

Botswana, 6-9 August 2024

ACTION VOICES

Community Solidarity Forever



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Lekgotla la Dikereke la Botswana



Community Monitoring training in Botswana

On the 06 -to 09 August the Botswana Council of Church with the support of Bench Marks Foundation and the Norwegian church hosted a community monitoring training in Gaborone. The community monitoring project is a flagship project of the Bench Marks Foundation, which focuses on capacitating the mining-affected community. This model of the training is based on accessible tools like social mapping, timelines and writing, which are known to enhance community capacity. The program has a footprint in South Africa, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Zambia.

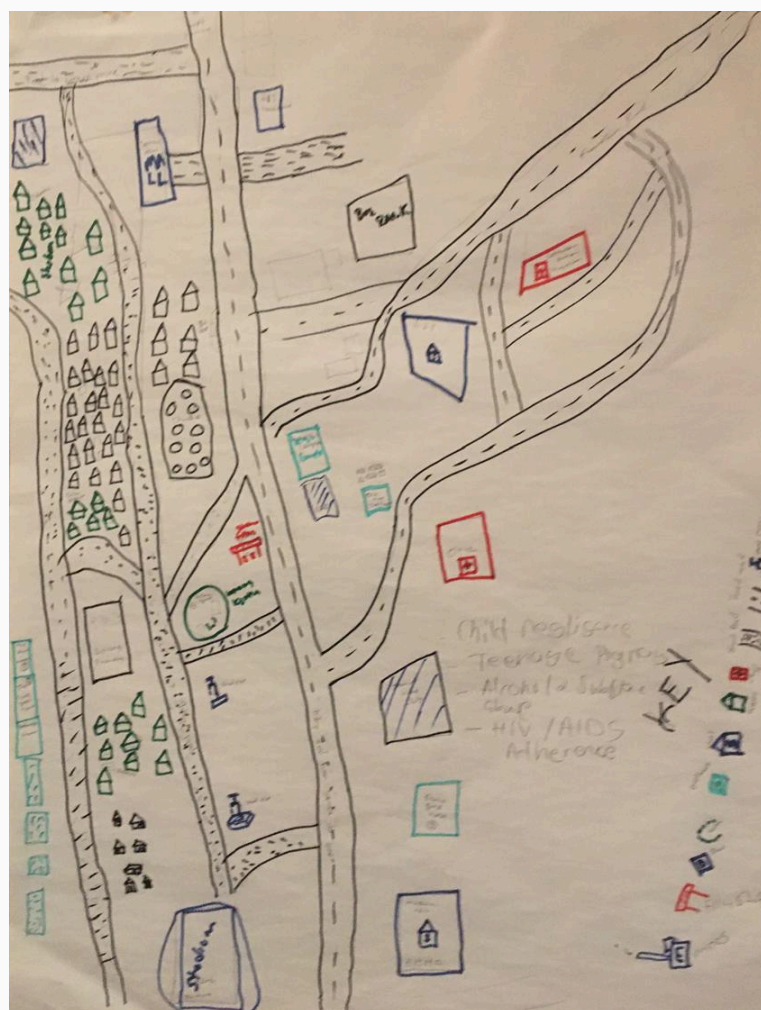
Approximately Twelve dynamic community members from Letlhakane, Medie, and Mahalapye, underwent the training. The process has highlighted three issues faced by these communities. All villages have mining-related problems, which vary. Mahalapye village faces the depletion of river sands in the Mahalapye river, due to rampant sand mining, Whilst Medie a coal mine host community has been struggling with an impassable road, degraded by trucks which leads to difficulty and striving for the community. Letlhakane is one community which has attracted diverse fortune seekers due to elaborate diamond mining which includes the likes of Orapa mine. Letlhakane community is experiencing confluences of social issues which include alcohol and drug abuse.

The group systematically mapped the issues and brought to bear the narrative hard to fathom. However, the solutions seek to reconcile interests of diverse stakeholders for the development of the community.



Lethakane village struggles with alcohol and weird drug abuse

Goikagetsemang Thokamotho, Banyatsi Salutu, Tebogo Papiso, Mogi Bolathilwe, Olefile Radikeledi, Banetseemang Gakeatsiwa



Young people who are our potential future leaders in Lethakane village are severely affected by alcohol and drug use, as their peers easily influence them. They end up contracting diseases, and dropping out of school, whilst others end up losing their lives due to accidents. Additional to this is the level of dependency and unwanted pregnancies gradually increasing.

