

Action Voices

2011



Bench Marks Foundation
Community Monitoring Project

Acknowledgement and thanks to funders

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

Bread for All, Action Aid South Africa, the Foundation for Human Rights, Norwegian Church Aid, NiZA (Nederlands Instituut Zuidelijk Afrika), IANRA (International Alliance on Natural Resources in Africa) and Development and Peace (Canada) who supported the project directly and our core funders: Christian Aid, Diakonia (Sweden), EED (Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst) and ICCO (Interkerkelijke Organisatie voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking) who made this work possible.

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

Bench Marks Foundation
2011

ISBN 978-0-620-52113-0
Action Voices 2011

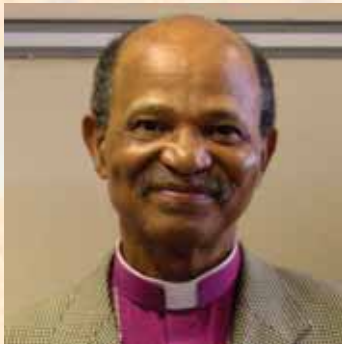
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Foreword

The Bench Marks Foundation has continued its commitment to ensure corporate accountability at all levels of society. The community monitoring project has undertaken to generate information and evidence of corporate practices at the local level. Through our social media and interest from like-minded civil society organisations, we have managed to sustain our work in communities. After three years of monitoring activities within communities, there are creative ways emerging from communities in response to the impact of corporations.

One of the objectives of the project is to enhance the communities' ability to hold companies accountable. The communities have seized the opportunity to do so through our community action research. The lessons drawn in the past three years have acted as pillars of success in building community confidence and provided new approaches to research.

This year the Bench Marks Foundation accelerated the monitoring programme by expanding community capacity in Rustenburg. The community action research actively involved six communities to monitor mining companies present in the area. The process has run for over nine months, leaving knowledge within these communities. It is our delight to share our success, particularly the strategy we pursued, in driving community awareness and igniting active participation through our research.

We had the greatest pleasure in continuing to network and share the monitoring programme tools with groups in Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Our vision is to further extend these in 2012.

We are encouraged by gradual changes in the societal view of corporate accountability. We hope our involvement in the continued monitoring of big corporations will result in transformation at the community level.

There is a growing frustration in the communities we work with, which is visible in the "community uprisings" in the Limpopo Province, Rustenburg, Klerksdorp, the Vaal Triangle and KwaThema in the East Rand.

We are getting a clear message from the community that they can no longer bear the pain of unemployment, poverty, the lack of housing and basic services, in a context where mining and industrial corporations make huge profits and where some government and party officials become the new rich and live the lifestyle of royalty. We hear communities saying: "We will not accept being oppressed and exploited".

As a movement born in the Church we cannot remain silent in the face of this new oppression. We have to continue the struggle with new strategies to "set the oppressed free".

It is our hope that this publication serves to enhance the work of the Bench Marks Foundation and its outreach to neighbouring countries. ■

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Jo Seoka
Chairperson



Introduction

Once more we celebrate the voices of communities, from the communities by community activists. *Action Voices* records the Monitoring Action Project testimonies penned from the experience and the observations of the community activists involved in monitoring mining and steel companies.

Since the inception of the Monitoring Action Project, documenting the process has been at the centre of the project. The project has demystified fears associated with writing and has seen activists recording their experiences. Activists have shared with their organisations their findings, making monitoring through writing mightier than the sword.

Cohorts of community activists from Limpopo, Klerksdorp, East Rand, Rustenburg, Vaal and Sasolburg participated in a nine-month programme to learn and share from their experiences. The programme has emerged with diverse material giving us insights into the impact of corporations in the communities.

Participants are exposed to methods which come in handy for monitoring and documenting. This year we focused on better ways to extend the programme to a wider audience in the communities. The experiences aired by the participants have revealed amongst other things the existing gap between the policy and practices of corporations.

This comes at a time when the world is struggling to deal with the effect of global warming.

While our work remains focussed in South African communities, we have continued our exchange of information and experiences with groups in Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. We hope in time (and with the availability of resources) that our work will develop into a solid network of grassroots communities.

In a fast growing world, technology has become a tool for

the monitors and the school has actively promoted the use of social media to expand their outreach and staying in contact as communities.

The monitors have developed their writing skills and used these to develop blogs and workshop newsletters.

We express our gratitude to our partners in different networks and those funders who gave their support for the development of this programme in the last three years. Through the Bench Marks Foundation's monitoring programme, voices will be unearthed and translated into action in the quest to hold corporations to account. ■

Mr John Capel

Executive Director, Bench Marks Foundation



Section 1

Monitors' Writings

The writing in this section is a selection of the work of the monitors in the Bench Marks Monitoring Project (May to October 2011).

The ability to write down observations and express one's thoughts and ideas is a core skill for a community monitor. In our training we focus on encouraging and supporting the monitor to develop the confidence to write freely. The monitor keeps a diary or journal and is encouraged to write down personal thoughts daily.

Monitors write short articles on any issue or problem they observe in their communities. They were then asked to email this article to coordinators of the project. In doing this activity, monitors developed their observational and writing skills and learnt how to use email.

Between May and September 2011 the eight monitors on the project wrote an average of four articles per month.

To prepare them for their task the monitors participated in two workshops, at the beginning and towards the middle of the project term. They were given introductory training in free writing and basic computing. Participants were expected to develop their skills through practise and feedback.

The monitors are in the age group 22 to 35 and include six female and two male activists who completed this year's programme that was developed in conjunction with a number of community and faith-based organisations. All the monitors have completed high school education and most have attempted some post-school training.



My name is **Chris Senne** from Chaneng village in Rustenburg. I am a social activist and a member of the Chaneng Youth Organisation.



ENGAGING THE MINING COMPANIES

Chaneng village is encircled by platinum mines. These mines include the Bafokeng Rasimone Platinum Mine. On the eastern side there is Impala Platinum and our back yards are invaded by the newly constructed Styldrift shaft. As the directly affected community we had expected to get employment to improve our social conditions, as the impact of these mines have contributed to the increase of unemployment in our area. This is because in pursuance of our livelihood we were depending on farming and other job opportunities in hotels around. Lately these farms are utilised for mining.

Instead of the mine recruiting its labour from among the locals, they rely much on the migrant labour and provide them with no accommodation. In my village you will find employees of mines with mine clothes walking to and from the mine as most of them are staying in our community. Most of them bring their wives, girlfriends and kids.

The Chaneng Youth Organisation has engaged with these mining companies. They make promises of change but never fulfil their promises.

Towards the end of last year (2010) the community came out in protest against the mine. It was on the 8th October 2010 when the youth of Chaneng decided that they had enough of promises and no delivery. They decided to stop the mine operations by blocking the roads leading to the mines with burning tires and big stones.

The youth were angry that the mine company did not want to engage with the community while mining on the community's land.

The whole blockage was done early in the morning to

prevent people from going to the mine or to their work. Most of the people gathered at the mine entrance to make sure that no one accessed the mine area. The mine management was afraid to come near because they were afraid for their lives. After 2 to 3 hours the police came. They asked the youth to remove stones out of the roads, but they were wasting their time, no one listened to them.

On the way to our village, police started shooting rubber bullets at us.

We then gathered in the community hall to meet the councilor who was there with other youth from the nearby local village. After being addressed by our councilor we went back to our village to get feedback from our Lekgotla elders who went to see kgosi the very same morning of protest. On the way to our village, police started shooting rubber bullets at us. We did not fight back but ran in different directions, dodging the bullets. The police senior instructed them to make arrests. They managed to arrest eight of us.

Since then we are still attending court. The next date is on the 26th May 2011 because they claim they are still waiting for further investigations and state witnesses. The remanding of this case is a way to keep the community silent and stop them from protesting. People who were arrested were given warnings and given dates to appear in court.

