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ACTION VOICES

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OUR VIEW

WE MUST CELEBRATE IN A NEW WAY

On the 25th May we celebrated Africa Day in great fashion, we spent a lot of money on big concerts with dancing and singing. On this day, did we think about the very big challenges we face as a continent and a country? In our view we should be celebrating by reflecting on challenges and coming up with new ideas and a vision for Africa.

ON AFRICA DAY WE ARE REMINDED ABOUT THE PEOPLE'S LOSS OF LAND TO COLONIALISM.

The government is in dispute with the Mining Corporations because they did not meet the 26% black ownership target. This is governments way of people taking ownership. They are putting a lot of time and energy to increase black ownership of the mines.

Yet government is not upset with the way mines are destroying the lives of the larger community, the poor and working people who live around the mines. Government is not putting pressure on mines to restructure, to create jobs for the majority.

Government is not protecting people when they lose their land, their rivers, and their graveyards. Instead we see political leaders benefiting when big corporations expand, taking people's land.

ON JUNE 16TH THIS YEAR WE WILL CELEBRATE YOUTH DAY.

This will be another celebration when millions will be spent for us to sing and dance. Yet our unemployment is rising from 30% to 50%. The majority of unemployed are youth. Our youth unemployment is the third highest in the world.

Instead of spending billions on arms and aeroplanes and houses for government leaders, the government must find a way of giving each unemployed young person a subsidy or stipend to enable the young person to create new work in our very poor communities.

ON JUNE 5 WE MARK WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

As we celebrate this day we thank all our monitors in their respective towns and villages for their activism to expose the environmental destruction resulting from mining and for their ongoing struggle for a world where we do not destroy our environment.

Tunatazama means:

Ndiku Jongile
Kego beile leihlo
Ngiku Bhekile
Oppas
Ke go tlhomile leitlho
Ndovha Livheleka
We are watching

We adopted Tunatazama as a slogan for the community monitors school because it best described what we, as community monitors and activists, do. Tuntazama is a message we send out to business corporations and government officials: "We are watching you".

Tunatazama is also a challenge to ourselves as activists: open your eyes, observe the little things that makes life a misery for the community, observe the causes of destruction in our environment. Observe the little things we do that can make us strong.

Tunatazama, a Swahili word, was given to us by our comrade Nizar Seleman, from Tanzania, who participated in the monitors school in 2013.

Tunatazama is more than just seeing, it is the first step to action.

THE PEOPLE ARE WRITING THEIR OWN MINING CHARTER

By Meshack Mbangula

The Mining Charter drawn up by government is all about the interests of a tiny minority of people. Political leaders are fighting to change this because even their compromised agreement is being ignored by mining corporations.

But what about the people? What about the poor and exploited workers? Government and political leaders no longer speak for the people. They are more concerned with deals between the BEE elite and Mining Corporations.

MACUA (Mining Affected Communities United in Action), a network of mining affected communities have been holding meeting in all towns and villages affected by mining, and are in the process of drawing up a People's Mining Charter. Their focus is to present the voice of communities who have been ruthlessly and negatively impacted by mines. They are concerned about the destruction of the environment, about water supplies which are diverted, polluted and exhausted by mines. Their concern is the rehabilition of land, cracked houses and employment for all.

Government and mines are not self motivated to adhere to human rights frameworks and to follow the process of consultation with communities. Decisions taken by business and Government does not involve communities. Even with the latest Mining Charter, the Minister of Mineral Resources, Msebenzi Zwane, did not involve or consult with the affected communities.

We therefore have no cause to celebrate the government and business charter. We have decided to compile and present our own Peoples Charter informed by affected communities.

Meshack Mbangula, National Coordinator of MACUA and Facilitator in Community Monitors School. ***Image credit: Community Monitors***

PRINCIPLES FOR THE PEOPLES MINING CHARTER

The writing up of the Peoples Mining Charter will be based on the following principles adopted on the 25th March by organisations participating in the MACUA network.

1. Community Voice in Decision Making through negotiation based on right of consent to determine what activities occur on one's land.
2. Democratic Community representation and customary decision making processes that are community-based and not based on undemocratic traditional Authority.
3. Benefits from mining activities (profits, employment, procurement, and local economic development) should be shared equitably distributed to directly affected communities, near mining communities, workers and the public through a democratic process.
4. The public, specifically mining affected communities must have the right to free and accessible access to information regarding all operations that affect the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of communities.
5. Communities bear a disproportionate burden of the costs of mining and there should be independent, accessible, speedy, and effective recourse mechanisms, before, during and after mining.
6. Rehabilitation standards should ensure that the land is no worse than when mining started.
7. Restitution and reparations should correct historical wrongs and should include environmental, social, cultural and heritage rights including spiritual connections to land, people and nature.
8. Compensation for loss of livelihoods and economic, social, environmental, cultural and heritage resources should be based on full cost accounting including future losses of alternative development paths and value loss of minerals.
9. The Coalition also demands proper and comprehensive opportunities for input by mining-affected communities on the revision of the MPRDA.

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DISABILITY ISSUES STASHED FOR ANOTHER DAY IN KWA THEMA

By Sabatini Motloung and Mandla Jwili.

When you are looking at the person who is in a wheelchair hustling every day to fit in the community, you see hope, hope that encourages one to want to do better in their lives and to think about the privileges of ability that allows one to accomplish more in life.

Section 9 of the Constitution of South Africa states that no one may be discriminated against on the grounds of disability.

We in the Ekuhuruleni Environmental Organisation do not believe that the rights of disabled people, set out in the constitution, is respected in Kwa Thema. We investigated the conditions of disabled people in our community and these are our findings:

HOUSING

Bafana Mabena, a 52 year old man living with disability. He lives in Kwa Thema White City. When approaching the gate, you are welcomed by an old four-roomed house with backrooms, outside toilet, floors nicely cemented, allowing him to move around the yard.

"The state has done a great job with the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) houses, though I wish the houses were accommodative of disabled people" said Mr. Mabena with sadness in his eyes. He mentioned that he left his RDP house in Langaville because his wheelchair seems to be a barrier for him to be mobile in his house, let alone going to the shops. He wrote countless letters to the department of housing to lodge his complaint and he did not receive any sort of response.

The place that he lives in is not conducive and all the dreams he has of starting his cooperative are derailed because of his disability; "Bafana is an active man who wants to see a great change in the community, business minded and enjoys being in the vicinity of disabled people solely to encourage them to never give up on their dreams" said Mzwandile, Mr Mabena's landlord. "… he sometimes feels underprivileged because of his disability. He sometimes wish that he could die because people like him are taken for granted here in Kwa Thema. They treat them as if they brought this to themselves, as if they need to be punished…" He continued.

Because of his disability, he cannot use a computer and some internet cafes chase him away because of his wheelchair, he is told that there is no space and he will be a hindrance to other people who want to access the cyber café. Even when he wants to do things the old way by sending letters via post, Kwa-Thema post office is also not disability friendly.

TRANSPORT

We were shocked to learn that some drivers are very impatient with disabled people and some force them to pay for their wheel chairs. Ntombi, a woman living with disability, said "angeke ngikhokhele izinyawo zami. Uma ngikhokha ngicela ukuthi wonke umuntu okuleyonqola akhokhele izinyawo zakhe khona sizolingana phela" (I will never pay for my legs and if I do, may I please request that other passengers pay for their legs too so we may be equal)

With a lot of mistreatment of disabled people happening, even the main taxi rank does not have a place designated for disabled people to access the taxis. We tried to get an interview with the chairperson of Springs Taxi Association and we were sent from pillar to post, no one was available to comment about the ill-treatment of people living with disability. A group of disabled women told us that they lodged complaints and they were called into a meeting representing disabled people, they said that their voices were not given space to speak in that meeting as they were not asked for any opinion, but spoken for by others.

SPORTS AND RECREATION

Jeanette and Themba are members of the Vukuzenzele Disabled people. They both play sport and went to Phelang School for Learners with Special Educational Needs. They explained to us that they enjoy playing floor hockey and they received that privilege when they were in Phelang because they would go to Johannesburg for training and they even went overseas to play. "I want to continue playing floor hockey because I love it and it made me feel normal like other people and I felt so confident when I played," explained Themba with a shallow voice. He was crying when he told us that Kwa Thema has no facilities for floor hockey and the grass disadvantages them from playing other types of hockey because they are disabled. Even when they were to opt for basketball they would be disadvantaged when they want to access the toilets because they are far from the court.

"When we want to pee, we use buckets", said Jeanette,"It is not nice to undress in front of people who see you as an alien, worse so, laugh at you because you are picked up from the wheel chair to a bucket just to pass urine." She told us that she has stopped playing sport because her condition is not suitable to do so. They also wrote letters to the Community Care Centre Manager asking that a path be created for them to be able to travel smoothly to the toilets. She told us that when they went to hand in the letter she was asked by the receptionist what was it about; when she answered, she was told that the Kwa Thema Sports complex was not built for disabled people, she must try joining those that are at the Kwa Thema Stadium.

The issue of disability is a not the issue of only the disabled person. It is an issue for the entire community. The number of people living with disability in our community is very large. They have many different kinds of problems. It is important for us to realise that disability affects the entire family and the community.

EEO is concerned that the issue of disability is not addressed by government. Disability is stashed for another day.

ILLEGAL DUMPING HAS CAUSED THE COMMUNITY OF EXT 7 DISCOMFORT IN THEIR HOMES

By Zethu and Mpho

The community of ext 7 have a problem of illegal dumping that has been happening for years now and it has caused discomfort in their own homes, not being able to open windows due to the smell. Community members are complaining due to the dead dogs that are dumped by some community members and some unknown people, and the dumping site is near the houses. A lot of things are dumped which is stones, and clothes. One resident explained "The truck that comes and pick up the dirt doesn't come anymore. We asked the community members to stop dumping near our houses and they agreed but at night they come back and dump because there is no one that is seeing them. Only in 2013 the municipality truck did come and collected the dirt that was the end of it."

Members of the community went to speak to the councillor about the dumping site. They told us "we explained to her about the challenges we faces that we can't breathe because of the bad odour that comes from there, and the rodent and flies and children playing there. She said she will come back to them about this issue, but she never did. It's clear that she ignored our complaints."

We visited the councillor and asked her about the community's problem. She said "The community of Ext 7, they don't appreciate because that space was cleaned around 2012 or 2013 were we had a tent and we invited the community to attend so that we can talk about these issues. One member suggested that we build a park that has been started by community members. I told them, I am a councillor not a developer. I asked them to write a proposal if they want that space to be a park, and I will assist them in every way I can because I don't own that space, it's the municipality that owns it. I don't have any plans about the dumping site until the people who are affected start doing something for them self."

We spoke to the nurse if there are any reports of people being affected by this dumping. She said many people come with loss of water in their bodies and diarrhoea and vomiting. Many children have skin rash. She said " We treat our patients by giving them medication and drips to give them strength and give them fluids and Aqua Creams for the childrens rash". EEO continues to monitor this community.