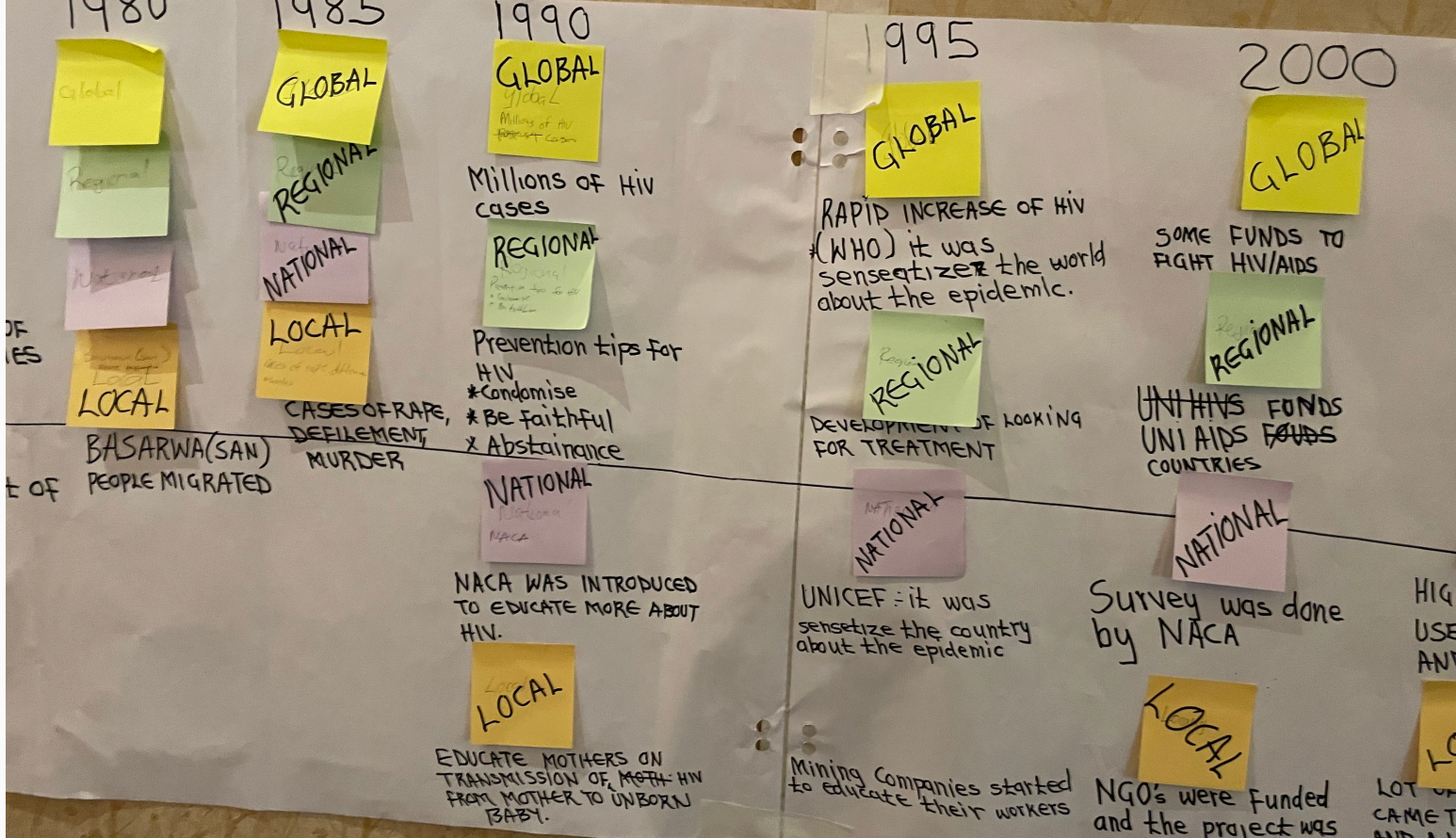
The San people (Bakhwee) who are prevalent inhabitants of the area are integrating with great difficulty given the influx due to diamond mining. They end up being severely affected as they adopt a new way of life which includes alcohol consumption and usage of substances.

Ever since 1969 when the diamond mines were established in Lethakane village situated in Boteti District of Botswana Central, there has been an influx of people. This community is surrounded by four diamond mines namely DK1 (Lethakane mine), Orapa mine, Damtshaa mine and Karowe Diamond mine (LUCARA). The uncontrollable inflow of job seekers has accumulated since 1985 leading to the decline in the community's moral fiber. The community started to experience rape, murder, defilement due to alcohol and drug abuse.

From 2010 to date alcohol businesses have boomed as locals open shebeens, bars, and clubs as a source of income. Most of these businesses are less than 2km from each other and are located near schools in each ward of the community. Serious issues that we are facing in our village is HIV/AIDS and risky sexual behaviours.