Instead of government protecting us, it is helping mining companies to disuse, misuse and abuse us. The power is no longer with the people (us) but with the people we are voting for. ■



My name is **Tsholofelo Kokwe** from Kroondal in Ikemeleng, close to Rustenburg town. I am a member of the Ikemeleng Environmental Forum.



**Ikemeleng (Rustenburg)
North West Province**

VERY POOR COMMUNITY SERVICES

I live in Ikemeleng, an informal settlement. We suffer with very poor services by the municipality. Our community does not have proper toilets. We use the bucket system. The bucket system is also affecting our community with a bad smell.

The company which is responsible for servicing the bucket toilets is always irregular, coming as and when they deem convenient. As a result the toilets are infested with worms and flies. In summer there is a bad smell.

In the middle of our settlement there is a stream of water, passing through. This stream is the source of water for the community.

Though the stream is a relief for the community, the ever present waters flow from the direction of the nearby mine tailings dam.

Members of the community are seen on a daily basis and more on weekends doing their washing there. Others are using it for bathing themselves. There is a sign which is mounted close by showing that the stream is infested with Bilharzia. Though the stream is a relief for the community, the ever present waters flow from the direction of the nearby mine tailings dam.

Regardless of suspicions of the stream's condition, the community continues to depend on this stream. We do get water delivered by a water tanker. But this is not sufficient for our large community and sometimes it is irregular.

Our hopes have been raised by the present initiatives to

There is a sign which is mounted close by the river showing that the stream is infested with Bilharzia.

supply water by the municipality. However this has been going on for two years now. Recently they promised us piped water by December 2011. ■



Water collection



I am **Talita Diphoko** living in Dominionville near Klerksdorp. I work in the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission and I am a caregiver at Atlegang Home-Based Care.

MINES CREATE FATAL CONDITIONS FOR THE COMMUNITY

We live in Dominionville in the North West Province next to a uranium and gold mine. In 2010 last year the mine dug trenches next to our graveyard to avoid the overflowing tailings dam running into the N12 road. Those trenches are very dangerous for our children because they are now full of water due to early rainfalls.

The article written by Tshepo Mmusi mentions how mining pits are dangerous and can result in a child's death. This incident happened in 2008 where six children from the community were playing and swimming inside a mud hole and the other one was drawn inside and drowned.

Phathekile Petrus Mabango, 10-years old, was a very intelligent and talented boy with a bright future. He met an unintended fate at the pit. According to one of the caregivers of Atlegang Home-Based Care, the boy is remembered as a great gumboots dancer and actor. He used to perform in their workshops and functions energetically.

As one of the residents, together with other community members, I stay 400 meters from this tailings dam. The tailing facility is barely covered to prevent dust from blowing to the community especially during the windy periods of August. In addition to this risk the community has used the tailings soil for domestic building purposes.

Fifteen identified members of the community have plastered their walls with sand coming from the tailings dam. After plastering, shiny nice colors like purple, white, black, grey, orange and yellow can be noticed.

Despite the knowledge of the tailings dam containing heavy metals, members of the community still continue to decorate their walls with this tailings dam sand.



Dominionville
North West Province

Despite the knowledge that the tailings dam contains heavy metals, members of the community still continue to decorate their walls with this tailings dam sand.

I spoke to Tshidi Mochawe, one of the community members, she said that these colours are so beautiful. She said they make beautiful decorations on her walls and she will continue to decorate with tailings dam sand. ■

I interviewed a number of women about alcohol and drug abuse. Rebecca Mashupenyana said that the youth of today had lost control and after they had too much to drink and smoke, they become monsters. She added that after her grandson has too much to drink he demands food and threatens to beat her. The last time she called the police, and the police gave him a warning.

Dorine Ntwaagae recommended that youth should refrain from drinking during the week and only drink on weekends. Sinah Oliphant reckons that they should sell food at stokvels so that when the young girls are busy drinking and getting hungry they must buy food from them because they spend a lot of money on liquor. A tavern owner, said that she sells liquor, but she doesn't call anyone to come and buy. All that she is interested in is to make money and feed her family. These women concluded that this generation is a lost generation.

The Justice and Peace members in Dominionville have decided to hold workshops for the youth to encourage them to engage in healthy extra-mural activities.



My name is **Mahadio Maitse**. I am from Kanana, an area close to Klerksdorp. I am a Justice and Peace member and work on issues of social justice within Kanana.



**Kanana (Klerksdorp)
North West Province**

UNEMPLOYMENT AND CRIME, OUR UNENDING NIGHTMARE

Justice and Peace activists in Kanana studied the problem of crime in our community and came to the conclusion that unemployment was a major cause of crime.

The rate of unemployment gets higher due to retrenchments happening all over the country.

Kanana is a place not far from eleven shafts mining diamonds and gold. The rate of unemployment in Kanana is horrible. It rises month after month. One wonders how does unemployment become so high in a place close to so many mining companies and why residents can't get jobs in the mines? The answer is simple; the mines prefer to employ illegal immigrants to locals. Employers pay illegal immigrants lower wages. In most cases they pay bribes for jobs.

These workers come from countries such as Lesotho, Mozambique and provinces such as the Eastern Cape and Free State. Meanwhile some unemployed residents of Kanana who have been looking for employment for a very long time without luck end up being ruthless criminals and thugs. They consider crime as their last resort.

Former mine workers have now turned into heartless robbers and criminals.

When mining companies close their operations and migrant workers are expected to go back to their homes, they choose to remain and search for alternative employment and when that is not happening they resort to other means of survival.

Criminals, gangsterism and violence are becoming a part of our everyday lives. Life has changed from what it used to be, particularly around 15 to 20 years ago. Wherever one goes, one has to think of one's safety and protection, especially at night. Kanana has now become the home of criminals.

These days, finding employment is the most difficult thing to achieve, especially if you are uneducated and without qualifications or experience. Realising that life has to go on, boys from as young as 15 years of age, resort to different types of criminal activities, from house robberies, handbag snatching and various more inhuman criminal activities.

Lately, these thugs don't have a conscience as they can now rob people in broad daylight. Sometimes if you have no money or cell phone, you get stabbed because these criminals hate finding nothing on you when robbing you.

Former mine workers have now turned into heartless robbers and criminals. These are the people who worked for mines such as Uranium One, Pamodzi and AngloGold Ashanti. To make ends meet, they realised that crime has to be the way of life. A while ago I interviewed Thabiso who got stabbed and robbed near the old houses of the mines allegedly by those guys who worked at that shaft when it was still functional.

In conclusion, crime in Kanana and nearby mines has turned into an unending nightmare for innocent residents who are victimised for their own valuable belongings. People believe that the police take these people into custody and let them go without being questioned, only because they work together. ■



I am **Nthabiseng Dimema** from Boitumelo, in the Vaal Traingle. I am a member of the Catholic Justice and Peace and also involved with Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance.

"THIS HOUSE MUST BE SHUT DOWN"

The people in Boitumelo started to reside there in 1997. The government gave community low-cost RDP houses. It was a good thing to see our government take initiative to deliver services.

But two years later these houses started to give problems to the community. The houses started to crack and some houses are not in good condition. Some are not straight, others have collapsed.

Before they started to build, they didn't check the condition of the land whether it was suitable for building houses. Some houses have damp surfaces. The ground underneath the house is permanently waterlogged and has a damp surface and bad smells come from the soil. Cracks and fungi inside are so bad the walls tremble.

According to Mrs. Sesi Mosimanga (owner of the house) "this house must be shut down".

Last year (2010) in October an inspector come to check on the problem. He said the place is terrible, people must not live there.

This mother of three kids wants to leave the house because it is dangerous. In 2004 she tried to extend the house but she was unable to because of wet land. She left the house like that with incomplete foundations.

Sesi said she has complained about cracks to the municipality. They ignored her and other community complaints.



