people in them who are undocumented immigrants and who are living in the informal settlements, are tired of the situation they are facing. HIV/AIDS rates are high, as is the rate of prostitution. More and more people are dropping out of school. Crime and substance abuse are extremely out of hand. Corruption and political issues are dividing the people in the communities. Threats to community activists are growing at an alarming rate. The voices of the communities are suppressed by those in power.

FIGHTING EACH OTHER

I feel very sad and angry at the same time because the life we are living today is leading us to war. We will be fighting each other in our own communities when the mining companies are gone and have destroyed our lands. We have no clean water, no land for farming, no grazing fields or land for our animals, no land for communities to build houses, clinics, hospitals and schools. But land for mining is always there.

Our government promised us development and a better life for all, but instead we are suffering. What makes me sad is that the mining companies always choose to mine in the poor communities and not in the rich, middle-class areas or cities, because the mining companies already know and understand the destruction they will cause.

PREVIOUS ISSUES OF **ACTION VOICES** AND **THE POLICY GAP**, PUBLISHED BY THE BENCHMARK FOUNDATION



PUBLISHED BY THE BENCH MARKS FOUNDATION

6th Floor, Khotso House,
62 Marshall Street,
Marshalltown,
Johannesburg,
South Africa
2017

Email: actionvoices@bench-marks.org.za

Phone: +27 11 832-1743/2

Fax: +27 11 832-1750

Postal Address:

P O Box 62538,
Marshalltown 2107,
South Africa

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Editor: Moses Cloete

Production Team: Bobby Marie, Malebo Rammekoa, Olebogeng Motene, Susan Moraba
Libby Lloyd and Naadira Patel



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