Shebeen boom

Lethakane is the central meeting point for all four diamond mining companies operating in and around the village.

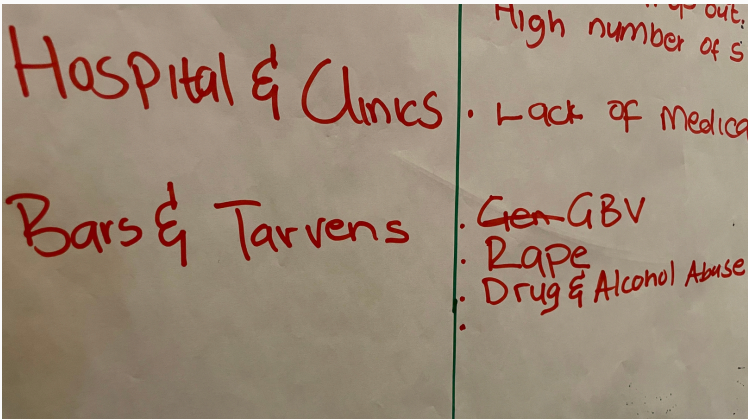


The local community complains of the lack of employment opportunities which has led to most of the residents finding themselves having to resort to opening alcohol outlets for income generation. Additionally, the lack of recreational facilities has made the alcohol outlets spaces as alternative recreation along with the use of marijuana which is readily available in the community.

Known nightclubs in Latlhakane like Stones and If Not Why Not are making a kill by hosting festivals on weekends. Patrons enjoy all night, increasing the risks of road accidents, recently reports of a Lucara mine employee getting involved in an accident. These are unfortunate incidents which require the awareness of the patrons.

The problem has spilt over to affect schools, what is more telling is that there was an incident whereby senior school students were drugging themselves by using dried human faeces. This weird practice which shocked the community led to one of the students ending up having mental health problems.

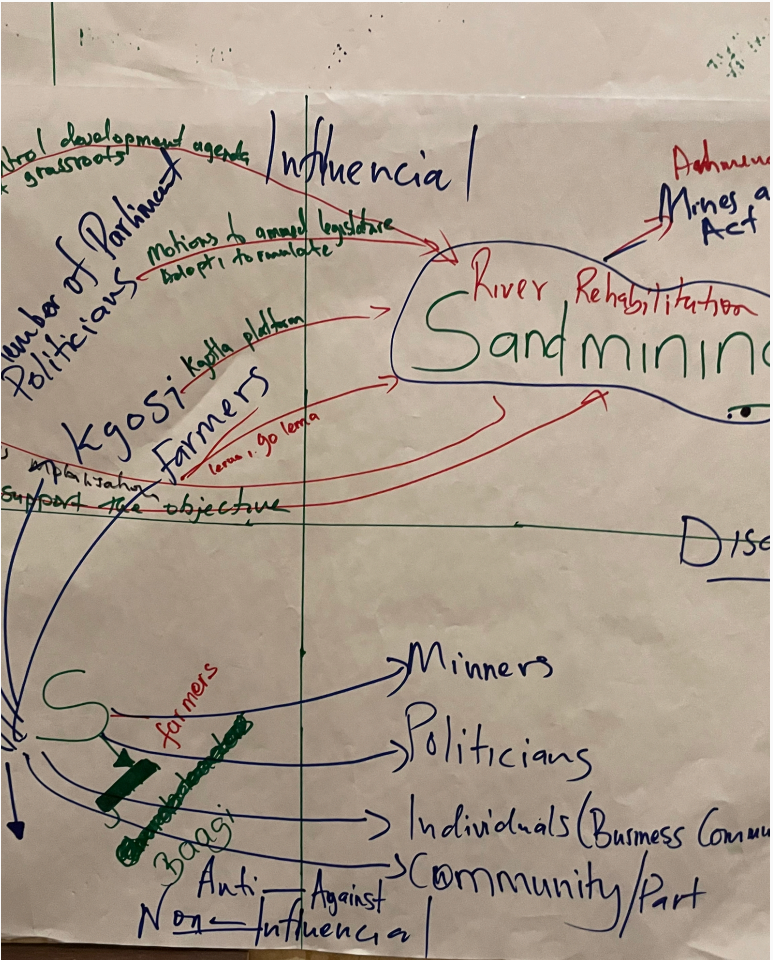
Many of the youth leaving school end up spending most of their time at the shebeens and bars because they cannot find employment. Increasingly young women whose mothers spend more time in bars and neglect their kids, which results in malnutrition. Alcohol and drugs in this community are mere symptoms of a deeper problem of this community. Nevertheless, something needs to be done and there is a need to start by mobilizing and sensetise the community. Embarking on campaigns in school and calling other organizations to join in on this issue. The support of kgotla meetings and space to address these issues will make people listen and support.



