



## **Media statement by the Bench Marks Foundation**

### **Impala Deaths a Tragedy**

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#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

The death of four mine workers at Impala Platinum's Shaft 14 mine in Rustenburg, South Africa on Friday, 22 January 2016 is a terrible tragedy, says The Bench Marks Foundation.

The Foundation ascribes the deaths and the problems in mine health and safety to a number of factors:

- The use of productivity bonuses rather than safety bonuses.
- Retrenchments due to low platinum prices. These prices are partly attributable to the overproduction of a commodity in which South Africa has a near monopoly and should be a price-setter instead of a price-taker. Workers fear for their jobs. They therefore find it difficult to concentrate on health and safety at the rock face.
- The continued high levels of illiteracy amongst mine workers. This makes it difficult for them to read and understand health and safety signage.
- The high levels of dependency on sub-contracting, outsourcing and labour broking prevalent on the country's mines continues to be a problem for the country. Sub-contracted labour is often not properly trained. Permanent workers and subcontracted workers do not develop stable workplace relationships due to the high turnover of subcontracted workers. In addition, bonds do not have a chance to develop between supervisory staff and the every changing faces of subcontracted employees. The level of trust and camaraderie essential for this sector is scarce due to this.
- Employees working for subcontractors, outsourced suppliers and labour brokers earn on average 40% less than the permanent employees. As a result, they often suffer from poor nutrition and sub-standard housing conditions.

- The manner in which mine health and safety training is conducted on the mines. Training is usually conducted after shifts when workers are tired and unable to concentrate. Again the high levels of illiteracy impacts on the effectiveness of the training.
- Appalling housing and social conditions that surround mines in the Rustenburg area.

In addition to these factors, the Bench Marks Foundation cannot understand why CEO and management salaries and conditions in South Africa can be globally competitive, but worker wages and living conditions does not compare, particularly with that found in Australia and Canada.

These issues and more have been reported and highlighted by the Bench Marks Foundation in its Policy Gap research reports dating back to 2007.

According to the Bench Marks Foundation, workers health and safety is not improving because of the limp-wristed response by government to issues plaguing the mining industry which, according to the organisation, is informed by the presence of mining industry interests in the government and the ruling party which has elevated the Mineral Resources Department above all other departments and possibly even over the Constitution.

The Foundation believes that this it is clearly a matter of profits trumping human rights.

The Bench Marks Foundation monitors multinational corporations operating in Southern Africa and the rest of the African continent to ensure that they meet minimum social, environmental and economic standards and promotes an ethical and critical voice on what constitutes corporate social responsibility.

For more information on the Bench Marks Foundation and to access to all research reports, go to [www.bench-marks.org.za](http://www.bench-marks.org.za).