**Boitumelo (Sebokeng)
Vaal region, Gauteng Province**

The houses started to crack and some houses are not in good condition.

Last year (2010) in October an inspector come to check on the problem. He said the place is terrible, people must not live there.

At the moment, Emfuleni Municipality has brought in pumping equipment, to pump the water to a nearby river. This has not solved the problem.

House No. 3551 had a big water hole next to the house. Mrs Leah Tshwabisi (house owner) managed to have it closed; she said that inside it was water that is having soap or bubbles. They also found frogs, snakes and other creatures in the water hole. ■





I am **Lisemelo Francinah Mazibuko**, from Sebokeng in the Vaal triangle. I am a member of the community organisation affiliated with VEJA.



**Sebokeng, Vaal Region
Gauteng Province**

A DISGRUNTLED ARCELORMITTAL WORKER

On 6 April, 2011, I interviewed Mr. Thembisile David Nqwenisa, who is a resident of the Hostel One, Block G in Sebokeng.

I realised how deeply disgruntled he is, after working for many years at Iscor, which is now ArcelorMittal.

He worked for Iscor from 1968 to 1983. This was a very bad time for black workers. They had no trade union rights.

Mr. Thembisile currently lives close to ArcelorMittal. He is now an ex-worker of this company in Vanderbijlpark. ArcelorMittal is a very big company which concentrates on manufacturing steel.

Mr Ngwenisa is disappointed and disgruntled after years of searching for justice.

He was employed as a first aid teacher. He received training from the company in first aid and trained other workers. Many of these workers were white workers. The managers praised him, saying that he is too clever, like Mandela. However, then the managers moved him out of first aid and placed him in a labourer's job in the coking ovens.

Here he took ill. His illness forced him to take sick leave for close to a year. When he returned the managers insisted that he continue working in the coking oven. He refused to do this and was therefore dismissed in 1983.

After he had been fired from work, he received no compensation for his years' service. Instead he was told to wait for three years to claim his money.

**He worked for Iscor from 1968 to 1983.
This was a very bad time for black workers.
They had no trade union rights.**

However he told us that the Pretoria officials told him that everything expired and he cannot get his money.

Mr Nqwenisa is disappointed and disgruntled after years of searching for justice. He is still fighting for justice to be done.

Today the Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance (VEJA) is working so hard to assist these ex-workers; they are determined to fight for justice. VEJA arranged for a meeting between the workers and the Department of Labour who is now investigating their case. ■



ArcelorMittal



I am **Bukelwa Mokoena**. I come from KwaThema township near Springs and I am a member of the Ekurhuleni Environmental Organisation.



**KwaThema
Gauteng Province**

TEENAGE PREGNANCY

Teenage pregnancy is one of the problems facing each and every community. Pregnancy seems fashionable amongst the youth. This is also true for the community I live in, KwaThema, which is a working class township east of Johannesburg.

Young girls today are getting pregnant almost every day, and as if there is nothing wrong with that, they walk around with their big bellies proudly roaming the streets, they even attend normal schools with other kids who are not pregnant, what must other kids think? That it is okay to go to school and at the end of the day you are going to become a young mother?

I'm not saying they should not go to school, they have rights to education, everybody does, but they should attend special schools where they won't be mixed with other kids. I don't know what's wrong with the kids of today, I think they lack values and principles; they don't respect their elders and they do as they please. The biggest problem according to the youth is peer pressure. In order to fit in with the crowd you must have a boyfriend and have sex in order to be cool – that's according to their mates.

Another thing that misleads the youth is technology. It is excellent and the greatest invention ever and it makes our lives easier, but on the other hand it destroys the youth of today, because they use it negatively. For example they watch porn, chat with strangers on the internet, who could be perverts who are out there to harm them. They learn dangerous things like how to commit suicide. Some parents buy computers or laptops for their kids to help them with school work or gather positive information, but they don't know what their kids get up to when they are hooked on

those computers. It makes them think they are clever and that they know more than their parents, and yet they are in darkness.

"... they walk around with their big bellies proudly roaming the streets..."

By getting pregnant at an early age sometimes they end up with fatherless kids or with a disease such as HIV/Aids. I wonder at the high rate they are getting pregnant when contraceptives and condoms are free at every clinic.

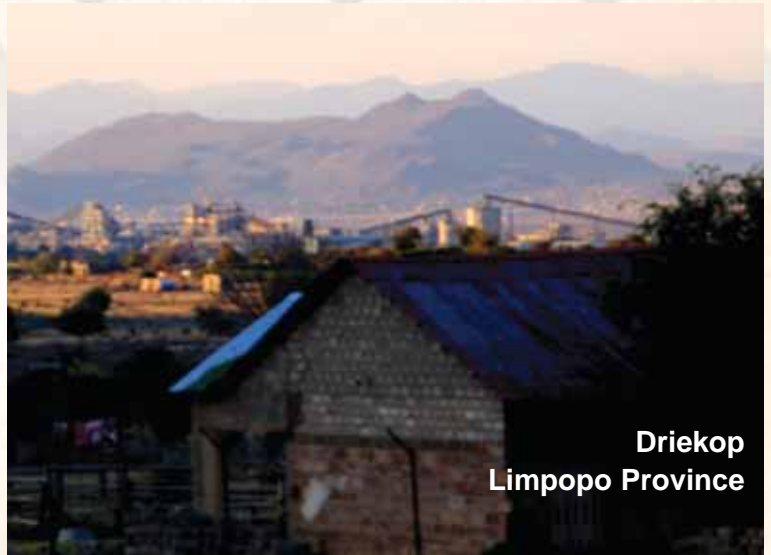
Why are these kids so ignorant? I think more sex education should be provided in schools and at home parents should talk with their children about the consequences of having sex at an early age. Why are parents scared to talk with their kids? They think they will lose respect for them, and yet if they don't talk with them, they will talk with their friends and get the wrong information. ■

KwaThema is township near the Springs industrial area. There is a high rate of pollution around this area. A firm near Mzumbhe area, called Western Platinum, has a factory that burns and boils metals such as platinum and gold. The fumes that come out of this factory are bad.

I met a group of women in the area and I talked with them about what they experienced living around there. They told me that it was unhealthy to live in this area but they had no choice because they can't afford living in better areas. They said that they were not working and they got these RDP houses for free.



I am **Kabelo Mabilo**. I come from a rural village called Driekop in the north-east of Sekhukhune.



**Driekop
Limpopo Province**

NO LIFE FOR RESIDENTS AROUND TAILINGS DAM

Marula Platinum mine is a mining operation under the ownership of Implats Investment Company located in the Eastern Bushveld of Limpopo Province around Burgersfort within the jurisdiction of Greater Tubatse Municipality. The mine's operations are largely located at two farms by the names of Driekop and Clapham. The other affected farms nearby are Foresthill and Winnershoek Farm.

The Driekop farm has been subjected to a land claim by the community since 1998 but the mine just operated on it without consulting the claimants. Clapham is also on claim.

With regard to the health and environment around, the people experienced no problems prior to the operations of the mine. Since the mine occupied the land for mineral extractions Marula Platinum Mine has placed a tailings dam in between the Driekop and Clapham farms. This affects the community in the villages of Mahlokwane in the eastern part of Driekop and Madikane village in the western part of Clapham. These villages are not more than a kilometre from the tailings dam of Marula Platinum.

The soil in and around the dam is contaminated with heavy metals from the underground constructions.

The bad effect of this dam is that there is poor security for the people around. The village is next to the river that is mostly used by the poor communities for drinking and washing. People inhale dust from the dam which is dry and is not sprayed. This causes dangerous diseases for the local people. The soil in and around the dam is highly contaminated with heavy metals from the underground constructions.

The mine is failing to address these issues in a professional

manner. The matter has been raised several times by the residents as a complaint and the mine is silent on this. The local government is also failing to intervene and to secure the lives of the communities.