Above: disabled community members feel that their issues are continuously set aside. Right: Illegal dumping. ***Image credit: Community Monitors***

Children play in a "slime dam". ***Image credit: Community Monitors***

"THEY TAKE THE GOLD AND LEAVE US SLIME DAMS AND HEALTH PROBLEMS" SAY THE KWA THEMA COMMUNITY

By Gugu Nkabinde and Meshack Mbangula

We visited the Vlakfontein mine and found that the slime dam (tailing dams) and the abandoned mine is a serious threat to the communities health. Mines make a lot of money from mining. After they have taken all the minerals they abandon the mine leaving the local community to suffer the consequences.

The Vlakfontein mine started in 1934 in Springs, they were mining Gold and Uranium ore. Vlakfontein was mining Gold and Uranium ore until 1978 which is 34 years ago. After closing they did not rehabilitate the land but destroyed the hostel which workers were staying in. Workers were forced to build shacks as their shelters without sanitation living close to the slime dam or tailing dam.

From the internet (http://www.tailings.info/basics/tailings) we learn that tailings are a waste product of mining, and consist of heavy metals like sulphur and acid. These heavy metals contaminate water and contain radiation which after long period of time can cause chest problems and skin diseases.

The tailings dam dust is an irritation which cause problems to the eyes. The community of Kwa-Thema ext3 and Barcelona is the community that is affected by this Vlakfontein slime dam in different ways. Lack of information and the consequences lead community to treat the slime dam as an ordinary place.

We interviewed people staying around Barcelona and ext3 who live close by the Vlakfontein slime dam. They say that people are getting sick due to the slime dam. This is what they said "most of our children play on the dam during school holidays and even on weekends. They swim in the slime dam in summer holidays, and they swim in contaminated water."

The majority of the people staying around Vlakfontein slime dam are not working and they get sick now and again due to what they are breathing every day and they can't afford to buy expensive medication for them and their children. A resident said "We become sick due to the dust, we suffer from asthma, skin irritation, respiratory problems, lung cancer, heavy headache and breathing problems."

Due to unemployment most of the people who used to work in the mine resorted to illegal mining in order for them to provide for their families to eat and take children to school. Some of them use mercury to extract gold from the slime which is a very dangerous for health. Some sell this slime dam soil to people, which is baked in the sun and eaten by pregnant women.

We met several men who worked as "illegal miners." The first man, Daniel Mdlalose, a 37 year old man from Malawi has worked in there for 2 years, the second man, Mnaka, a 22 year old male from Mozambique has worked there for 1 year and a third man, Steven Dlozi, a 43 year old man from Mozambique has worked there for 3 years and 6 months. Daniel and Mnaka were both introduced to illegal mining as a job by Steven since they were unemployed and poor.

Steven Dlozi explained "As people working the slime dam soil what we have seen is we are affected by the dust and we are suffering from skin problems, eye site and breathing problems."

The government, in particular the Department of Mineral and Resources must take all the necessary measures to ensure that communities are educated on slime dam effects and secondly to hold the mining companies who did not rehabilitate the land, accountable.

GOING TO THE TOILET, A HEALTH HAZARD FOR THE COMMUNITY OF EXT 8, LANGAVILLE

By Team Ayanda and Vuyelwa

Families were relocated from Geluskdal in 2014 to Langaville extension 8. They were told that they will be built houses but this has not happened. The community faces a major threat to their health. Today more than 10 families are forced to share 1 mobile toilet. Lan-

gaville is situated in the east of Ekurhuleni in Brakpan.

The toilets in Langaville are a health hazard because there is no proper sanitation system. There are approximately 10 shacks in one yard and 1 mobile toilet away from the shacks. There is no privacy, the toilets are transparent you can be seen doing business inside, when an overweight person enters the toilet it becomes a problem the toilets shack is not stable

The toilets in particular affect women and children. It is not safe using it at all. Women and children they easily catch diseases like eczema, skin rash, and woman get vaginal problems. Some of the toilets can't even lock, you have to hold the door by yourself. At night it is very dangerous for women and children they must be accompanied by a man. Children can't access the toilet they often need to be monitored every time they use it. Zodwa, a community member said "there was once an accident whereby a little girl age of 6 fell inside the toilet. Fortunately she survived. Now she is experiencing a skin problem, her skin is like she was burned by hot water. No one was held responsible for this accident and nothing was done."

Residents talked of some of the challenges the community come across especially during summer. Gogo Emah said "it is horrible, the toilet smells very bad you can't even open windows for fresh air." It is worse when the big truck come to clean the toilet, they have to lock the doors for hours due to the bad smell. The toilets attract more flies and mosquitoes. Also children they play next to the toilet there is not enough space for them to play because the shacks are squeezed in a limited space.

We interviewed a nurse, Sister Zanele at White City Clinic. She said that the mobile toilets had a bad impact on the members of the community, the toilets need to be cleaned every day not once a week as it is easy for women to catch diseases like STI, the smell affects the vagina and they can get a rash, ithumba (boilie).

Mobile toilets are meant for events, emergency and for a short period of time. Not for permanent use, especially for the members of the community for their entire life. The health and hygiene must be the number one priority practice to community especially for women and children.

TSAKANE WASTE WATER TREATMENT PLANT POORLY MAINTAINED

By Sandile Nombeni and Zamuxolo Magona

The Community of Tsakane Extension 10 are experiencing serious health problems since they were relocated next to a water treatment plant. In 2007 the communities of Germiston (Knights and Angelo) we're forcefully relocated to Tsakane Ext 10 where they were promised new houses from their informal settlements closer to town. The community sees this as a a dumping site. The community now has a new problem, the health hazard arising from the waste water treatment plant managed by ERWAT, a water treatment company.

One resident Miss Molly Ndlovu described the problem they faced "its been 8 years since I moved to the area to take care of my brother who passed away three years after he got sick from the health impacts caused by the waste water plant. The plant is badly maintained and the sewage from the plant overflows into the areas around the plant including where people live."

The community of Tsakane Ext 10 has been engaging the municipality and ERWAT employees for years and only empty promises had been made. In 2012 Mr Meshack Mbangula from E.E.O intervened to the situation were he went and spoke to ERWAT employees to bring common understanding to the three parties to resolve their issues and build better communication. Till now nothing has happened and the community is now feeling helpless as their members and livestock are seriously affected. There have been many deaths which the community feels are the result of the sewage spillage. People complain of lung sicknesses, cancer, eczema, asthma, bad odor flooding of sewage water into their homes.

On the arrival of this community the municipality claimed the area to be a transit area with no electricity and proper, sanitation infrastructure till Tsakane Ext 22 was completed. This is unlikely to take place soon as we know that the municipality has also promised other communities like Kwa-Thema, Eden Park to be allocated into the RDP houses while the people from Extension 22 were supposed to be the first priority. When we tried to approach the local councillor he refused to comment on the matter.

ERWAT according to their representative Mr Thapelo, says it is also having challenges with the maintenance because the "municipal officials claim it takes time to order broken parts which sometimes takes up to six months as they only dependent on the municipality to keep their work on track, we are hoping things will change with time and we feel the pain that the community is feeling and wish our municipality can pull up their socks and better serve the community".

EEO has established a regular contact with the community and are monitoring the situation.

From left to right: Images show undermaintained mobile toilets and waste water problems. ***Image credit: Community Monitors***

WELKOM \

IS THE FAILURE OF THE IDP DUE TO POLITICIANS?

By Santos Phukuntsi

As historically disadvantaged communities (Black communities), we are agitated that given the legacy of apartheid model of doing things, there is a need to reduce historical backlogs through acceleration of service delivery to local communities via democratic inclusion in development planning. It was for this reason that the Integrated Development Plan got introduced.

The IDP was the document that would ensure public participation in the development planning process. It was a document that would lead to a more strategic decision making and more profound local democracy and ultimately it would lead to more developmental and transformative outcomes.

However, is the IDP still relevant in this political epoch? Our government leaders have turned a blind eye on it. Local communities are no longer consulted.

There is very little participation of the public in the development process. The question emerges, why are we no longer involving the people in the development process? What are we hiding? What are we trying to avoid? And is todays' government still government of the people by the people? nIt for this reason that we are experiencing public protests and riots on daily basis of our lives in all corners of the country. Does the problem lie with the document or useless politicians?

WE RISE AGAIN

By Zanele Stuurman

Today, after several attempts of being a non-discriminating society, after numerous efforts of erasing the ideology of a "man's world and a woman's place", there is certainly a lot to be done. The infinite gender inequality still perceived within our homes, work places, studying institutions and so forth. What is the cause of this failure to change? Little effort, ignorance, fear?

There's more to gender inequality than we think. Our nurturing impacts heavily on the way we perceive other individuals and ourselves even. Today there's an increase in justification for the phrases that are meant to put women "in their places".

Talks have been held, discussions, television shows and various campaigns have been held on gender equality, yet our society finds bliss in the ignorance of this matter. I have witnessed women classifying their gender as a fragile state and this is an ongoing process in this lifetime. Our families see no fault in regarding a woman as a weakling and as a result she "needs a man to be whole".

Individually, I am for Women empowerment and Women's passion enhancement. Half of the universe's women are emotionally and psychologically imprisoned in the name of their gender, this has banned their attempts in becoming whatever they wished to become. And when there are movements such as feminist movements, it is said that women shouldn't fight a hand which feeds them (basically men).

That it'll never be in a woman's gene to reach the level of a man, that women are fighting nature for not granting them all the features that a man has. The absurdity in all of this has created all sorts of negative names about women who believe that gender should be prioritised in our country, in our continent, and in the world at large.

Women have been publicly dissed for fighting this inequality. Teenage boys see no harm in saying that girls are "softies" for certain highlights of subjects at schools. Men even make it sound a cliché at work places for women to step in and rule them. Marriages have become a way for men to earn "helpers" as they are the "heads" and they expect that their wives will listen to whatever they have to command.

We are a delicate nation and with failure to get the people who are stereotyped on our side, it'll mean a downfall of the attempts made to an equal, non sexist society. Yes, it is dim to be counting eggs yet, but with the support we receive from feminist men out there... there's hope after all. It isn't a battle but a plea for equality. We rise still!

MINE SHAFT RE-OPENS, JOBS FOR A FEW BUT ANOTHER MESS!

By Motsoku Lawrence

In the first week of April we received a circular stating that there will be an opening of a mineshaft in our community, about 45km north of Welkom. This shaft was open in the past but was closed because of the uncontrolled flow of water underground which was a serious environmental problem.

People in my community see this differently, especially the vast number of unemployed youth. They feel that this is an end to their daily struggles as they hope to be employed at the operations for this shaft. The large unemployment in Nyakallong is due to a lack of skills and education. While the opening of the shaft will provide some jobs for a few, these come with many problems.

We haven't seen the mine closure of the previous shaft, how would the new respond to the problems which where identified then? Have they rehabilitated the damages caused then? The open-

ing of the shaft will also see the destruction of the growing, small scale substantial farming of maize. There will also be the problem of air pollution that comes with mining which has an impact on the health of the community.

I don't see the opening of the shaft to be solving problems but creating more problems and threatening our own health, climate, land and food security. How will we survive within the next 10 years with our decline in water and agriculture? What do we preserve as the legacy for the survival of the coming generations?