The side of the river is used as ramps for loading and pits for pit sand. This becomes a problem as the Mahalapye River is the only source of river sand in Botswana, meaning it's now mined for industrial purposes. The river sand level currently is way below acceptable standards. The sand level cannot hold water needed by farmers through their wells. In some locations or part of the river is left unrehabilitated.

Mahalapye river and our rich cultural heritage –our beliefs or spirituality

The degradation goes deeper than the farmer’s plight, it has affected the religious and cultural community. Parts of the river that were used for spiritual baptism no longer hold water thus baptism ceremonies are affected and cannot go on as normal. Some precious stones meant for both religious and cultural purposes can no longer be found as they mined with sand every day and have reached other parts of Botswana that way. This river has been handy to the Christian community and the African traditional healers; water points were used for prayers and initiations by both parties concerned.



Our call for rehabilitation

This document is produced by concerned members of Mahalapye community whose interests are to rehabilitate the Mahalapye river through the moratorium on river sand mining. First the document addresses the need for stakeholders and their contribution towards this noble effort that would benefit us all. Our objective is to achieve a moratorium on Mahalapye river sand mining; The objectives would be achieved through

- *Advocacy and lobbying*

For us to achieve this goal we need the pressure groups as well as all politicians on board. That is why the Kgotla plays a meaningful role in this agenda. The advocacy and lobbying would assist us in coming with laws in relation to environmental protection, amendment of the minerals and mines act to accommodate the moratorium of Mahalapye River.

- *Community or stakeholder engagements*

The river is not private property; we all use it in different ways whether we can quantify the interests or not. It is on that background that we need the support of the MAHALAPYE community and Botswana as a whole as this directly affects them. The community needs to be engaged and brought on board to achieve the objective. The community would assist this process by becoming vanguards of the river and river banks, we cannot achieve this objective without them.

- *Partnerships*

There is a Setswana saying that states “Moroto o esi ga o ele” and one that says “Setshwarwa ke ntsa pedi ga se thata” all these idioms and phrases express the need for partnership. Partnerships would provide room for funding, room for consolidated efforts by pressure groups.

Our proposed solutions

- Community trusts to manage and coordinate river sand mining activities
- A moratorium on river sand mining

the mining company committed to constructing its access road into Medie, but it never materialized. Instead, they continued to use the community road.

KEY PROBLEMS	
HOT SPOT	DESCRIPTION
* One busy access gravel road	# Mine trucks speed past to peoples farms and households. Livestocks are hit and killed by the trucks. # The road is not tarred hence it cause a lot of dust, which is a health hazard and road safety issue.
* Mine close to the brass village	# Smoke from the mine affect people's health. Causes allergy reactions and/or tuberculosis.
* A series of broken pubs	# Blasting from the mine, crack peoples houses. There have been reported cases (3) # Crop Food security is affected. # Sexual transactional relationships # Drug and alcohol abuse # GBV # Teenage Pregnancy # Availability of illicit alcoholic drinks

This commitment was championed because there was a common consensus that the mining machinery has the potential of destroying the gravel road. Around 2021, it became evident that the road was in ruins beyond measure. There was dust accrual mainly by the roadside. Due to this dust, motorists sometimes were at risk of poor visibility on the road resulting in road accidents.

Batswana pride themselves with rearing of livestock and crop production, unfortunately, the mining activities including the blasting (coal dust) and traffic affect their livelihoods. Some families has reported that their livestock have been hit by mining trucks and no compensation was paid.

Medie has only one health facility that does not have all that is required. Women who are pregnant have to travel to Letsweletau for delivery. Due to the nature of the road some women end up giving birth along the way. During rainy seasons the road get even worse posing a threat to emergency responses. Additionally, the gravel road affects the delivery of essentials like basic food leading to price surges due to the scarce availability of food products.

The blasting from the mines also poses a serious threat to people's life and their property. Several community members claim their houses are badly cracked as a result.