Sekhukhune land is a tribal or traditionally administrated land. Driekop and Maandagshoek are important parts of Sekhukhune land as both areas are surrounded by various mines including Anglo American, Implats, Platinum Australia and Exstrata. ■

Driekop is a tribal community under Chief M.W Mohlala who took control of the community and is responsible for decisions on property administration. He lives in a portion of Driekop known as Diphale where the royal house is situated.

The area had water pipes since 1996, one borehole for underground water drainage and a diesel water pump machine to supply the local people with clean water. All this fell under control of the chief.

Very simply the chief stopped pumping water for the villagers and instead sold it to them. This forced community members to use unclean water running through the rivers and dams, which might be contaminated by some heavy metals as a result of the surrounding mining operations.

The government which we vested with powers through voting has failed to protect us for almost 10 years now.

The corporations also consume a large amount of underground water and leave only 5% for the community. As a result the individuals who drilled some bore holes are unable to access enough water for their family.



Section 2

Community Group Reports

In the second phase of the monitors' training, the monitors write a report working with his/her local community group.

In preparation for this task the group participates in a workshop in which they learn how to identify and prioritise problems and the different ways of collecting information.

The monitor coordinates the information-gathering

process and is responsible for writing the final draft of the report. The draft report is presented in a national workshop where the monitor gets feedback and advice on how to finalise the report.

This section showcases the reports produced in this year's programme.



DOMINIONVILLE, NORTH WEST PROVINCE

We live in Dominionville which is an area situated near Klerksdorp. We are members of the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission. We do advocacy work around social justice and some of us are members of Itlegang Home-Based Care.

Our community is deeply affected by uranium mining. As caregivers, the definition of our work is to care for members of our community who are infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. However, we realised that we cannot only concentrate on people who are sick and ignore the appalling environment, created by corporations, in which we live.

History of our Community

Our community started long ago in the 1930s with Anglo gold mining exploration and a massive influx of people in search for work. After 1965 the mining company closed its operations and left the area with abandoned buildings and infrastructure.

Many migrant workers decided to stay behind and resorted to farming, and others continued to work as informal mine workers. In time mining operations ceased permanently. They left old shafts that were uncovered and mining pits that caused the deaths of children.

The next company that followed and took over operations was Afrikaner Skeet Mine. Uranium One, a corporation from Canada, came in 2003 and took over. Instead of our community members celebrating development and employment, the company brought devastation to the community. People's lives were never changed for the better and many stayed unemployed. Unethical mining operations were practised and environmental degradation became more severe within our community.

They left old shafts that were uncovered and mining pits that caused the deaths of children within our community.

Last year the company which came and took over the operations is Shiva Uranium which is co-owned by Duduzane Zuma (the son of President Jacob Zuma) and the Gupta brothers, businessmen from India. They came with the mission to enrich themselves in most possible ways.

The Slime Dam

A big slime dam was created by the mine. This slime dam is not covered by grass and in dusty weather conditions blows dust directly to the community.

The slime dam was flowing to the national road N12. To prevent it flowing into the road they dug trenches which redirected the flow to the area around our grave yard. This is a sacred place which is meant for our ancestors. But they dug it up and made it a non-resting place.

Pit toilets in Dominionville

For many years while the mines made profits around us we did not have basic services. As a community we protested about this. Today, after a strong intervention made by the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission on the provision of potable drinking water and sanitation, the Dr. Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality has provided communal taps around our community.

Pit toilets have also been provided for each household and now life has become better than before, because people used to use the bushes in order to relieve themselves which on occasions led to rape and robbery incidents.



Community members around a communal water tap with J&P members Moshe and Masodi



Unemployed men drinking homebrewed beer

Unemployment, alcohol, drug abuse and teenage pregnancy

Our community has been lied to over and over by different mining corporations, promises have been made ranging from community development projects, employment, building of schools and infrastructure in general and none of them have been kept. 90% of the community is unemployed and those who are employed either work at Shiva Uranium, or at industrial factories around Klerksdorp and big cities like Johannesburg.

Many young people drop out of school because of poverty around the area and because they want to be employed so that they can help to support their families and because they lack skills that will make them to be employable then they

become part of the unemployment statistics. When they do not have anything to do they resort to alcohol and drug abuse to make them forget their problems and that results in alcoholism and drug addiction.

90% of the community is unemployed and those who are employed either work at Shiva Uranium, or at industrial factories around Klerksdorp and big cities like Johannesburg.

Many young girls drop out of school because of the reason that they want to be employed and if employment does not become a reality they resort to teenage prostitution because they want to feed their families. They also become vulnerable to temporary contract workers who use them for sexual favours. They end up falling pregnant and contracting HIV/AIDS, thus causing destruction to their lives.

Community Projects



A community chicken project

While we have many problems we do things to get on with our lives.

Talita Diphoko and others are active in the home-based care organisation to take care of people in our community. Lesego Setlhabi and Justice and Peace members have started projects that can help us generate our own income.

Through the Bench Marks Foundation Project and Monitoring School we are learning how to monitor what happens in our community, to discuss it as well as to write a report about it. ■



LIFE IN KANANA

NORTH WEST PROVINCE

Kanana is in a mining town known as Orkney. Kanana consist of 14 Extensions besides sections known as X and Z and OAU. Kanana residents rely on mining companies including AngloGold, Harmony and some other international companies. Of all the minerals found within these mining operations, gold is the most mined mineral in our area.

The mining company which is bigger than others is AngloGold as it has 11 mining shafts. Number 10 shaft is the one much closer to Kanana as it is only 2 kilometres away, situated outside the township. The other 10 shafts are more or less 6 kilometres away from our township; therefore they do not pose health effects directly to the community of Kanana. The impact is felt by its workers.

Of all the minerals found within these mining operations, gold is the most mined mineral in our area.

However, the problem faced by Kanana residents is that they don't know how the mine endangers their lives.

Pollution in the form of dust is evident and visible almost every day and this dust comes from number 10 shaft. Most of the people affected are those residing at the Z section and those nearer to the shaft especially in the informal settlement nearby.

To get to the bottom of this hot issue, we went to the Z section to find people we could interview. Ten people agreed to be interviewed but they were afraid to give their names except for a 42-year old man, Thabiso Ntlangane. He complained about the dust that affected his eyes, and also

complained about his chest pains, unending coughs and respiratory problems. He pointed out that he never had such problems before but he is adamant that inhalation of dust is the cause of his health being at stake.

When we compared all the interviews conducted to people who did not want to be named to Thabiso's story we could see similarities to what they were complaining about.

So far we have decided to draw up a petition to be circulated around the community of Z section to be handed over to the company's management to show them the impact of their actions.

After interviewing the residents we decided to visit the local clinic and interview the nurses. We found out that about 30 people are treated monthly for respiratory illnesses like tuberculosis and asthma coming from Z section and the informal settlement nearer to the shaft. We then concluded that dust from the mines contributed to the illnesses that people are suffering from.

With the help of the Justice and Peace (J&P) office of the Catholic Church, we decided to engage in a plan of action. So far we have decided to draw up a petition to be circulated around the community of Z section to be handed over to the company's management to show them the impact of their actions.