I therefore advocate that our community should be involved in the drafting of SLC, (Social Labour Plan). What will be the role of the municipality in service delivery and how will the mine look after its labour? We also need to know how the mine was granted a licence to open this shaft. Were projections on mining impacts on the environment l and social life done?

Community leaders only preach 'jobs' but not leadership, control and ownership. They say "people will now have jobs and be able to support their families" but we know that only a few will get jobs and more importantly what will this do to to the existing economic activities, our environmental and social life in Nyakallong? And what about the long term issue of our water scarcity, I fear that the least remaining will all be consumed by mining activities or at least 5 years down the line and our own people will not be having water at all.

AFRICA DAY

By Brown wa ha Motsau

Today I think,
yes I think, I for one identify with the soil of this continent, today we celebrate mother soil of this continent.
I think of the food it produces,
I think of fresh natural water sources in their various forms from rivers to fountains,
I think of the minerals it produce both on the surface and below soil,
I think... yes I think... I think of the beautiful Kings and Queens it has raised,
I think of the innocent blood that was spilled
slavery, oppression
capitalism, colonialism
that happen on this beautiful land.

Today I remember,
I remember many of the good things that this continent got to offer to the world which is today termed globalisation.
Today I remember that even those we at times choose as leaders may not necessarily have interest at heart of our mother continent.

Today I am grateful,
I am grateful to identify with the black soil of this continent in whatever form or name you want to label it AfriKA, AfriCA, AfriKYA, PhariiKA, AfariKA, AzaniA you name them.

I am grateful because your time has come, your time is bound to pass, and your time will come to manifest and your children shall never leave in struggle again.

Today I call
I call to the great Gods of Africa to reawaken the young men and women who will lead this land and its people to a new era of home.
I call on the spirits of the selfless great leaders of this continent to reawaken young lions to lead this continent. I am grateful to the spirit of Sankara, Lumumba, Hani, Selassie, Garvey and many unsung heroes and heroines

I so join in the celebration....

KLERKSDORP

THE SHOCKING TRUTH OF RIETKUIL COMMUNITY

By Petrus Moshe and Modise Tlhako

Next to the Shiva Uranium gold and uranium processing plant, a company owned by the Guptas family and the son of the state president Duduzane Zuma under Oakbay resources, is a community of about 15 households. The houses are built with mud. This area is known as Rietkuil. On entering this community one could see in the eyes of children and adults that the community is hardest hit by poverty. According to the residents the land belongs to the white farm owner by the name of Paul Gravenston who is not staying on the farm and has only employed five people from the rest of the community to work on his farm. The shocking reality is, Shiva uranium has not employed even a single person although it's only two kilometers away from the community.

Martha Maruping, a 45 years old woman, could not reveal the name of their ward councillor, in fact she doesn't the know who the councilor is at all. She said they have never had a single meeting with the councillor. A Justice and Peace member has learned that the councillor in that area is Daddy Mogorosi who stays in Tigane township.

Susan Serame complained about mine blasting. According to her, every two months the mine brings two bakkies and transports them five kilometers away from their houses because they are blasting. "Because they dont notify us on time, we go without food and water which the mine is not providing."

She added: "We have tried everything in our power to find employment in the mine for the past eleven years, the mine managers don't take us serious".

This community stays in a highly radioactive area as per the reports done by experts before. Joseph Mokgothu who was born sixty years ago in the area says, he did not know anything about radiation and that it could be dangerous to their health. Community members reported that a mobile clinic from the department of health did not show up on the scheduled date which was the 26th of May. The community rely on that mobile clinic for check up and without it those in dire need are left with no choice but to go to a clinic in Tigane township for which they will need transport.

According to Susan Serame, the majority of the community rely of state social security grants for survival, she says without the grants the community would have suffered worse.

As for the grave yard, the Shiva uranium company has fenced the graves, this means the community cannot reach the graves anymore to do their rituals. "It's more than 12 years now without seeing the graves of my family members, this is sad and keeps me worrying", Martha Mokgothu said.

The company security officers denied the Justice and Peace members entry to the graves when they requested to enter the yard. This problem seems to be an issue of concern in most communities which are near the mines in South Africa.

The residents in this area also complained about cracked houses, their houses which are built with mud are cracking every time when the mine is blasting, nobody from the mines takes responsibility for the destructive actions, Joseph Mokgothu said, "the Shiva Uranium company is very cruel, they don't regard them as human beings, they have not provided them with a single food parcel ever since they started the operations".

The Justice and Peace community monitors felt touched about the living conditions of the people in this community. Petrus Moshe who is the organization's coordinator vowed to confront the mine authorities to ask about its CSI projects towards this community and raise other issues of major concern which members of the community have raised.

SHIVA URANIUM CSI PROJECT ABANDONED, LEAVING COMMUNITY WITHOUT ASSISTANCE

By Tuelo Bantsijang, David Gaanakgomo, and Lydia Bantsejang

In the year 2012 the Shiva Uranium company introduced its Corporate Social Investment (CSI) project to the community of Tigane in the Klerksdorp area. The project was funded to the tune of R2,5 million to start a vegetable garden which company officials said would feed the community at a relatively cheaper price in comparison to other markets. At the time of the inception of the project one could see faces of happiness and joy from the volunteering staff and the ward councilors. This announcement was indeed some good news to the community of Tigane. To the volunteering staff who started by earning a stipend, the project meant possible future employment.

Just like many other CSI projects outside there, especially in mining communities, the solutions to the problems faced by communities were temporary and unsustainable.

Thabang Potlaki who still regarded himself as a worker in a non-functional project recalls being underpaid every time and receiving his stipend for only two years instead of the promised six years. The project operated for only three years supplying the local community with fresh vegetables; afterwards nobody in the community could see a truck coming to feed them as usual.

John Tloboro, another project worker says, "We spoke with the project officials from the Shiva Uranium company regard to continuity funding. They were ignorant of what was happening and could not give any relevant answers".

The money generated from selling the fresh vegetables to the community was not enough to run the project. John Tloboro finds it difficult at the moment to feed his family as they depend on the child support grant. He also reported that according to the budget in a three years period, there was money left to pay for stipends of the workers and other direct operational costs of the project.

For the record this project started off with a total number of ten volunteers who worked at the garden, to date only three are still available even though they cannot produce vegetables anymore. Mami Kganyago said, "The project itself has been tearing them apart as workers, and the ward councillor seems to be not interested in our matter any longer, he simply does not want to meet with us". This is a usual case in many other projects of the community, the political leaders abandon the projects after realizing that there is no longer any money and show no particular interest towards the future of such projects.

The community monitors in the area tried everything to meet with the councilor, Daddy Mogorosi, and did not succeed. They wanted to hear from him because the councilors are the people who who receive projects for the community.

The Shiva Uranium company doesn't want to comment on the matter. This has always been the case. Every time when we try to get information from the company officals, we simply do not succeed. There are a number of issues which needs to get answers.

We the community monitors in Tigane have raised concerns before about the way the project was introduced. Things happened too fast as nobody concerned could make a submission. We will pursue this issue until we are satisfied, if we let it rest history will repeat itself and more projects will fail in our community.

Above: A worker outside the Shiva Uraniam & Gold Plant.
Below: The CSI community vegetable garden project that was supposed to generate an income for community members has been abandoned. ***Image credit: Community Monitors***

KLERKSDORP

HUMAN SETTLEMENT NEAR A WETLAND WAS A WRONG MOVE

By Ndade Pule, Nomaindia Gaji and Petrus Moshe

During the times of drought it's normal that people come together from different parts to ask for rain, however those settled in Ext 10 west would somehow be worried about such instead. Pre- 1994 elections in South Africa saw the residents of Jouberton Township who demanded land for human settlement illegally occupying it, worse in that situation is, some residents tampered with the wetland and have since then experienced hardships. This is a portion of the land which many has known to be "Wil-makau", its a place where children used go to for swimming in the 1980's. It got occupied and shacks were erected in order to pave a way for permanent human settlement. Yes it is a wetland as we the monitors recall and say, those who have gone ahead and developed RDP houses in such an area have truly made a wrong move.

Jouberton Township is considered the biggest in Klerksdorp in comparison with other townships which all falls under the Matlosana municipality. We interviewed two community members who are Ms Palesa Makoro and Mrs Ziphora Molifi, they both reside in the area. They shared that, their joy and excitement vanished a long time ago before and after receiving their RDP houses. They complained about the foundation of the houses which has weakened, the water that could easily access the house. Mrs Ziphora further added that during heavy rains the area becomes flooded, the frogs and different types of snakes occupies their homes and feels scared.

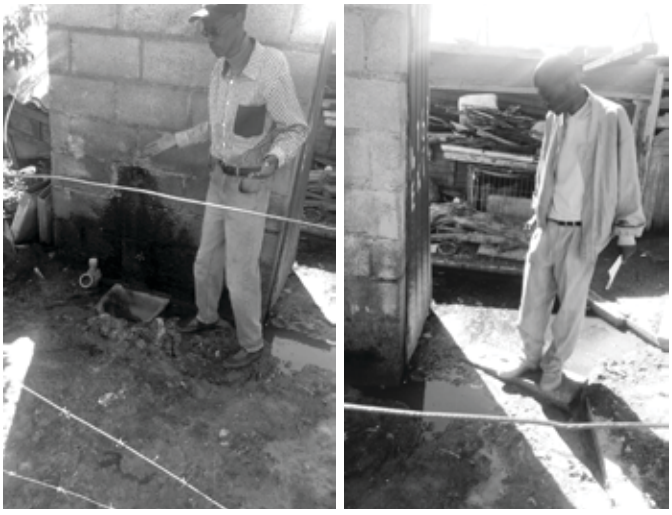
On the arrival of Justice and Peace community monitors in the affected section, we smelled unbearable bad odour from the wastewater due to sewage spills and contaminated storm water resulting from illegal dumping. We are told that wetland are good in purifying water; however in this case a wetland, and the people themselves are under a serious threat due to sewage spills, this environment here, is totally not suitable and sustaianable for people to stay in, I for one sometimes regret my choice of settling here", said Mr. Nzimeni Memane, a resident in the area.

The ward committee member Mrs Lizzy Tshofu said, we have tried to solve the problem by engaging the ward councillor and the municipality, they promised to change the small sewage pipe system to a more sophisticated system which will cope with the blockages. To date nothing has changed the situation. The affected people are worried of their wellbeing and say the area is dangerous. The relocation of the people in that area is long overdue, it was supposed to be completed long time ago.

Mr. Nzimeni and others are among other many people out there who are suffering with poor housing planning as a result of building homes on a wetland. Community members have explored various ways to channel the water and this exercise is not an easy one because the water can be uncontrollable sometimes. Mr. Mothupi from Disaster Management office in Klerksdorp regularly visit the area each time after heavy rain, as part of his intervention, he called all relevant government department to assist, this include the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), they assisted by providing a grant of social relief of distress for certain number of households, added, Mrs, Palesa Makoro.

