



MEDIA STATEMENT BY BENCH MARKS FOUNDATION

Trauma faced by Botswana predicted in 2009 study

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For immediate release

Reports of the apparent meltdown of Botswana through strikes by teachers, medical personnel, border and state officials and the detention, interrogation and tear gassing of innocent people and children, is noted with concern by The Bench Marks Foundation.

John Capel, Executive Director of the Bench Marks Foundation, says the organisation is, sadly, not surprised by these developments.

"In a study published by The Bench Marks Foundation in 2009 titled *Corporate Social Responsibility in the Diamond Mining Industry in Botswana - De Beers, Botswana and the Control of a Country*, we pointed out the unhealthy dependency of the country and its government on a single commodity, namely diamonds.

"With the collapse of the diamond market, the country has been in a steady downward spiral. The dependence on one corporation, de Beers, to extract that commodity has exacerbated the problem.

"A tightening of security by government, including the attempts to stifle freedom of the press, the untimely and unfortunate death, claimed to be suicide by authorities, of Mr Louis Nchindo, former CEO of Debswana in 2010, an escalation of extra-judicial deaths and the failure to sell the country's diamonds are all events that have finally led to the current situation of social instability and protests in Botswana," says Capel.

Capel says that the attempts by the government to amend the situation has come three years too late and is insufficient to rectify the impact on the people of the country.

"If the government had taken the Bench Marks study seriously in 2009, it might have avoided some of the pain and trauma the country is experiencing today.

"We call on the government of Botswana to seriously negotiate with the 50,000 civil servants on strike, and we call on them not to flippantly dismiss serious investigations into the challenges facing the country."

The research document on diamond mining in Botswana is the fifth in a series concentrating on the legislative environment and the policies and practices of mining corporations in Southern Africa. For more information on the study or to download Policy Gap 5, please go to www.bench-marks.org.za.

The Bench Marks Foundation was launched in 2001 by Archbishop Desmond Tutu in response to the churches' call in 1993 to monitor and hold businesses accountable in the new South Africa and in Southern Africa. It is chaired by Bishop Jo Seoka.

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Bench Marks Foundation is an independent organisation monitoring corporate performance in the field of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) with the focus on social sustainability and economic empowerment. The organisation encourages CSR that goes beyond reporting mechanisms and focuses on the gap between policy and practice, thereby assisting civil society groups and corporations to move beyond philanthropy to more strategic interventions that benefit both the corporations and society. Central to Bench Marks' agenda is how CSR is integrated into companies' operations and ensuring that it is at the core of every decision making process.

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