Furthermore, we requested the J&P Diocesan office to write a letter requesting a meeting with the AngloGold management in order to discuss this matter in detail. We are still awaiting the company's response. ■



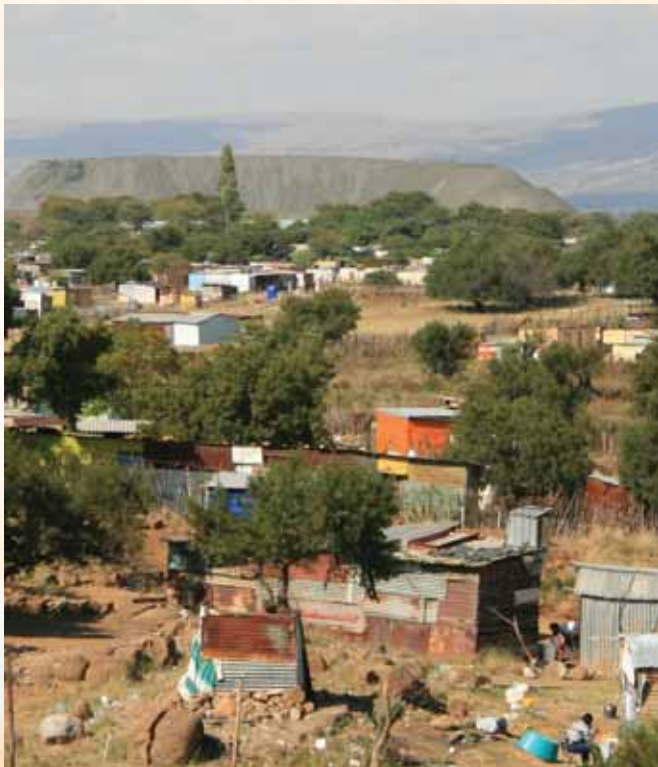
IKEMELENG

MINING AND SEX WORKERS

Many people in Ikemeleng are unemployed and they live in poverty. Ikemeleng is also a place where mine workers find cheap accommodation because the mine does not provide accommodation for them. These are men with no families. These men pay young women who are desperate for money for sex.

Sex workers are people who stay in the community. They came like all the residents of Ikemeleng from other places looking for work. They don't find work. Some come with their boyfriends. They have problems with boyfriends. They are dumped. Sex workers are around 18 to 28 years old. Some sell their body for booze, some for R50. At every tavern, you can find around five or more sex workers.

Here are two interviews about sex work.



Ikemeleng is an informal settlement located in the platinum mining area of Kroondal, Rustenburg in South Africa.

Interview 1

Q: How does it feel like to live, I mean charging men for pleasure?

A: Nothing bothers me, as I don't steal from no one. Even I don't put up a board like a tuck-shop. So whoever comes here is with a purpose.

Q: Do you charge cash or credit or are some boyfriends?

A: Listen there is nothing for mahala when you just look Baba. And I am not a cash loan. If you don't have cash, step out. And I don't want to waste time with boyfriends. I've been playing that game and it's enough. Now it's strictly business. I have had enough of being lied to, love and no love will hurt me no more.

Q: Do you consider yourself a prostitute?

A: You know what, I don't care what people call me, but they don't support me. I am paying my rent and everything.

Q: Actually what made you to do what you do?

A: Seems I don't understand you. You ask if I have boyfriends, and I tell you that I don't have boyfriends. I have been hurt



many times by what you call boyfriends. I am tired of being controlled, even my mother don't control me.

Q: What about finding a real job, have you tried in the mines, farms or the Spar?

A: You know what, these days it's not easy to work in the mines. I am not educated. Sometimes it's boring to wake up early to go to a job, sometimes there is no job and to work on the farm is the last thing I can do. I mean look at me, at least at Spar Supermarket it is better, you get to see new faces and it's a nice place.

Q: Do you ever do a test for HIV and Aids?

A: Yes and I was negative. You think that I sleep with men without a condom. No ways Baba. You know even though I booze you can't just rob me easily. And sometime you must try it instead of looking at our lives from far. I even go cheap since we are neighbours. Do you ever hear me ask too many questions about your life? That's enough now.

Interview 2

Q: How come you became the person you are today?

A: I think you heard about the rumours that I have no parents, my grandmother was the one who took care of me. I even don't know my mother and father. So nothing was easy for me.

Q: How, I don't understand?

A: Even in my school days no one seemed to care about me. My grandmother was too old to persuade me to go to school. And suddenly my uncle came to live with us but that did not help, as we both depended on her pension.

Q: What made you decide to live alone?

A: I was tired of begging and suffering peacefully. I had a boyfriend who I loved dearly, but he dumped me like a hot potato. So I stay alone in my shack in my uncle's yard after my grandmother passed away. I don't stress about paying rent.

Sometimes it's boring to wake up early to go to a job, sometimes there is no job and to work on the farm is the last thing I can do. I mean look at me, at least at Spar Supermarket it is better, you get to see new faces and it's a nice place.

Q: Are you in business, if I may ask. Do you sell yourself?

A: How, is it not obvious? What are you guys seeing and saying about me, someone you call slut, whore, and prostitute? Ja, I am in business and that is nobody's business and I don't call no one. They come here by themselves. And if they ask for it, they have to pay for it. I am not here to play.

Q: Tell me do you encourage them to use condoms, or do you use it?

A: What's that? I am not a nurse, and I don't care whether you use it or not. It's up to you. But you will pay extra cash without a condom.

You know what, wena? I don't give a damn what will happen to me or to them. I said, I do not call anyone, you see I don't even have a cell phone.

Q: Have you done an HIV and Aids test, lately or long ago?

A: That has nothing to do with me; I don't have time for that, I don't live my life in stress.

Q: Are you not scared of being infected or infecting others?

A: You know what, wena? I don't give a damn what will happen to me or to them. I said, I do not call anyone, you see I don't even have a cell phone. I just don't like it. And I don't want. And whether they infect me, or already did, it's not for me to find out. And please no more questions as I am getting irritated. Please, you are free to leave, you are wasting my time. If you want to prove something why don't you have a piece of experience and talk about what you did? ■



SEBOKENG SEWAGE PROBLEMS

In Sebokeng we have major sewage problems. There are places where the problem of sewage spillage is very serious such as in Zone 17, Hostel and Kwamasiza.

Zone 17

In Zone17 we spoke to Mrs. Madona. She has complained about the manhole which is built inside her yard. She said that she is worried about the health of her children because when the sewage spillage is taking place the whole yard becomes full of sewage. She said that they had to inhale the bad smell. The municipality came to fix the problem but after some days the problem started again.

Hostel

In Hostel the community finds that their health is in bad situation because sewage spillage has become a part of their lives. We spoke to Mr. Malawana who is staying next to an overflowing manhole. He said that when the sewage spillages take place they inhale the bad smell from the sewage.

I spoke to Sister Rebecca who is a nurse. She said that the illnesses associated with the flow of sewage can be serious for people with low resistance. She said that some people can get TB, others can get skin disease, diarrhoea and chest infection. She said some people have eye problems. She said it depends on the resistance of the person.

While we worried about the sewage, we had another problem which is drinking water. Our drinking water is not clean because inside the water there are small particles. People get sick, they have running stomach aches. Sister Rebecca said the sickness can be caused by water. We know of four people who got this sickness.

Here in Hostel we are overcrowded. In a three-roomed house, three families live. They all share a toilet and kitchen. In one block we have 31 houses but we have more than 150 people in this block.

Kwamasiza

In Kwamasiza there are dams of sewage. The sewage there has no control. We interviewed a youth, Thomamna. He name told us that all the blocks have this sewage problem. He said that he cannot sit outside the house because of the bad smell. The municipality does not come to help them.

We then spoke to Mrs Theresa who said that the place was owned by Iscor (today known as AcelorMittal) and the company decided to put their workers there. The workers continued to stay there even when they stopped working for Iscor and when Iscor was privatised. ■





BUILDING HOUSES ON WETLANDS

This report is about a problem in Boitumelo, a suburb of Sebokeng which falls in the Emfuleni Local Municipality and Sedibeng District Municipality.

There is a large wetland in and around Evaton, Sebokeng and Boipatong. These wetlands have been neglected by the municipality. It is a place where industries and communities dump their waste.

Some of our houses have been built on wetlands. During summer when it rains, water comes into the houses. There are 72 houses affected with this problem.

There is a large wetland in and around Evaton, Sebokeng and Boipatong. These wetlands have been neglected by the municipality. It is a place where industries and communities dump their waste.