The Matlosana municipality had several meetings with the residents of that area, they promised to relocate eight (8) houses to the south part of Cocekani secondary school. This came after the ward councillor Mr Thabo Mpjapudi and the Matlosana Mayor Mr Kagisho Kgauwe, but up to so far nothing has happened in that area. The residents has even requested the Municipality to clean the area by using their TLB's, Front loaders, and back loaders, and all the promises has never been fulfilled till today. The ward councillor, Mr. Thabo Mptjapudi, said, "I am aware of the problem since its long standing, I have tried my level best to resolve the problem, hence the council resolution of 2012 to relocate the affected people. The unfortunate part arise from our municipality in regard to implementation, they (municipality) take us from pillar to post as councillors. We have received several letters from the community about their problems. The worst part about our municipality is that they only act after a disaster has occurred".

The local Justice and Peace organisation has done door to door in those household which are struggling to cope with the impacts of the wetland and collected all the information regarding their problems. The engagement of Matlosana municipality and the environmental health practitioners is under way. We will not rest until this houses are demolished and people relocated to the place which will be suitable for human settlement and their human dignity restored.



Rising water causes damage to the foundations of houses.
Image credit: Community Monitors

WHO IS THE OWNER OF THIS LAND?

By Lesego Setlhabi, Nthabiseng Leshoe, and Modise Tlhako

The Dominionville community monitors have written before in regard to the concerns around the issue of land. All what we knew is that the land in which we have stayed in for the past eighty years (80) has belonged to the farm owner Mr. Duplessis George Benjamin. The place where we stay has the history of mining, hence some of us stay in old buildings which used to belong to the mine.

In 1967 the Dominion reefs Ltd mine dissolved. Our fore fathers who worked in the mine did not leave the area even though they could not work anymore. They resorted to farming for their survival, "in the 1980's I was working for Orgie duplessis in the farm, he had the livestock and crops", said Francis Mashiya. For the period 1967-2005 there was no mining activity in the area, we survived though agriculture.

In the year 2005, we were told that the mine will operate again, it became the uranium one company. "I remember reading a public notice which was written, proposed mining of uranium, gold, rare earths and associated minerals by aflease gold and uranium resources LTD. The company was applying for the mining rights over the farms around Hartebeesfontein including dominionville, Lesego Setlhabi said. According the application to the DMR the mining rights would give the mine a combined life of mine in excess of 30 years. Most of us in our community did not participate in this process because it subjected us to information sharing meeting which was held in Tigane community hall, this venue was too far for us, Lesego Setlhabi added.

Shortly after this processes, the mine began to purchase lands from farmers, most of the farm owners after selling entered into lease agreements with the mine in order for them to continue with the agricultural activity. In selling the dominionville land to the mine, we were not consulted, it did not matter, and there was no need I guess since nobody cared. We are struggling even to date to receive answers and official documents on who the owner of the land is. We know outside the record that that the farm owner sold a portion of the land in which black are staying to the Uranium one mine, and when uranium one left they sold to the Shiva uranium company. We are frustrated by the mine and our leaders who we vote for, nobody is willing to cooperate and help us in finding the proof of land ownership.

Since they do not take us serious, we did not retreat and do nothing, we explored other ways in our efforts of finding information. One of our own, Nthabiseng Leshoe asked that we do the google search. The property results in the deeds registry at Pretoria reveals that "ip, 326,41" which is dominionville – Rhenosterspruit owners details to be Uranium One Africa LTD. We are still hurting and shocked, why we were not consulted in the process of selling and transacting the land. We are at the strongest view that the department of land affairs would have been helpful to us the people.

We will continue to explore various ways in demanding Justice, the land is question is our community is a cause for concern and we fight for this land and no relocation can take place.

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Residents of Dominionville draw attention to the issues of land ownership and mine blasting. ***Image credit: Community Monitors***

LIMPOPO \

THE MINES HAVE STOLEN OUR LAND, AIR, WATER AND HERITAGE

By Mmathapelo Thobejane

Mototolong is the village that is less than 1 km away from the mine shaft Hackney and mine offices Moopetse camp. Mototolong village has been there even before the mine operation. There is a river that flows, passing the Motolong village. Motse river is where the community fetched water for drinking, cooking and washing when our bore hole machine was broken. The soil was very fertile along the river. We grew our food here. Since the mines came, our water, soil and air pollution here is very high.

WATER POLLUTION

There's a stream that flows from the mine running every day to the main stream which is the Motse River. The mining activity has polluted the water. In 2014 people lost their livestock because their cattle drank water from the stream. They never got any compensation from the mine.

In May 2014 we engaged with the mine and spoke to Mr Lebang representing the mine. He denied all accusation against the mine. He said: 'We took the animals to the laboratory and we found that it is not the water from the mine that caused the death of those animals". Even though the animals were found right beside the stream. The mine fenced the stream after the incident but still the animals manage to cross the fence. I spoke to one of the livestock owners he said: "we did not receive compensation we are still confused about the whole incident, the mine is here to destroy everything we have."

SOIL POLLUTION

This place used to be our only source of survival. Now our maize don't grow as they used to. The water from the mine and the gases in the air have an impact on our production. Even the colour of the maize we produce these days is not the same. This shows that we have a problem with our soil since the operation has started. We don't have resources to test our water and the soil but we know this to be true because we never experience something like that before the mines came.

When speaking to the community about this they say they are no longer interested in ploughing because it seems to be a waste of money which they don't even have.

AIR POLLUTION

Big mine trucks and cars when they use our road it causes dust in the air. Most people here have lung problems and diseases. Most of the locals when they are called for interview they fail medical tests because they find out they have lung problems. The mine uses underground soil and stones to pave our roads which mean the dust we are breathing everyday has some of the chemicals that they use to blast the rocks with.

When I asked the community about their understanding about this they say:

"The mines are here to destroy everything"

"It's killing us, stole our land, air, water and heritage".

"We are now waiting to sink in their hole and die".

"We are sick because of the environment we are living in".

I wish our community will next time agree to have their picture taken. As always you ask their picture they still think you want to make money about their stories but it was very helpful to agree to share their stories.

Pollution of the Motse River. ***Image credit: Community Monitors***

HOUSE CRACKS AND MINING OPERATIONS—MANTJAKANE COMMUNITY

By Tjao Peter Pitsamatuba

At my community and other nearby communities we are facing problems of house cracking since the mining company operations started in 2003. It is an underground mining company, they blast day and night. Their operation is too harmful to us.

In our area there's a mining company that affects us directly which is Anglo Platinum mining company, the name of the mine is Twickenham Platinum mine, based in Limpopo, greater Sekhukhune District. Twickenham Platinum mine, they are performing their operations underground and surface, they are working two shifts and they blast in each shift.

We as community we are not happy because we are losing our house because of their blasting and our houses are cracking day and night. What hurts more is that we don't benefit anything from the mine, I mean no employment they offer us as communities and no development they are doing in our community.

Since we experience the problem of house cracking we did take steps to report our problems to the mine offices, to the CED manager. They agreed with us that there may be the problem of house cracks because they are doing blasting every shift, then they promised us that they will come and check the damages but they didn't come and when we call them they said they know our problems. We went again to report but nothing happened from them and when we followed up they said they are working through the tribal authority.

As a community we told them that there are some issues that don't need a tribal authority/chiefs, because we as community are the ones affected. Their operation is very harmful to our lives because when they are blasting there's dust that comes from underground via ventilation shafts and that dust goes straight to our village.

There is also dust caused by trucks and it's too much dust because it's happening during their shift every day. We are unhappy because we believe that the dust can cause diseases such as TB, asthma and other diseases. Their operations also make a lot of noise day and

night and we will end up losing hearing because of that noise.

As a community we did report the problem of dust, they promised us that they are going to fix it by watering the roads every time and they did it only two days after we reported. Now we are suffering from the dust during working days.

The community wants their demands met, because they didn't deliver their promises but they are here to divide people and create fights between communities and chiefs.

When we are fighting for our rights they call the police and even when we are applying for a march they make court orders against us not to protest. They are unfair to the community, they don't deliver anything to the communities at all.

The Twickenham Platinum mine is here to separate communities because they fail to deliver. They don't respond to the promises they made to the communities and they said they are working with chiefs/tribal authority. Right now we must work together as communities to win against the mine with the truth found by NGOs and we must be more united and share information because the mining companies are doing things for them to benefit only.

Dust kicked up by a truck on a dirt road. Communities around the mine face severe dust and air pollution. ***Image credit: Community Monitors***

LACK OF WATER IS A SLEEPLESS PROBLEM IN OUR VILLAGE

By Tokelo Mahlakoane

My name is Tokelo Mahlakoane, I am writing this story on behalf of Sekutlong community. Sekutlong is a small village in Sekhukhune-land, that has been there for a long time. We are having a problem, we do not have water. We are having a ward councillor who is living with us in the village but does not do what the community wants and the village is not far from the Twickenham mine, Those are the ones who are culprits in our situation. We are drinking water from the river that is polluted by acid mine drainage.

THE WARD COUNCILLOR

We are living with the ward councillor in our village but she is very ignorant about our situation. I managed to interview one of the elders around our village. She said 'the ward councillor called a meeting around April 2015. On that day there were 7 to 8 people and the ward councillor said she was going to make a borehole connection to the tanks so that it can supply us with water and she can give them a jik (bleach) to pour in the water tanks for the water we fetch from the river to kill germs. The person we interviewed said they are still waiting for that project even now.

The unfinished borehole project. ***Image credit: Community Monitors***

We as Sekutlong youth we tried to mobilise ourselves after we heard that the ward councillor was going to make boreholes while there is an unfinished water project around our village as you can see the image above. We managed to do that, we were six when we called a mass meeting. It was a Thursday of the 3rd September 2015, on that meeting there was a majority of youth and few elders. We took the responsibility by alerting everyone about the situation and they understood what we had for them. We agreed by inviting the ward committee and the steering committee of water to be with us during the next meeting because we were willing to know where and when the water project is coming. We wrote them invitation letters and submitted to them but they failed to attend the meeting dated 10th September 2015.

We agreed to call the ward councillor after realising that our guests failed us. Through the call (on loud speaker) we tried to explain everything that we have done until we called her. She said that they couldn't come to us until we write a letter to the municipality so that the municipality can give them permission.

It was a surprise to us because we didn't know something like this but on the other hand we wrote the letter and on the letter we pointed out that we wanted the office of the speaker where we can explain our problem. I was one of them when we submitted the letter at the municipality office on the 23rd October 2015, we didn't have access to talk but only to submit the letter. Around November the ward councillor called a meeting only after she received the letter we submitted to the municipality offices and she promised us lots of things but even today we are still waiting for those promises. We are now waiting because of the local elections for further steps.

TWICKENHAM MINE

We are drinking water from the river which is polluted by the mine drainage but Twickenham mine is ignorant to clean the water. We managed to group youth and to start a project called "BEE KEEPING" we want Twickenham mine to train the youth around our village.

We hope that after the training we will be able to know how to clean the water. We made an appointment and we managed to meet with the mine management and he told us what we needed in order for him to approve our proposal and we are currently busy with that.

In our conclusion we would like to say the coming ward councillor must use the old boreholes than making new ones. We as Sekutlong

youth and community we will be glad if Benchmarks Foundation can assist us on how to deal with the capitalists. We are looking forward to putting down the people who think are good to us while they are not in our village. As we are activists around our village we hope we will know how to approach the capitalists with our power.

