



Media statement by the Bench Marks Foundation

Limpopo province is a pot about to boil over

18 May 2015

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Limpopo province is yet again set to explode with massive retrenchments expected at Lonmin, high youth unemployment figures, social unrest and deaths during clashes between police and protestors in the Sekhukhune Platinum region, warns the Bench Marks Foundation.

“The people in the area are very unhappy and disgruntled. They feel that the platinum mines are still ignoring community needs,” says David van Wyk, Lead Researcher for the Bench Marks Foundation.

“For example, the community members of Atok in the Sekhukhune Platinum region protested last week and only just went back to work. The protest was about concerns over Bokoni Platinum’s (a subsidiary of Anglo Platinum which is in a joint venture with Canada’s Atlas Resources on this mine) failure to follow through with agreements reached around various issues earlier this year.

“This, together with the protestors’ perception that the company is undermining and failing to develop the community as well as the refusal by the company to meet with the protestors - the same company that has, in an article in Mineweb on 13 May 2015, stated that “it is unclear what the community is protesting about” - fuelled the anger and mistrust in the company which resulted in the escalation of violence and the deaths of two protestors by police”.

“In addition,” says van Wyk, “our community monitors, who work on the ground in various communities, have told us that the miners as well as the residents of Marikana are also very unhappy and angry with Lonmin mine as it is talking about retrenching large numbers of workers.

Van Wyk says that the issues that are causing such unrest in these areas are not new.

“The Bench Marks Foundation has raised all these issues for many, many years and has given recommendations to the mines and to all the government departments in each of our reports.

“The report on the Platinum industry which was completed way before the Marikana Massacre occurred, warned of the impending disaster. Why is it that action is only, at times, taken when deaths occur?

“Hiding behind statements like “you are not a legitimate structure” (as per an article in News24 on the situation with Bokoni Mine entitled ‘Residents feel done in by Mine’), when the group had signed a declaration with the company and with the local municipality, Premier’s office and Department of Mineral Resources, is unhelpful to say the least.

“What is needed is for the government and the companies to be proactive and to really listen to all their stakeholders. They need to engage properly with them and to actually do what they promise to do. No more ostrich-like behaviour! To do so will be to ignore the signs that Limpopo province is a pot about to boil over”.

For more information on the Bench Marks Foundation, and to read their many reports, go to www.benchmarks.org.za.

ENDS

Bench Marks Foundation is an independent non-governmental organisation mandated by churches to monitor the practices of multi-national corporations to

- ensure they respect human rights;
- protect the environment;
- ensure that profit-making is not done at the expense of other interest groups; and
- ensure that those most negatively impacted upon are heard, protected and accommodated within the business plans of the corporations.

The Foundation was launched by the Rt Rev Dr Jo Seoka who chairs the organisation and by member churches of the SACC in 2001.

Client Contact details:
Bench Marks Foundation Contact:
Mr David van Wyk, Lead Researcher 0832295149 Email: crezele777@iburst.co.za or d.vanwyk58@gmail.com