One of the residents, Sesi Mosimanga, says that water comes from underneath her floor. Some of the residents are hoping that their houses will be destroyed and the new one will be built somewhere else, says Mrs. Mosimanga. This mother of three kids wants to leave the house because it is dangerous.

At the moment, Emfuleni Municipality has brought pumping equipment, to pump the water to a nearby river, but there is no progress. The people should be relocated. The RDP houses in Boitumelo were built in a place where the soil is always wet. This leads the walls of the houses to be unstable.

We spoke to Mr. Ndaba Moremoholo, a father of two children and owner of house no 3565 and Mr Tau Tsoabisi. They said that their houses were built over a river and they feared that the houses will one day collapse.

They said that fungi grew on their walls. Children eat the fungi which leads to sickness. They say that some children who eat the fungi behaved as if they were mentally disturbed. Children also developed water sores because of bacteria from the water.

We need the departments of Social Health, Environmental Affairs and Human Settlement to assist us on this issue.

Since June 2005 we wrote letters to the Emfuleni Local Municipality to complain as a concerned community group. They replied that they had a budget that will resolve our problems but there is no action. We even wrote to the Sedibeng District Municipality office and we did not get any answers.

The people of Boitumelo have been living on a wetland for more than 13 years now. They have complained many times to the municipality as well as on President Jacob Zuma's hotline. ■





DRIEKOP/DIPHALE LIMPOPO

Sekhukhune Land and Mining Communities Based Forum (SLMCBF) is an organisation interested in the development of the Ga-Sekhukhune district. Sekhukhune region consist of five local municipalities with hundreds of communities. The district is mainly rural communities under tribal authorities. Our organisation includes: the Youth Development Forum of Driekop/Diphale; Atok Unemployment Committee; Magobading Relocated Community Development Forum and Mampuru Community Activism Organisation. The main objective for the establishment of these organisations is to unite the most affected communities.

Driekop (Diphale) is a traditional village under the tribal authority led by chief Mohlala. It is approximately 30km from Burgersfort in Limpopo province. It falls under greater Tubatse municipality; the village is a very rich in platinum.

Historically Sekhukhune was a place where residents lived and enjoyed their cultural lifestyle together. Since the mines arrived in our land our cultural values are slowly eroding. As a result there are elements of changes and challenges experienced by communities,

Driekop (Diphale) is a traditional village under the tribal authority led by chief Mohlala. It is approximately 30km from Burgersfort in Limpopo province. It falls under greater Tubatse municipality; the village is a very rich in platinum. The community as a whole consists of ten small and scattered villages. Marula platinum mine is one of the mines mining around our villages. Our lives and lifestyles were better before Marula came.

We were crop farming people with livestock, grazing at the fields. We were enjoying our precious and communicative nature. Our livestock is now struggling to find grass; the land reserved for grazing is occupied by a shaft. Marula is only interested in their balance sheets and don't care about our lives.

Roads

Our roads are a shame to stare at, the roads where mining operations are situated and our internal roads. They only tarred their road while ours are gravelled. It disadvantages us to walk and drive in rainy times and it is also dusty. They used galaga soil mixed with dusty cement powder.

We're forced to close our doors, windows and airbrick houses because of the deadly dust that covers the whole village. On 19 September 2011, youth of Diphale turned sour and blocked the roads by burning tyres and stones. The issue was all about dusty roads that are not good for their health.

"We see pupils flocking to the clinic every day, complaining about lung pains and eye problem, that I suspect is result of dust they are exposed to, everyday" says Mr Maroga the principal of Dihlabakela Secondary School. We no longer do washing as a result of this dust.

On 19 September 2011, youth of Diphale turned sour and blocked the roads by burning tyres and stones. The issue was all about dusty roads that are not good for their health.



The mines failed to build houses for their migrant workers now we are renting houses to them and it impacts on our social life and culture.

Unemployment, teenage pregnancy, illiteracy and HIV/AIDS

When Marula platinum come to mine in our area, as community, we thought we were going to benefit from the mine. But today as we speak promises are not met. Our sisters were cooking food like our mothers but today they are drinking like our fathers, all because of a change of lifestyle.

We are beggars on a beach of gold and we've lost our beautiful grazing land. The company prefers employing migrant labour to local people. That system left us astray. The migrants use their employment status as the opportunity to establish romantic relations with our sisters. In this relationship they are compromised they are promised to be wives. They fall pregnant; forcing them to drop out of school and just to look after their children and this perpetuates the problem of illiteracy, teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS.

Some households break up because husbands are not able to maintain their families. We are living in a community where it is difficult to find jobs in the nearby mines. The mines failed to build houses for their migrant workers now we are renting houses to them and it impacts on our social life and culture.

We used to gather at the chief's kraal raising problems of unemployment, but he diverted us. This leaves our brothers and sisters stranded.

One of the social movements based on education by the name of Leolo Education Development Organisation has written a report that says that since the mines came to our area early dropout by the learners became very high compared to what it had been before the year 2000.

Now teenagers' pregnancy rate contributes a huge percentage for school dropout. Such drop out can be 20 to 30 learners dropping off and 60% from young pregnant school girls, the report says. ■





Section 3

Using Social Media and Building Networks

While our work in the Monitoring Action project is focussed on strengthening local community groups and helping them develop the core skills of monitoring and community action, we are also at the same time taking the first steps to assisting community groups build their power using social media.

All the monitors are introduced to the use of email and the internet and are encouraged to set up blogs and use platforms such as Facebook.

Our work in this area has developed slowly largely because monitors in villages as well as urban townships do not have easy and ready access to the internet. Monitors do not have

their own computers and they use cyber cafes. The cyber cafes are in most cases far from the place where they live. They therefore have to travel to the nearest city centre by taxi. Using the internet in cyber cafes costs money which therefore restricts the time the monitors can spend on the computer and internet. Often enough they find that the quality of the internet feed may not be fast enough.

We hope in 2012 to equip some of the groups with computers and internet access so that they can explore the use of social networking as a way of building local community power.

This year, the five monitors who participated in the 2010 Monitoring School were selected to set up blogs. They had varying degrees of success. The blogging took place between May and October, a period of seven months. One blogger posted 4 blogs per month, two bloggers tailed off after the first few months and two withdrew from the programme due to personal problems.

We present here a selection of articles posted by the bloggers. We also include the blogs started by activists who are linked to the Monitoring Project.



<http://kwathemamonitor.blogspot.com>

CLIMATE CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa is the largest CO₂ emitter on the African continent, and the 12th largest emitter in the world. Devastating climate change is a change of weather patterns for a long period of time. The cause of climate change is green house gases especially CO₂ in the atmosphere. Climate change will have a negative impact on us all as the earth's average temperatures rise. Oceans are warming, ice caps in the north and south poles are melting, sea levels are rising and extreme weather events like hurricanes, drought, floods, cold spells and heat waves are occurring more often. Climate change is likely to result in a drain on the economy because of increased sickness among the population, damage to transportation infrastructure, reduction in productive land and available water, loss of homes, through heavy rains. Having based our industrialisation on the burning of fossil fuels, we placed ourselves at a point of ecological catastrophe. We are living like there is no tomorrow, no coming generation.

Our South African government is showing very little commitment, because they are still building more coal power stations like Khusile and Modupi to generate electricity. Also our government wants to build six nuclear plants in the Cape Province to generate electricity. Nuclear is produced out of uranium which is radioactive. How can you generate electricity out of a bomb, we saw what happened in Japan? Government is not looking at introducing renewable energies like solar and wind turbines. We have the resources in South Africa.