UNSAFE BLASTING BY MINES

By Khutso Phala

Since 2012 at my place in Gamathule in Sekhukhuneland we started experiencing the problem of unsafe blasting until today 2016. Chromax mining company is doing unsafe blasting day and night.

We believe that Chromax mine is mining without a mining licence and that operation is harmful to everyone who is living in Gamathule, Ditwing, Mosiphong, Madifahlane, Serafa and other surrounding areas. Management did not listen to us as communities instead they listen to the tribal authority while the tribal authorities don't stay with us in the village but far from the village.

The mine makes noise from their machinery and trucks during the day and night, the blasting kills our livestock and others are badly injured. They don't hire people from our communities whilst their blasting makes a lot of dust which puts our lives in danger, the dust can cause diseases like TB, Asthma, Sinuses and other chronic diseases and also causes miscarriage for pregnant women.

In all the communities mentioned above, none of them have community halls, drop in centre, free toilets, water which everyone can get in his/her yard, safe gravel roads or even a school. Mining don't do anything for the communities because they don't respect us as communities. Chromax mining company took our grandmothers farms, now our new generation won't know or taste the mabele porridge or watermelons because we don't have a place to plant them. Our grandmothers and grandfathers lost their livestock, donkeys etc. because Chromax mine doesn't have a fence for the safety of them to prevent danger because once they cross there they will never be seen again. If we talk to the management, they tell us that its not their problem or fault that the animals cross to the mining area. Our houses are having cracks created by their blasting, the cracks are bad because when you are inside the house you can see outside the house.

Mining companies don't give us, the youth, the mining skills or train us for employment, but they advertise posts and when applying for the posts they say we don't have mining skills. When we are trying to apply for a march / protest at our municipality at Greater Tubatse Municipality, the municipality will side with the mining company because they bribe them and they choose to undermine the communities while they must be protecting our rights as communities and treating us equally according to the South African law in the Bill of Rights. Before we knew about Benchmarks Foundation, we were about to lose hope about our land, our minerals and basic rights. As we see mining companies are having deals with our municipalities, chiefs. Now we hope that if we can work together as communities and come up with a plan on how to win the game as we have Benchmarks leading us with information / steps that we must follow hopefully we will win.

MINES, TAR ROADS, ELECTRICITY WIRES & SEWAGE PIPES DESTROY FARMING IN SEKHUKHUNELAND

By Tshephisho Thobejane

People do not cultivate because the mine created the road where it trespass at their farm lands. There is an electricity wire which pass at the farm lands and the water pipelines are passing by through. People are not free to cultivate because they no longer have space to plough.

Another reason why people don't plough in their farm lands is that the mines have title deeds to claim that the land belongs to them whilst they also built sewerage pipes or pumps in their lands.

One of the community member said "I regret allowing the tar road to cross my farm land. Farms were assisting us to raise our children and some grains to sell to people who do not plough to have money in order for our children to further their education."

Some communities or members from the communities still feel that the mine should compensate them every month but it's too late for that. The community tried to get information from the chiefs and to get evidence about their lands and the mines that made promises and responsible for the farm lands they took, on how and who is involved. Mine took our fields, we can't plant and now we are suffering.

WATER IS A LUXURY FOR THE PEOPLE OF GA-KGOETE VILLAGE

By Sekome Phinda

Water is a basic need, but in the village of Ga-Kgoete, in most households it remains a luxury. Ge-Kgoete is surrounded by a number of mines. This village hardly has any development and only one mine has come to their rescue by drilling one borehole to help ease the burden of water shortages. The basic water remains a challenge for the people of Ga-Kgoete especially for the poor who survive by the Sassa social grant, who have to buy water from those who have boreholes. Water is sold for R2.00 per 20L.

With an initiative that Samancor established, we have seen a high number of households getting access to water. Fortunate enough are those who are near the community taps but for some it remains a challenge of having to travel a distance in difficult geographic areas where the wheel barrows get stuck in sands or high slope gravel roads. Another challenge is that the water tanks are not enough to supply the whole community with water because sometimes the tanks run out of water.

These challenges are strong especially on school kids who return from school and have to go and fetch water from far distance with different routes and they have to push 3-4 20Ls of water in a wheel barrow. It's a strain and takes a toll on their school work and performance as most of their time is consumed by home duties. Sometimes when water runs out they will have to wake up the early morning to wait long hours for water so that they can prepare for school. This

has led to a high number of absenteeism at school resulting in a high number of fails at the end of each term.

As for the elders living alone without children is a saddening challenge as they can't push the wheel barrows. They in turn have to pay kids who can get them water with the little they are getting from the Sassa social grant.

The municipality needs to take charge of the situation and work together with the mining sectors to help eradicate this common challenge and also to improve the initiative that Samancor mine has undertaken on trying to mitigate the problem in the village. To try and speed up the initiative of water pipes system for those who have to travel long distance and those who can't or are not able to reach community tap points.

Above: JOJO rain water tanks and water pipes are in short supply. Right: relocated graves. ***Image credit: Community Monitors***

"THEY REMOVED THE REMAINS IN A RUBBISH BAG" RELOCATION OF GRAVES FROM MAKOBAKO-BE TO MORAPANENG

By Lebogang Thobejane

Graves were relocated due to the mines wanting to start mining on the land. These graves where near the Heckney Shaft. Not only graves were relocated, people were moved too. They left their childhood homes to start a new life somewhere. They had no relatives or loved ones near. They experienced their homes destroyed and that felt very emotional because seeing a home you called home destroyed is heart-breaking. The place where all your entire memory was made was being taken away. This is horrific even though the people were compensated. Those people relocated were given money, a new house built for them also new furniture, but families where not compensated for the relocation of their graves. The graves were relocated from Makobekoba to Morapaneng to some of their relatives. The relocation was not done properly. The community was not consulted. The mines only talked to the royal family. The families did not have much to say about how they wanted the graves to be relocated , meaning the decision was made for them or on behalf of them.

The remains were removed but not by coffins, they placed them in a rubbish bag meaning they were like dirt or garbage. For the community these are the most respected people as they are no longer on this earth. But the mine people did not care that much how their families must have felt seeing their deceased brothers and sisters in a garbage bag. It is disrespectful and selfish.

They mourned for those people, hearts were broken having the thought of no longer to see those they loved anymore and now just strangers rise up that hurt and it will definitely hurt more to see them treated like that. No counselling was offered to the families, how will one cope having to experience seeing remains of someone they once loved, to once more wake up the old wounds and some might even have nightmares. Counselling should have been offered to people if they really cared about the families and the deceased.

Culturally re-burying bodies, there should be a ceremony, blood should be shed, a certain cow or goat to be slaughtered, in order for the ancestors to accept them and for their souls to rest in peace. In Christian ceremony a new funeral will be prepared, the remains will be re-buried in honour of the ancestors and the families, hymns will be sung along with the pastor reading the bible and preaching comforting words to the loved ones of the deceased.

I interviewed one of the families of the deceased and she asked to be anonymous. She said "the remains of my loved ones were relocated to where I am staying. They were not laid in peace because they removed them with plastics and they were buried in boxes not coffins which had us surprised."

LIMPOPO \

MINE BLAST CRACK HOUSES IN MONAMETSE

By Selowa Moshabi

Poor communities face a bad situation due to the Bokoni Platinum Mines. The communities feel very unsafe. The following communities are affected by the mining project of Bokoni Platanum mine: Sefateng, Maruping, Malomanye, Monametse and Mokgotho.

In 2013 the affected communities engaged the mine management on the issue of the housing cracks resulting from blasting. The mine responded that they did not feel that the cracks were created by them. However they agreed to renovate some cracked houses when they relocated part of the community. That gave us power to engage further to get positive answers. The company responded by giving the community members forms whereby the engineer will be appointed to check as to whether cracks were created by the mine or not.Unfortunately the forms were given to the councillor who at last said the forms were misplaced. We asked her to to attend a meeting with us in January 2014. In the meeting she said the Mayor will call a meeting with the mine. We felt that this move was to confuse the situation further.

Part of the community was relocated. This group found that even in their new houses which was near the mine their houses cracked. We engaged with Richard Spoor to tackle the matter but the issue was moving too slow. Small cracks began to grow bigger, no progress was on the matter, and communities also wondered when this will end.

MOGABADING, WAITING FOR MINE PROMISES IS LIKE WAITING FOR A WINTER MOON

By Koma Neria

In this case we are going to talk about how our road looks like and how we are feeling as a community about it. We are going to talk about pavements, tar roads, holes, stones, injuries that are caused by holes and stones.

We have lived at Magobading a relocated community since 2003, Anglo Platinum who moved us made a lot of promises, It is over 10 years but there has been no changes. We have a problem with our road. The roads have holes and big stones. Our friends and relatives buy new cars but they experience great problems because of our roads. When it rains no one can go with the car because the car will get damaged and you have to pay a mechanic to fix your car.

We have a lot of stones on the road, the car does not move well, Some parts have large sand patches which make it difficult to drive through. These roads are impassable when it rains.

We as a community we are not happy anymore because the elders suffer injury walking on a road of stones and holes. We do not walk on these roads at night because of the danger of injuries. You may remain at home unless the car picked you at the gate.

The mines are playing with us. They promised the community to develop the road by making tar roads and pavements on our street. Now we have more than 10 years fighting about that tar road and pavement and there is no change. Ten years later it is like waiting for a winter moon.

We met as a community and talked about our road and why there are no changes and what action we should take. Some felt that we should go to the local municipality and ask. Others felt that we must sue Anglo platinum Mines or demand that they shut down the mine and go away.

GRAVEL ROAD

By Mampa Eunice

Mines should provide community with skills and development. Our roads are poorly constructed and maintained. We use gravel roads which is about 15 km before we reach the main road R37. During heavy rain cars are not able to pass on mud roads and potholes.

When there is funeral after a rain, cars won't be able to pass and people would carry the casket by hand for about 9 km to reach the graveyard. Recently in Ga-Phasha road a car was taken by the water and rolled off into a valley, killing the driver. When people get sick during the night like someone in labour there would be no transport and when we call ambulance they would attend the matter after many hours.

Schools are far from our village, children from our village need transport to school because the schools are far. During exam times like on final exam, tutors would be late for exams, because of the rain and as we are using gravel and muddy roads it would be too slippery. Their transport would be there waiting for that mud to be a little bit dry and students would be waiting for question papers by that time, instead of writing at 09h00 they would write at 13h00.

Hospitals and clinics are far from our village: we walk about 9 km to reach the clinic and to hospital it's about 19 km and if you are really sick and you cannot walk, there would be no transport.

Another problem is the dust. During August there would be a lot of dust from the open-cast. Even cars when they are moving on gravel road they make a lot of dust, especially trucks from the opencast. Trucks from the opencast cause vibrations when they move in our village and our houses are now having cracks. Even their explosives cause our houses to crack and our domestic animals they don't have any ground for grazing.

If we should work together there would be development and services from our municipality and mines. Together we can.

