Magobading Community/Bench Marks Foundation and Anglo Platinum

We are of the view that in the discourse of CSR-CSI, corporations have screwed the communities, workers and the environment in which they operate. Their primary concern has been and is profit, above health and the wellbeing of communities and the citizens in general.

We are also cognizant that the corporations wherever they have shown an interest to talk to organisations of the people, have been as a result of mass pressure and action globally and nationally. Corporations in these conflicts have suffered reputational damage, which has severely dented their profits and market share generally.

What are sincerely needed are more programmes and actions that forces corporations to become more accountable and transparent in their functioning in a democratic society. The nature of these campaigns is varied and not all assist in making corporations accountable to society.

The recent attempt by Anglo Platinum to improve on how it engages with communities is a result of pressure and by no means sincere, but responds in part to what communities are interested in getting resolved. The MOU entered into with the Bench Marks Foundation is a product of such struggles and the urgent demand of communities towards getting their fundamental basic needs met. A struggle that simply mouths "down with capitalism" is sloganeering at its best but in the long term will result in disillusionment on parts of large sections of those resisting the corporations to give up and do nothing or in effect become conservative supporting elite rule over society.

Background to the Bench Marks Foundation position

In 2007 the Bench Marks Foundation did a study on mining in Limpopo called Policy Gap 2, measuring the gap between company policy and practices. We were highly critical of how Anglo Platinum dealt with communities and how land grabs and relocation of communities took place. We then did a further perception index study on how the company engaged with communities based on our mining and community engagement principles that recognise free informed prior consent.

Both Policy Gap 2 and community perception study showed up serious policy gaps and we presented this at a meeting organised by PGM (Platinum Group Roundtable) and Milieu Kontact that involved community reps, reps of Anglo Platinum and the Bench Marks Foundation.

In this meeting on the 18th February between Anglo and the community facilitated by the PGM Roundtable, where the Bench Marks Foundation reported on the study outcomes, resulted in a discussion and outcomes decided upon by the community with Anglo Platinum.

The BMF was witness to an undertaking by Anglo Plat to engage in a more meaningful way with the Magobading community in Limpopo to:

1. Fix up broken houses using community members to do the actual work.
2. In the next few months to set up a trust fund that will empower the community
3. To keep a record of meetings with the communities and to record decisions made.

In order to hold Anglo Plat accountable to its undertakings, the Bench Marks Foundation at an international meeting of the Platinum Group Roundtable on the 8th April 2010 held in Paris strategically signed a MOU as witness to what Anglo would do. We believe that this was important as it gives us leverage as an NGO on the side of the poor and communities to firstly keep Anglo Platinum accountable and secondly to start witnessing tangible improvements in the life of the community.

The MOU specifically state that the Bench Marks Foundation witnesses the intentions of Anglo Platinum with the Magading community and that we have not entered into an agreement on behalf of communities with the company.

However, this MOU is not a blank check as we reserve our right to pull out of it, as soon as we find attempts to use communities and not deliver on the basic needs outlined in the document.

We commit to monitoring the implementation, ably assisted by communities and our own Monitoring School, and we will review their reports at quarterly meetings, and if we find transgression to the MOU and attempts to green wash or co-opt us, we will have no hesitation in pulling out and publishing any transgressions.

Any person, finding transgressions to the letter and spirit of the MOU can personally contact Bishop Jo Seoka, chairperson of the Bench Marks Foundation or Executive Director of Bench Marks Foundation, John Capel and we promise to act on genuine concerns.

We will put the MOU and the media release on our website for public scrutiny.

John Capel

Executive Director

Bench Marks Foundation