



Media statement by the Bench Marks Foundation

Call for more Consistency in sustainable Development Reports

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Mining companies, including Anglo American Platinum (Amplats), need to disclose the impact of their activities more consistently than they currently do in their sustainable development reports (SDR), according to Bench Marks Foundation.

Speaking today at the launch of its latest study in its Policy Gap series, “Critical analysis of Amplats Sustainable Development Reporting (SDR) from 2003 to 2015”, Executive Director of Bench Marks, John Capel, said that the report had highlighted many shortcomings in Amplats’ sustainable development reporting.

However, he hoped that the report would be seen as a “positive contribution” to assist Amplats and other mining companies to develop an ever-deepening and broadening understanding of sustainability “so that, in the end, all stakeholders, including communities and their dependents, will benefit from the extraction of our natural resources.”

“Amplats, together with other mining companies, does not consider the wider context of its mining activity. Instead, its impacts are judged from inside its own gates,” Capel added.

“Most mining companies regard shareholders and owners as the most important stakeholders, and therefore the ones to which special attention must be paid. However, mining would not be possible without the land from which the minerals are extracted, the communities which live on top of this land, and the workers whose labour results in the extraction of the minerals.

“In the vast majority of cases, these stakeholders – environment, community, workers - are at the bottom of the pile of priorities, if they are on the list at all.

“If Amplats and other mining companies were to prioritise environment, communities and workers, it would stand to create a strong legacy that would go a long way to taking responsibility for the privilege of being given a licence to mine,” the study says.

The study, which is the 13th in the Policy Gap series, identifies three periods of sustainable reporting by Amplats. The first, from 2003 to 2006, was one in which disclosure was minimal.

The second extended from 2007 to 2010, and was one in which Amplats aimed for full adherence to the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) guidelines.

However, in the third period, from 2011 to 2015, Amplats focused on “selected issues for positive storytelling,” the study says.

“Amplats appears to have identified the story it wants to tell its SDR readers, with product responsibility key performance indicators (KPIs) progressively disappearing from the SDR, as well as significant decreases in KPIs in the areas of human rights (down to around 33% in 2015 from 95% in 2010), labour (down to 53% in 2013 from 73% in 2010) and environmental (down to 64% in 2015 from 73% in 2010).

“Only economic issues increased slightly with 68% of KPIs used from 2013 onwards,” the Policy Gap reports.

The study goes on to question how Amplats has achieved top honours in several awards, “without demonstrating overall net benefit to society and nature”.

These include being ranked first in environmental reporting in 2011 in the materials category of the annual Newsweek Global Green Rankings, being ranked fourth in the Excellence in Sustainability Reporting 2011 by Ernst & Young, and being the top gender-empowered company in the resources and overall categories for the Top Women Awards 2011.

Bench Marks says that this report corroborates what it found in its Policy Gap 7, a study of Lonmin released in October 2013, that SDRs are more of “an image building exercise backed by an awards industry that allows companies to win awards based on selective information”.

Bench Marks’ Policy Gap series consists of evidence-based research. The first Policy Gap on the six big platinum producers in the North West Province Bojanala district, noted by the media as seminal research, was launched in 2007. To date, 12 Policy Gaps have been produced, ranging in subject matter from copper, platinum and diamond mining, to relocated communities, the impact of mining people’s health, and the Marikana massacre.

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