Dirt roads affect transport, damage cars, and slow down the daily functioning of the community. ***Image credit: Community Monitors***

Mine blasting causes severe structural damages and cracks to houses nearby. ***Image credit: Community Monitors***

HOUSE CRACK FROM GA-MAMPA

By Lindiwe Mampa

Our house began to crack after the mines enters into our areas for mining. More than 79 percent of houses in our area are cracked because of mines. Our houses were fine but they began to crack after the mine blasting. When the mines blast in their work I know for sure that some house will experience cracks because we hear the sound far from our home but it sounds as if it comes from next door. We even hear the windows shaking when the blasting began. If the windows don't shake the glass from the windows crack or it falls down and is crushed.

What I'm asking myself is what will be the state of our houses after 30 years. It may not fall now but I know for sure that after the years pass it would be a miracle to see it standing. We have an example in our community of the window falling off the house after two to three weeks of blasting.

Our school is also in danger because it is about 1 km from the open cast mine. What I'm asking myself is that what happens to our children in Seroletshia Secondary school, are they coping? They are also affected by noise from the same open cast. This sound is louder than a truck. Will they be able to hear the teacher talking? I doubt they are hearing them well. Sometimes we hear the ground shaking.

All of us should take this matter seriously and the government should intervene in this matter and the mines should stop because they put our life in danger.

WE WASH OUR CLOTHES IN THE MOTSE RIVER

By Makgopa Tebogo

In my area we suffer too much because we don't have enough water. If you want water you are going to buy at Monyela driving school and from my place to Monyela driving school you must walk 2 hours and a half, one bucket of water is R2.00

Please do something for us or give us some idea to write a memorandum to municipalities to give us a help.

In my community we have a councillor but they did not do anything and we wrote the memo from our community to municipality but nothing changes. When you call a meeting our own councillor does not come because he knows his sins.

We feel sorry to that councillor because he is going to fall down. We are going to get another mayor to remove the old mayor.

If ever you come to my community one day you are going to feel sorry for us because when you want to wash your clothes you must go to Motse River to wash that clothes of yours.

"NOW FOR THE LAST TIME WILL YOU PLEASE FIX THE WATER?" WATER PROBLEMS OF SEKUTLONG VILLAGE

By Jane Moloto

I have done some research regarding the matter of shortage of water. I went to five houses asking them where they get water and I revealed that some get water from the river, some get water from the municipality , but only two tanks per house. They have installed taps long ago but still there is no water in the taps. We used to get generated water whereby we had to push the generated water with wheelbarrows from the river. At Sekutlong village we don't have water, for now this is our major problem. We all know that life cannot move on without water. We need water for our survival.

It's been a while since we asked for proper water taps but it seems like our request in not taken into consideration. Whenever the municipality makes things it's only temporary like delivering water whereby we only get two tanks per house, sometimes some house actually do not get water. The generators that they brought for us do not actually last for a year only a few months then it's broken. We have to push and pull the generator to the water hole and pull it back home. In order to drink normal and clean water we have to buy the water with R2,50. What about the people who cannot afford to buy water? They have to go and ask from the fortunate who have boreholes and sometimes they have to drink water from the river. This is water that is being drunk by all kinds of animals. Some actually pee in the rivers but we actually have to drink that water. So drinking water from the forest that is not healthy at all.

This is a residents message to the municipality and the mine "It's been a while now, we have been pleading with you for proper water. Now for the last time will you please fix the water. We hope that our request will be taken into consideration."

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MPUMALANGA

NEW COAL MINES THREATEN THE SECURITY OF FAMILIES ON FARMS.

By Lorraine Kakaza

New coal mines are on the rise in Mpumalanga. White farmers are selling up their land and leaving. Poor black families who were laborers on the farm are being forced to move. Some do not want to move. Some believe they have rights to the farm on which they worked for a large part of their lives. Those who move regret having moved. Lorraine Kakaza, a community monitor, interviewed two affected families.

Mr Masina on his farm. ***Image credit: The Sowetan***

THE MASINA FAMILY

I visited the Masina family where by I meet Mr. Johan Zembe Masina who is 84 years and lived on a farm, Twyfelaar for 60 years. This farm is out side Carolina in the Mpumalanga province. Mr. Masina used to work for the previous farmer named Jacobus Van Deberg who has passed away. The sons said that the farmer Jacobus Van Deberg promised their father money or the farm. The farmer passed away while they were still in the process of the negotiation. The father says that when the owner of the farm passed away he became the owner of the farm.

Mr. Masina with his three sons are concerned about the the entry of Phembani Coal Carolina onto the farm. The Phembani Coal Mine is owned by a leading South African business man who was the former MTN boss, Phuthumani Nhleko.

Now that the mines have moved in, the family's life has become hard. "I used to have my own livestock and I lost my livestock due to mine activity," said Mr. Masina. Mine blasting has made cracks on their house. When the mine blasts they come to the family and take them away from their houses and when they are done blasting the family has to to walk back on their own. Mr. Masina can't walk because of his age.

The family is not allowed to extend their house. The sons say that they were harassed by a mine official who on several occasions warned Mr. Masina not to build further on this farm.

The Masina family is worried about their five graves and the other 11 graves that belong to other families. The mine promised to put a fence.

The family wrote a letter to the government were they stated that the mines told them that they had no right to to stay on the farm.

"We reported several times to the MEC for the province, even now we never got a positive response from them," the sons told me. The family approached the South African Human Rights Commission to investigate their problem. They also registered a land claim. They received an acknowledgement letter from the commissioner.

Mr Masina's income is a pension grant and he can't afford to plant maize meal. He was full of tears when he told me "My neighbor who got a new house from the mine said I must move, she was sent by a mine official. I replied that I'm not going anywhere".

The struggle of the Masina family continues. We are watching!

THE MAHLANGU FAMILY

Today we visited a place called Sikhululiwe, between Belfast and Arnot in Mpumalanga Province. The people here were moved by a coal mining company called Mafube Colliery. While they were given a house and were given money as compensation, their lives are worse off then when they were living on the farm.

We spoke to Mrs Thembani Maria Mahlangu, a 70 year old women. This is her story:

"At first we used to stay at the farm called Springbok Laagte. I use to work for a white farmer. I spent many decades here since I was very young. I got married here and I also gave birth to my children."

"The farmer sold the farm and just left without even notifying us. Then the mine came to us and said they wanted to move us and we were given an opportunity to choose an area were we were going to be moved. We chose our place. But at the end of the day we were given another place were they build us a house. They took us with a bus."

We were relocated by the year 2009 with our graves and we were paid a compensation. We didn't have a problem then but these days we are suffering. Here we don't have water, we have to go for 3km to collect water, we do have a tap but it's useless, no water comes out of it. We have to pay for electricity but at the farm there was no such. We have lost our livestock. We have no place to keep our livestock. We can't plant because we don't have a garden.

When they removed our graves the mine bought a coffin, a goat, flowers, 2 blankets and a small grocery package to do a ceremony. All went well.

We tried to extend our house but it was difficult cause the municipality made us pay a fine, they say we are not allowed to extend. So it is difficult for us because the space is not enough.

We are not working, we depend on pension grants which we have to use to buy wood thrice a month, but by the time we were staying at the farm we were happy, but everything is a mess today.

The Mahlangu family has to collect water in buckets 3km away from their home. Image credit: Community Monitors

WATER PROBLEMS IN THE COAL CITY—EMALAHLENI

By Brain Masuku, Thabo Elton, Rudolph Sambo, and Colleen Jolobe

Witbank (Emalahleni) is a small town in Mpumalanga and the biggest coal supplier in South Africa. This mineral helps the economy of the country stay strong. But the people live with many health problems especially related to clean water.

We talked to the community about their problems and we found a great number of angry and frustrated community members. They are sick and tired of this unhealthy lifestyle forced on to them by their municipality. We talked with staff from the local Hospital and clinics but they would not respond to us. We talked with municipal officials but they insist that there is no problem with the water. We now have to think about how the community should come together and take action.

WHAT RESIDENTS SAY

Simphiwe Khoza a resident of Emalahleni had this to say: "The municipality is not concerned, not to say they don't do their job but they don't put much effort. We have a huge dam, the Witbank dam where they extract the water of Emalahleni. So I don't understand how come they fail to clean the water because they don't spend much to get the water".

Many people from this settlement use bottled water for cooking and drinking. Those who cannot afford bottled water suffer. "If you leave tap water to settle in a container for 5 minutes just after pouring it in a container, it forms this black layer at the bottom and when I drink it, it gives me diarrhea and I also gain complexion," said Mr. Ngwato Tshehla.

Mr Mabena, a community member who lived in Witbank Emalahleni for 15 years said that "the water has changed from what I know, now it is worse. When I drink the water my stomach will start running; when I think of taking a shower I have to think twice because after taking a shower my body will start feeling itchy. I am affected by the water we receive from the tap."

Tebogo Mpunyane, a resident, said "the water coming from our taps is brownish in color and it smells bad, I don't drink it because it makes my stomach sour."

OUR OWN OBSERVATIONS

Ihawu Lemelo community based organisation (ILCBO) interviewed ten community members from different locations who also complained about the very same water. We then conducted research: we took the tap water and compared it to the underground water and there we managed to see the difference. The tap water smelt bad.

WE SPOKE TO NURSES AND DOCTORS

After collecting this information, we went to the local clinic in Ext 10 Kwa-guqa to interview one of the nurses. We asked her if they came across patients who suffer the consequences of the state of the water and she said "Sorry I cannot give out information because by the law I'm not allowed to give any information regarding my job and the patients who I am treating".

We met Doctor Mabuza at the Witbank Hospital who would not speak to us and referred us to the CEO of the hospital, Mr. Albert, who gave us only five minutes to explain what we were looking for. We then stated that we were conducting a research about Emalahleni water so we were looking for records of patients admitted to the hospital due to related water issue. He responded "I am not disagreeing with you about what you are looking for but please write down a formal letter and send it to my office then we will communicate it with other officials on whether to give the information or not. We cant just give the hospital information to strangers." We then wrote a letter and sent it but they never responded to it as yet many weeks later.

WE SPOKE TO MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS AND VISITED WATER TREATMENT PLANTS

On the investigation done by the SAGRC activists on the 7th of April 2015, the lady who is working at the sewer and wastewater management said "I don't drink tap water. I buy purified bottled water because the one coming from the tap is full of manganese and should I consume it, it will affect my unborn baby".

Theo van Vuuren the municipality administrator was quoted in a Witbank news article, "The current situation in Emalahleni in respect of water quality is problematic. Since 2013 until recently we have managed to improve the efficiency in water purification and could guarantee the community top quality water flowing from the purification works". From our observation this is not true.

We spoke with officials form the Department of Water. They explained to us the water treatment cycle. They insist that they purify the water before sending it to residents. We then went to the water treatment plant to see for ourselves. What we saw made us believe that raw sewage was being sent to the rivers without proper treatment.

OUR CONCLUSION

We think our municipality is responsible for the poor quality of our water. They are not operating the system properly. We need to come together as a community and with assistance from water experts, investigate the source of the poor water supply. We must push our municipalities to comply with the laws of the country, which says access to drinking water is a right. We must monitor the work done in the water treatment plants and see that they are operating properly.

Lastly we must educate the community that water is a right and they should not accept poor drinking water.