Our commitment to tackle climate change does not rest only on the achievement and implementation of international agreements. Our commitment must be borne out by what we do here at home. We have the means indeed, the responsibility to ensure that our policies, programmes and activities contribute to emission reduction and respond to the impact of climate change on our country and region. Avoiding runaway climate change will require the most for reaching structural reforms carried out by human society, business as usual is simply not an option, and already other countries like Kenya and Somalia are affected by drought. Renewable energy must be introduced to avoid catastrophe in our country. ■



<http://klerksdorpaction.blogspot.com>

A PAINFUL REALITY

In our previous articles covered by Tshepo Mmusi, especially on Uranium One mining we have covered a number of disastrous mining activities undertaken by the company. We covered irresponsible mining behaviour about how the company neglected its responsibility of taking care medically of its ex-workers after exploiting them for years. We also covered articles which revealed how the company left areas where they have been operating un-rehabilitated and those areas happen to be situated near human settlements. We also saw the devastation that human beings are being subjected to, in terms of the environment, health and the general welfare of the community of Dominionville. To this end one can conclude that all these social challenges are of corporate social responsibility.

In the last few weeks we have tried to figure out exactly what is Shiva Uranium, who are its bosses and what is it that they are prepared to offer to our communities that Uranium One failed to offer. Many questions to date still do not have answers. To my research and findings I can deduce that Shiva obtained its prospecting rights based on the BEE (Black Economic Empowerment) score board which is questionable.

The question of health and safety is also of great concern, because a worrying factor is history repeating itself as far as the Uranium One case is concerned. Judging from my previous interaction with ex-employees, similar views and comments are coming from Shiva Uranium employees. It is just a matter of time before we can see the true colours of this company.

With regard to the community projects aimed at community development and social upliftment, the programmes which claim to be developmental are nothing but ridicule to our communities. The fact that our communities are powerless, lack skills and confidence to tackle issues which are fundamental to human beings does not mean that corporations like Shiva Uranium should take advantage of our vulnerability.

If we are referring to ethical standards and international norms, Shiva is doing the total opposite, because as we speak, the company is sinking a shaft in the middle of Dominionville, which is a sign of disrespect for that community and clearly they do not have a sense of what is acceptably wrong.

To this end one can rather say Shiva is taking over and carrying on where Uranium One left off, and the sad part is Uranium One had a set of attractive community development projects which were not carried out and on the other hand Shiva is not even ashamed to point out two lousy programmes which are not even major and can make a difference to our communities. These are still early days though to say that the company is worse than Uranium One. ■



<http://jokotea.blogspot.com>

EATING AND BREATHING POLLUTION

Bophelong is situated in the Vanderbijlpark in the Vaal Triangle in the region of Gauteng. Pollution from ArcelorMittal, and slagment from Bophelong Bricks are killing the future of the young people and everyone who lives near these companies. They pollute day and night and they don't care who says what. The bricks company is situated right near the squatter camp called Joko Tea and Bophelong Township.

Communities living nearby complain about emissions and the black dust they inhale which come from these companies. These companies decided to come from nowhere to build their plants where people are staying. This company did no consult with the community about what they were going to do. They just did whatever they liked because they have the bucks.

The poor community just observe them making their profit over their lives. Communities complain that they don't benefit anything from these companies; instead they receive a lot of sicknesses caused by the chemicals they use to manufacture their bricks. They suffer from illnesses such as sinus, skin irritation, swollen feet and eye irritation. The community feels that living with pollution is not an option because the companies do not offer them jobs. Even when they are sick they have to struggle to go to doctors because the clinics are always full and can't accommodate everyone. The community appeals to government to listen with humanity and protect their rights. ■



<http://ga-pilasterkawter.blogspot.com>

GAPILA/STERKWATER COMMUNITY MARCH

On the 24/10/2011 community of Gapila/Sterkwater marched and handed over the grievances and demands memorandum to Anglo Platinum mine, formerly Potgietersrus Platinum Limited and which is presently being renamed Mogalakwena Mine.

The march started at Ga-Sebatsane place from 09h00 at old Gapila which used to be a bus station several years ago before relocation. The Mokopane traffic and Mahwelereng police accompanied the mass of up

to 1500 residents showing concern with written placards and a white flag on which is written "reconciliation" as a sign of community togetherness and a defeat of the Section 21 Company which aimed to divide and rule the community. The memorandum was read by Mr Ledwaba as the community representative and handed over to mine representatives by Headman/Induna Pila with the eyewitness of five community representatives leading the march. The project manager signed the memorandum and agreed to the timeframe of 14 days to respond.

The march was peaceful but shocking as the community had an artwork of a red coffin written with bold black letters saying "We demand that Anglo platinum witness the burial of Gapila section 21 company". I found that only Thobela FM Radio was there and leaders complained about several media not attending the protest as they initially promised.

Residents said that they did not want the mining company telling them what they intend to do on their forebears' land because the mine impoverished them living on untold mineral wealth in their former old Gapila village 'Vaalkop'. I found out clearly that the march was special and different as my observation revealed that it was the funeral of Gapila Association incorporated under Section 21 Company, by the coffin that were left at the main gate of the mine after the marchers dispersed. ■



<http://ikemeleng.blogspot.com>

HUNGER ISN'T A LAUGHING MATTER

There is a huge gap between the rich and the poor in our country
Yes, some of the rich people give some aid to the poorest of the poor
But most of the celebrities won't rescue the destitute without media coverage.

I salute our local business people who create jobs for the community
And often help the unemployed with or without media covering them.
When it comes to giving to the needy we must do away with greed and allow love to lead us.
If you are really touched by a hungry person, it's a waste of time to call the media
Before you give them food

Hunger isn't a laughing matter
This is real and needs to be addressed as soon as possible.
People must stop using the poor for publicity
When our stomachs are full and we are about to dump the leftovers
We must remember that someone somewhere doesn't have food to survive another day.
Hunger is not a laughing matter.

Tsolo ■



<http://vaalenvironmentalnews.blogspot.com>

WORKERS IN THE FRONTLINE

The first thing that we need to acknowledge is that workers are citizens. Just like any citizen workers have a right to a job which is healthy and safe. Therefore the struggle for health and safety begins at workplace.

Unfortunately for members of Vaal Community Coordinating Committee their struggle began after they were retrenched. From 1994, a group of ArcelorMittal ex-employees started a campaign demanding their surpluses. Some of them they were unfairly dismissed and retrenched but to their surprise none of them received compensation. They established a group called Vaal Working Coordinating Committee to fight Iscor to give them their money. Little did they know that their struggle was just beginning, later they discovered that their struggle is not just about their surplus money but also they have been retrenched because some of them were too sick to work. More than 1000 workers suspected that they are sick today because they worked for ArcelorMittal (formerly Iscor) for 10, 15 and longest is 35 years. They are between the ages of 40 and 60.

In 2009 Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance, Groundwork, Bench Marks Foundation and Vaal Working Coordinating Committee met with ArcelorMittal management and the CEO Nku Nyembezi. In that meeting the ex-employees demanded their medical records from ArcelorMittal but they were told that a room where the files were kept caught fire therefore there are no records. But workers didn't stop; they kept on asking ArcelorMittal to pay them. Then the company hired a doctor to examine these workers. Testing the workers started on 15 November 2010, 190 ex-employees were tested. It was agreed that attention would be given to identify predominantly the following possible occupationally-caused health impacts:

- Noise induced hearing loss.
- Lung functionality disease due to possible exposures to risks at AMSA plant.
- Possible cases of heavy metal poisoning - as reflected by the presence of proteins in urine.
- Pneumoconiosis, as detected on chest x-ray, due to occupational exposures.
- Cases with cancer – possibly caused by exposures to carcinogenic substances at work.

Three ex-employees were too sick or incapacitated to complete the full medical evaluation. The doctor didn't examine them but he concluded that none of these cases were related to an occupational disease. The quality of employment and exposure histories at the AMSA plant were poor, and could not be used to definitively exclude occupational causes for pathologies found.

