



MEDIA STATEMENT BY BENCH MARKS FOUNDATION

Suffering former mine workers must be rewarded

Wednesday, 24th August 2011

Bench Marks Foundation supports the decision to encourage mining companies such as AngloGold Ashanti and Gold Fields to look at ways in which to reward their former mine workers who have suffered work-related injuries and sicknesses.

According to a recent article in Bloomberg, *AngloGold, Gold Fields Face Court Battles Against Miners With Lung Disease*, rights groups are working with former workers who have work-related lung diseases in seeking compensation for their damages through a class-action lawsuit.

“A number of former mine workers have been disabled due to working underground in gold mines where they were subjected to harmful chemicals,” said John Capel, Executive Director at Bench Marks Foundation.

“There are low levels of accountability, transparency and commitment related to sustainable development and corporate social responsibility in the mining arena of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region.”

Capel said that individuals who have contracted diseases and suffer injuries due to working in mines deserve a just and reasonable compensation. The same applies to people or communities whose land has been taken away.

As documented by Bench Marks Policy Gap reports, multinational mining companies need to address their corporate social responsibility programmes to focus on the real sustainable development of communities rather than as publicity exercises.

The organisation conducts research on mining in Southern Africa with the intention to provide SADC governments, mining companies and local mining community stakeholders with information and guidance on issues to consider in the process of empowerment and sustainable development through corporate social responsibility.

“We conduct research in the areas where mining operations take place. Our aim is to alert the global world of the human rights shortfalls that are being practised in the SADC mining communities,” said Capel.

Additionally, Bench Marks established the *Monitoring Action Project*, a programme intended to teach writing and computer skills to the youth who then observe and document problems faced by their communities. Also, the project is an instrument where the voices of former employees are also being heard.

The Monitors' writings and progress reports on the project are available on the website:
<https://sites.google.com/site/monitoringaction>.

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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