Untreated water causes severe illnesses. ***Image credit: Community Monitors***

RUSTENBURG

IKEMELENG: TAILING DAMS AND SMELTERS CREATE RESPIRATORY ILLNESSES

By Buti Botopela, Steven Ramokhula and George Jacobs, Ikemeleng (Kgetse ya tsie)

This community of Ikemeleng also called Matebeleng by residents, is located in the middle of five mines. The mining tailing dams and smelters is the cause of respiratory illnesses in the community.

During the windy season one can hardly see other people from a distance of 100-200 m away due to the severe dust. The cloud of dust covers the community making it hard for people living with asthma to breathe. Those of us with no respiratory illness experience nose and eye irritation, dry cough and dust particles in our mucus.

We conducted interviews to know how many people have suffered due to the dust and find out if our community is aware of the health hazard of poor air quality and their general views on the matter. We had 12 interviewees. Unfortunately we couldn't balance gender because female residents were reluctant to respond, we only managed to talk to two female interviewees. Of the 12 people interviewed:

- All were aware of the impact the dust has on their health.
- Two have lost loved ones due to poor air quality linked illness.
- Three have suffered from TB and are mine workers, and also experience black mucus because they do not receive proper PPE (personal protective equipment) from the companies they work for.

A male resident in his early 30's who wished to remain anonymous as he is employed by a company called EnviroServ, which is contracted by Aquarius to maintain their tailing dams, said "yes the company has a system in place, where they installed water sprayers to minimize the dust but it's not effective because they're poorly maintained".

Ikemeleng residents who are mine workers are aware of the health impact from the mine. A man who calls himself Mashigo who is a contract employee at Aquarius said that "Aquarius has two stock pile dams and when its windy all the dust gets blown into the community, dust full of gases. Even when you are not a mine employee, this also affects the community." Mashigo added that "Aquarius could try to remedy the problem by proper PPE for employees and planting grass or plants to minimize the dust volume to the community. SAMANCOR had no dams but built a clinic for the community and all Aquarius has done is fence the clinic".

From the interviews with the males we could pick up why the women did not want to respond to us, it said that the clinic staff is rude and only recognises Setswana speaking patients not others. Mrs Mofolo told us that both her and her late husband suffered from TB, he also suffered from Asthma and it was found, in his autopsy / post-mortem report, that dust particles were found in his lungs.

We feel that there is more to this issue than meets the eye. With the time allocated for the investigation we couldn't do much. We then conclude that a proper research should be conducted to hold the companies accountable. The department of health should conduct TB and other respiratory screenings as they did years back and this time issue the report. The companies should install dust buckets in the community and train some members of the community to monitor. The department of environmental affairs should also be involved to ensure that the companies around meet their emission standards. With help of the BMF and other NGO's we could host a workshop to create awareness among the community on issues of poor air quality and how to advocate for accountability.

Smog and air pollution in Ikemeleng. ***Image credit: Community Monitors***

LUKA, MOGANO: NO SAFE SPACES TO PLAY IN MINING VILLAGES

By Karabo Ramuntla and Tebogo Lenkoe (MoRaRa youth organization)

Mining has brought nothing but social illness to our community. They have taken away our land, our children don't have safe places to play anymore. We need recreational facilities to remedy the problem caused. We spoke to residents in Luka, Mogono to get their views on this problem.

Luka,Mogono is a village in the north of Rustenburg, located in the heart of the platinum mining region. Our forefathers lost their land to the Afrikaner settlers and bought back sections with their own money. They built their own church, schools, boreholes, planted crops and most families had a herd of cattle. Luka started experiencing Platinum mining in the 1960's. The community of Luka is currently surrounded by the mines and the dumps of Impala Platinum Mine and their subcontractors: Omnia mineral process and Concor in which the Royal Bafokeng Authority have shares.

With all the mining activities taking large pieces of land there are no proper recreational facilities and no development or improvement on the existing facilities. Lack of recreational facilities in our community context Luka, means our community has poor sports grounds with lack of resources (toilets, changing rooms, proper floor etc), no library, no park, no gym, or any other places for young people. Today large numbers of young people in the community engage in substance abuse and crime. There is a growing number of young girls falling pregnant and the school dropout rate is high .

We conducted a series of interviews with Mogono residents to hear their views, experiences on the issue at hand and what they recommend as a remedy to the problem.

The two groups of people we interviewed were sports lovers and players. They said that the village soccer grounds are not safe, has thorns, stones and dust from the soil and it doesn't have facilities (goalposts, change rooms, toilets or water taps).

Mathapelo Rapoo, a 20 year unemployed female resident said that she too stopped participating in her favourite sport because of poor facilities. "I played basketball for 3 years at Thethe high school and went to the gym at the youth centre. Now I stopped playing because the youth centre is too far and the pitch nearby is not safe. It is dirty, and can hurt us while playing. Lastly there is no coach to train us"

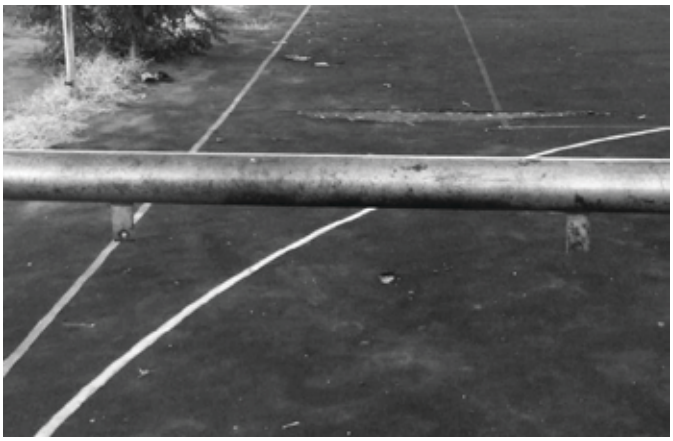
Kabelo Rapoo, a 22 year old male resident said that the lack of recreational facilities in mining affected communities leads to people resorting to alcohol to lower their stress "No! the mines are not developing the community sufficiently, and we are not motivated enough so we spend our time rather smoking and drinking beer" said Kabelo.

The 10 year-old boys named Tshiamo Magono and Motheo Ramong wished they had a library and good sports facilities: "I wish there could be a proper soccer grounds and a library for us to learn at and stay healthy" said Tshiamo.

We conclude that mining has had no good contribution in our community. We believe that mining companies operating around our community should consult with the community about building the social infrastructure. With no proper recreational facilities in upcoming years we will experience an increase in the of level of crime and poor health.

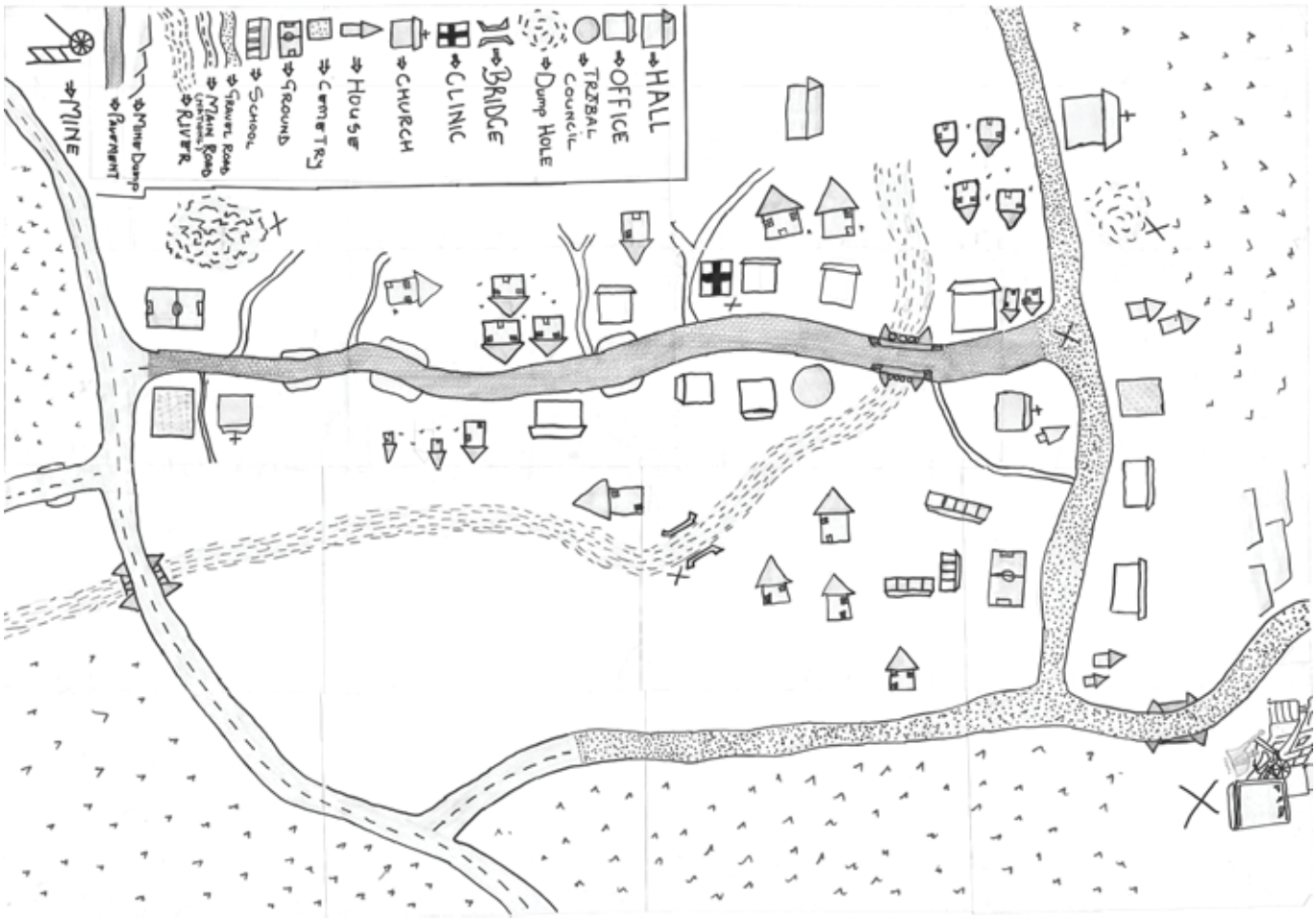
Othusitse Rapoo a 45 year old male resident said "with no proper recreational facilities in the next 5 years we will be breeding a lost generation. With no libraries we would have lost a chance to educate them. There will be a break down of social cohesion, lack of sense of identity and a serious problem in the community. Every community needs well resourced recreational facility and lack of it may lead to all kinds of social ills.

Recreational facilities are not only for young people but for elders as well. It is the responsibility of leadership, government and those at large to ensure that communities have recreational facilities. This has been a matter long before other various departments including the Department of Mineral Resources".