The employees rights were not respected nor their dignity. Just imagine a father working in the company being fetched from their homelands since their early ages. Remember that as workers they were only given simple cheap masks for protection. They didn't know the dangers to which they exposed to. They were not part of any decision or participants in a safety and health debate. Now they have to go back to their homeland sick without compensation. ■



<http://rustenburgmonitor.blogspot.com>

WHO RUNS THE ROYAL BAFOKENG NATION?

By Eric Mokuoa and Joe Di Josa

In the community so rich with material resources and yet the majority lingers in adverse poverty. Social disparity is ashamedly an orchestrated reality. The question arises: who are the ultimate decision makers? The school of thought suggesting that distribution of resources is favourably in the interest of elites is not farfetched. It argues that sole logic of allowing these vast inequalities is to perpetuate the social imbalances within the society.

Now if this argument is something to go by, the question arises: who are the ultimate decision makers? This question has solicited what we arguably perceived as the weakest response. Kgotha-Kgothe, Makgotla, Traditional Council and Supreme Council have decision-making powers within this community. In an elitist monarch of Royal Bafokeng calibre, it is relatively inconceivable if not unimaginable. However, to our dismay, it has convinced the public and those foreign to the real experience of this institution. As a result there are the anti and the pros. The two antagonists do not share in interpretations of ideas of Bafokeng monarchy.

Be it as it may, why are these institutions in place, especially Kgotha-kgothe? Traditionally, this gathering has been the highest decision-making body comprising all Bafokeng makgotla. It has never united the two in opposition. Those who enjoyed the outcomes either benefited or have access to those who benefit in the system. ■



FACEBOOK

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/124928554223576>

Facebook is proving to be a useful platform for community groups to access and pass on information as well as develop solidarity networks. The Monitoring Project held exploratory workshops with monitors on how they and community groups could use Facebook in their work.

We created a Facebook group page to report on work in progress, notes, alert members to blog postings and other information.

Some monitors access the page and post messages via their cell phones, however, because they do not have ready access to computers and internet we have not done much work in integrating Facebook into our programme of activities. However we are working on plans of changing this situation in our 2012 programme.



BUILDING THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN NETWORK

A key objective of the Bench Marks Foundation Monitoring Project is to develop a Southern African Network of community groups who share information and experiences and give each other support in their work.

We have been keeping active links with groups in Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe, sharing our strategies and experiences. Funding is a major problem in establishing a more rigorous programme of sharing.

Recently we have hosted and shared our ideas with groups from Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). ■



Section 4

Action Research

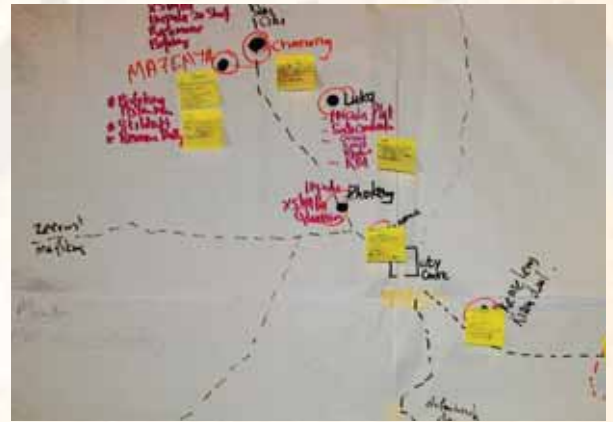
A key aspect of developing community capacity is the ability for groups to engage in systematic study of the conditions facing them and to use this information to determine what the remedy is as well as plan action for change.

The Bench Marks Foundation on behalf of the community has been doing systematic research on corporations to determine their impact on the environment and community life. We explored ways in which this research will involve local

community groups as active participants in the research process.

We did two projects, the first in Rustenburg around platinum mining and the second in the Vaal Triangle around the iron and steel corporation, ArcelorMittal.

We present here a brief report on both these two projects.



THE RUSTENBURG REVIEW

The project was formerly agreed to by local community groups in a workshop held on the 19th -20th February 2011. The aims of the Action Research Project are to:

- Review the findings of the Bench Marks Policy Gap study 2008 and to comment on any changes.
- Give local communities and opportunity to deepen their understanding of the impact of platinum mining on their immediate environment and community life
- Assist communities develop an programme of action to bring about changes with regard to problems they identify
- Develop monitoring and community action skills in the local community.

Community activists from different villages met regularly during February to September 2011 and discussed ways in which they would gather information and review their findings and its impact for community action.

The following organisations were involved in the process:

- Chaneng Youth Organisation and Mafanya Youth Organisation team totalled fifteen activists.
- Marikana Development Organisation and Enviro Kids involved ten environmental activists.
- Ikemeleng Environment Organisation: Participated in the process having five activists actively involved.
- Luka Environmental Forum had five activists involved.
- Tlhabane Youth Organisation involved four comrades in the community report.

Community groups worked on a very small budget which restricted their ability to travel across communities and to sites they wanted to observe and protests they wanted to cover as well as access to equipment such as cameras. The

administration and communication of the project was also restricted. The groups had limited access to information from companies as the process of getting information was too complicated.

A report on the community findings was published at the end of the study and presented key findings of the process:

- The destruction of the communities' traditional economy, youth unemployed and inequality and poverty were the key economic findings.
- Government departments failed the community by not enforcing the regulations that governed mining which resulted in the community being exposed to water, noise and air pollution.
- There was an influx of mineworkers into the villages which caused a range of social problems and the threat of xenophobic conflict
- On the whole the community found that mines did not keep promises and that their CSR policies were very superficial commitments to improve their image

The research process helped the groups identify a plan of action to be implemented with the support of the Bench Marks Foundation. This included the launch of campaigns on specific problems identified and embarking on targeted community-driven social and infrastructure development projects.

The process will also involve the launching of a regular newsletter to keep the local community informed and the use of social media such as blogs and Facebook to inform the world on what is happening in Rustenburg. Time will be spent on strengthening the network of community organisations which will include holding capacity building workshops to develop the skills of local community organisations. ■



COMMUNITY VOICES ON ARCELORMITTAL

ArcelorMittal is a steel-making company that for years communities in the Vaal Triangle have been bearing the brunt of its pollution. The company has violated human rights on several issues such as water pollution, dust blowing directly into the people's houses and has been responsible for making hundreds of workers and community members sick without being accountable to anyone.

Communities living near the fence line of ArcelorMittal took part in the Community Participatory Research Project. The research is conducted by the Bench Marks Foundation in collaboration with the Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance. The aim of the research was to investigate through the community voices how much communities are impacted or affected by ArcelorMittal.

This is what they had to say in the meeting held on the 12 November 2011.



Nthabiseng Dimema, is part of the Bench Marks Foundation Monitoring School. She says there are some positive things about Mittal because they have given a bursary to some learners but they do more of the good things for communities.



Maria Mack from Bophelong, says they must compensate all affected workers. She feels like a victim because her father passed away while working for Mittal. They did not receive any compensation. She is using her daughter's grant to provide for the family.



Lebohlang Mokoena stays in Sasolburg but share the experience with people living close to Mittal. Pollution has no boundaries; our government must play an active role in protecting community human rights and the environment. In Boipatong dust from ArcelorMittal is blowing directly into people's houses but it's ok because they were given milk to drink by ArcelorMittal to mitigate the situation, how sick is that? Communities don't understand or know little about Corporate Social Responsibility.



Sonti Mtambo's family is from Steelvalley where groundwater was contaminated because of ArcelorMittal. She has witnessed skin irritations, cancers and many other illnesses from drinking polluted water. Her family was removed from the area by ArcelorMittal and promised a better life. Today they are staying in a squatter camp called Joko Tea. No water and sanitation and roads are very bad. She blames it all on ArcelorMittal for destroying their agricultural land.



Lisemelo Masibuko, works closely with ArcelorMittal ex-workers. She wishes that Mittal can admit that they have made workers sick and compensate them. Government must hold the company accountable. She is part of the Monitoring School, which has empowered her with computer skills and writing community stories. ■



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