Intervention

- There is a need for capacitation of community members to strategies on how duty bearers can be held accountable.
- To enhance full participation in influencing policy and decision-making processes.
- Embark on a fact-finding mission to validated the community concerns

These will be achieved through the following activities

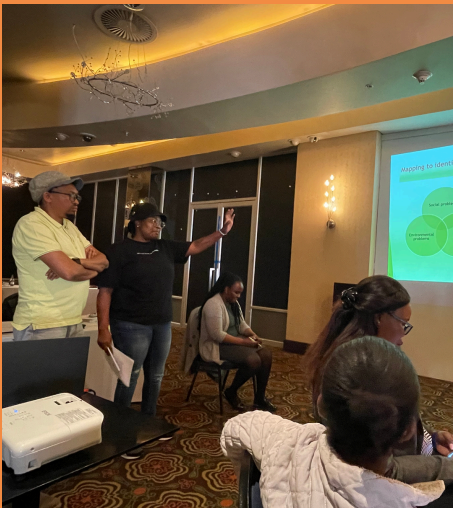
- Form focus groups
- Conduct interview for the purposes of a baseline study
- Consolidate evidence(photos, signed petitions etc)
- Data collection



The woman is pointing at a hand-drawn table on a whiteboard. The table is organized into five main columns: STAKES/PAK, HOLDERS, INTENTIONS, INTERESTS, and INFLUENCE. The rows list various entities: Traditional Leaders, VOs, Area Councils, Businesses (Gov, Church), and Community. The table also includes columns for 'Influence' and 'Influence' with 'Yes' or 'No' indicators. To the right of the table, there is a list of stakeholders: Visionaries, Children, Teachers, and Researchers.

STAKES/PAK	HOLDERS	INTENTIONS	INTERESTS	INFLUENCE	Influence
Traditional Leaders	Community Development	Community Development	Decision making	Yes	Visionaries
VOs	Local Area Councils	Local Area Councils	Information Dissemination	Yes	Children
Area Councils	Local Area Councils	Local Area Councils	Decision making	Yes	Teachers
Businesses (Gov, Church)	Businesses (Gov, Church)	Businesses (Gov, Church)	Financial Support	Yes	Researchers
Community	Community	Community	Financial Support	Yes	

Stakeholders: Visionaries, Children, Teachers, Researchers



Twelve activists were presented with certificate of attendance after completing training and activities which includes:

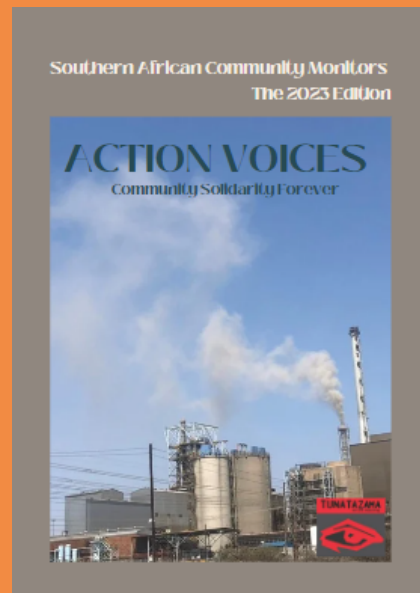
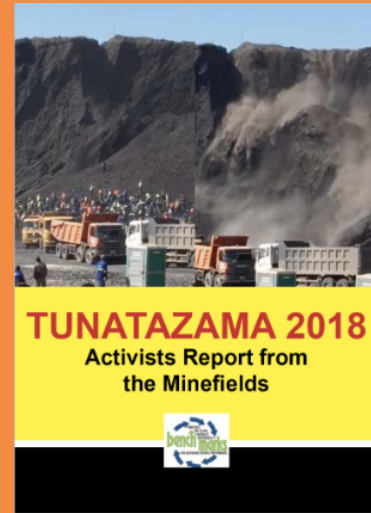
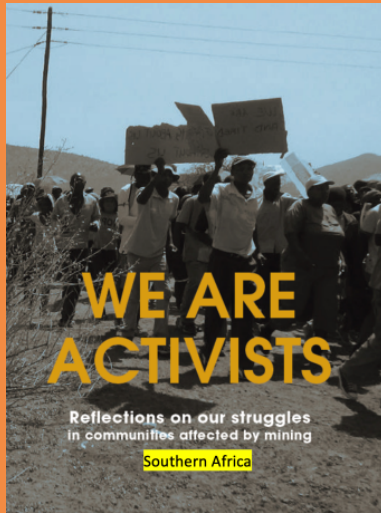
- Mapping to understand community context
- Analysing community problems
- Developing an action plan to resolve a community problem
- Writing skills



Coordination and training team



The Community Monitors Regional Action Voices/Activists publication journey



**TUNATAZAMA (we are watching)
is a network of activists in communities living near mines in
Southern Africa.**

**The blogs record their stories and reports on how mining
affects their community life and the environment and the
actions taken by communities to bring about change.**

Visit: communitymonitors.net