Undermaintained recreational facilities are a hazard for young children and adults. ***Image credit: Community Monitors***

RUSTENBURG



MOTHLABE: A BRIEF BACKGROUND TO A MINING VILLAGE

The Motlhabe village located in Mankwe, North West was established in the 19th century. The area is under the Moses Kotane local municipality. The people of the area and other neighbouring villages are called "Bakgatla ba kgafela" and their animal totem is a monkey which in Setswana is "Kgabo" which is the community's native language. When you address a villager by "Kgabo", this shows the utmost respect. The area is under leadership of Kgosi (Chief) Nyalala Pilane and their local headman is Sefatlhi Pilane. The community traditionally lived in mud thatch roofed houses, depended on livestock. Each family s owned herd of cattle and engaged in crop farming. Men would hunt and use animal skins as attires, the chief would dress in leopard skin as a symbol of higher authority in the community.

The indigenous villagers of Motlhabe originated in a place called Wipkleinfontein and were relocated in 1936 by the Apartheid government. Other members of the community were forcefully relocated from Matlakgape which is now known as Black Rhino game reserve. The relocation lead to less farming activities in the area.

In 2008 mining started 5km to 7km away from the village. The Pilanesburg Platinum mine set up an open cast mining operation. The community has experienced high environmental destruction as a result of the mining operation. Air pollution from blasting, bad roads due to mine trucks and other social and health illness. Although some members have been employed by the mine there is more that needs to be done by the mine to develop the community.

MACHARORA: TEENAGE PREGNANCY

By Tracy Tshose

Teenage pregnancy seems to be affecting mostly poor communities, where there's a huge lack of information and early sexual behaviour amongst other common factors. A report on news24's website on the 6th September 2015, stated that more than 99 000 school girls in SA fell pregnant in 2013. A provincial breakdown showed that in the North West Province 7359 teenagers fell pregnant.

In this article we specifically look at the Macharora community which is located in the Rustenburg platinum mining district. We spoke to residents and previous / current teen-mothers and asked them what they had to say about the matter. We also went to a local high school, Charora High and sat down with a Life Orientation teacher there, who would like to remain anonymous. In the month of May 2016 she gave us the us the current number of pregnant pupils:

- In grade 11 a total of 3 learners were pregnant. Two of the 3 had to drop out of school.
- In grade 12 the same figure of 3 appeared with 1 of the 3 also dropping out for the duration of her pregnancy and is said to be returning thereafter.
- The previous year a total of 8 learners were pregnant.

Whilst factors contributing to teenage pregnancy differ from com-

munity to community, some of the key factors that were pointed out by a few community members were: peer pressure, coming from poverty stricken backgrounds, young girls having to engage in relationships with older men as well as the lack of using birth control methods.

The Life Orientation teacher we spoke to stated that they do inform the learners about contraceptives and other birth control methods. "We talk to them about contraceptives, they don't want to listen. For them it is a taboo", said the teacher. While it is unclear where the ignorance comes from, she also mentioned that maybe it is because of the side- effects caused by the contraceptives that the girls are reluctant to use them.

Goitsemang (39) a resident at the section of Robega (located in Macharora) was once also pregnant at an early age. When she first had her child she was only in standard 8 (grade 10) and 16 years old. Her child's father was very much present and took full responsibility even though unemployed. She is currently unemployed therefore spends most of her days at home, watching teenagers as they go about their daily life. As there's a huge lack of recreational facilities in the area, Goitsemang stated that instead teenagers go out looking for entertainment in local taverns where girls end up meeting older men who work in different sectors, but mostly miners.

Falling pregnant at high school level is one of the most common factors for school dropouts, especially for school girls. Gloria Lekgotlhe (20) got pregnant with her first child, who passed away at the age of 19. By then she had already dropped out of school, whilst in middle school. At the time of her parents finding out about her pregnancy, they gave her grief about it and then she decided to leave home. She revealed that her baby's father, who was 27 years old at that time, was supportive as he was employed at a gardening service company. And like Goitsemang, Gloria was well aware of contraceptives but she did not use them. Currently Gloria has another child who she was carrying during the death of her fist born with a different father. She said that her plan for the future was to get a job, "I want to go find a job so I can support my child, whether in the local mines or anywhere else".

The million dollar question: who is responsible for eradicating this matter before it escalates? Is it the parents, teachers or should government try harder in the distribution of information?

WONDERKOP: BAD ROADS MAKE HOLES IN OUR POCKETS

By Amogelang Tabane and Gift Kgomo (Wonderkop village)

It has been 22 years since South Africa had gained its freedom and democracy, but the question still rises, was freedom given only to the urban areas and cities and not the rural areas as well?

Wonderkop village is a black community settlement that has more than twenty thousand residents. But with that being said it doesn't mean that it is well catered for everyone to live according to their daily needs. Wonderkop village has the worst crafted roads. It is a large village that has only one main tar road.

As a community we have collectively tried to fix these bad roads, by means of filling the potholes with soil, grass and recycled old house building materials but each time this happens the worst case scenario resurfaces, as climate plays a huge role. Rainy days are the worst, every time it rains all the effort that the community had taken goes to waste as the water flows and takes everything with it, then the roads become even worse than what they were at first.

We interviewed residents in the community to get an insight on how this also affects the community at large. Mr Mpangeni Bulawayo, a local taxi driver, says he has reached a boiling point, "I have had enough with these bad roads, I wish something could be done to fix this as it is impacting very badly on my taxi business because residents request deliveries not considering the fact that I will be forced to use the uneven bumpy roads." He also feels that it is the local mine's responsibility to fix these roads as they also use the road to deliver mine workers with their buses, "when they fix their roads they should also fix local roads because they also use them," said Mpangeni Bulawayo.

Masan Mishly, a local Pakistani business man also complained: "no one wants to do my deliveries anymore as they all complain about the uneven gravel road, even the bread gets delivered late because they use the road as an excuse, and business is normally very good in the morning", he continued, "so we lose a lot of customers who come to buy bread because when the truck comes to deliver bread late my customers have already gone to work".

As the community we wish that the government and the local mine can do its part when it comes to service delivery by just fixing Wonderkop roads once and for all. This road puts holes in everyone's pockets and this has to stop immediately.

Left, A teenage girl from Macharora sits with her newborn child. Right, Dirt roads are costing residents valuable time and money.
Image credit: Community Monitors

VAAL

GOVERNMENT'S PLAN FOR POLLUTION IN THE VAAL, NINE YEARS ON: ARE WE THERE YET?

By Total Lethae

On 21 April 2006 the minister of environmental affairs and tourism formally declared the Vaal triangle area and surrounding region a national air pollution hotspot—or a priority area—in terms of section 18(1) of the national environmental management air quality act.

It's been a facade now, since the declaration and it seems that we are not there yet. This article seeks to reflect on the measures taken by the community, the local municipality and the surrounding industries in Boipatong. Boipatong lies to the west of Arcelor Mittal steel mill and to the north are a number of firms that produce tins, fencing, steel drum and nails. And to the east is the waste landfill.

Waste management still faces challenges as more illegal dumping sites are erected by none other than the residents. As a result these dumping sites are a source of fires and littering. During winter children burn tires , plastic and trees in these dumps and sometimes get burned. And when it is windy papers and plastics hangs on the residents fences and litters the streets. The conditions in the landfill are still hazardous. Waste pickers are working without proper safety gear to protect them from dust and other particles.

The other challenge which is prevalent is that of contaminated stream water discharged from these industries and leakages from sewerage pipes. Streams where this contaminated water flows has no aquatic life left like crabs, frogs and fish. However, streams away from this water still has frogs and crabs living there.

Weather patterns last year December has shown that climate change is here. Last year December we experienced the worst drought after some years. Farmers lost their stock and prices for vegetables ballooned as a result of the drought. But it will have seems that we haven't learn anything from the situation. The human activity on climate change still prevail through burning of coal , oil, and gas as a source of energy. Our industries seem to be still polluting the area. Emissions can be seen everyday especially from the giant steel mill. Then, it is clear that since 2006 not much has been done, although this must be a learning lesson. As per air quality act it is our constitutional right to access to clean and healthy environment. Moreover the community approach towards environmental issues must be capacitated and also they must become active participants.

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VEJA with groundwork brought activists together in a camp in Parys in the Free State on the issue of climate change. This was at the same time when world leaders were meeting in Paris, France. The first camp was held in Durban, December 2013 and a declaration was adopted. The second camp was held in Parys North of Free State Province, from the 2nd to the 4th December 2015. The people's Climate Declaration was then revised. Below we present declaration at the end of the camp.

STATEMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S CLIMATE CAMP 2015.
PARYS, FREE STATE.

We are people's organisations from the polluted heart of South Africa, from the frontlines of the struggle to prevent dangerous climate change. We are from the hotspots of fossil fuel pollution in the Vaal Triangle, the Highveld and south Durban, from lands threatened by new coal mines and fracking from the Cape to KwaZulu Natal to Mpumalanga, from the lands wasted by gold mining in eGoli, and from the dumps that are monuments to an economy of waste.

We are fighting for survival now, for clean air to breathe and clean water to drink, for good land to make our homes and for our livelihoods. We are also fighting for the future survival of

everybody's children and grandchildren. We are already feeling the impacts of climate change. Last year it was floods across the north of the country and drought in KZN. Now it is drought and heat waves across the land.

We have made the 2015 People's Climate Camp in Parys, Free State, on the banks of the Vaal River. Here the Vaal runs dirty. It is polluted by the heavy energy, chemical and minerals industries just upstream, by acid drainage from the mines and mine dumps and by leaking municipal sewage works. We stand in solidarity with the people of Tumahole, Parys, who are poorly supplied with dirty water.

We know that those who are called the world's leaders, meeting for the annual climate negotiations in Paris, France, will not take meaningful action. They will offer only false solutions.

We meet knowing that the fight for real solutions and a liveable future is in the hands of ordinary people. It is in our hands. We commit ourselves to creating awareness of the causes and impacts of climate change within our communities and to building a powerful people's movement of resistance to the ruin of our world, a movement for environmental and climate justice.

As we struggle against the dirty production and waste of the fossil fuel age we are also building alternatives. We are waste pickers who are doing the real business of recycling and fighting for zero waste, we are agro-ecologists fighting to restore the land and for a world where people have control of their food system, and we are together fighting for a future in which clean energy is produced under democratic control.

Government says it supports the African position of limiting global warming to under 1.5˚C above pre-industrial temperatures. We call on government to act as if they mean it. It is urgently necessary that greenhouse gas emissions peak early and the decline steeply – globally and in South Africa. The climate crisis does not admit of a late peak and a decade long plateau before real reductions as proposed by government. The climate crisis does not admit of any further development of coal, oil or gas resources or of burning resources and livelihoods in waste incinerators.

The economy shaped by the use of cheap and dirty energy and cheap labour has made South Africa the most unequal society in the world. Nearly 60% of people live in poverty according to official statistics. In many of our townships, no-one has formal employment. There is more work in clean production and repairing the damage done by corporate polluters to our health, our homes and our environment. The corporations that profited from destroying the country should now pay for restoring it.

We cannot afford a government that is not fully convinced even by its own inadequate proposals on responding to climate change. Government must take responsibility. That means all government departments, provinces and municipalities. It means the departments responsible for minerals, energy, trade, industry and economic development as well as those responsible for environment, water and sanitation. It means the departments responsible for health, education, land and human settlements. It means the treasuries.

All are responsible for serving and protecting people and the environment that we depend on. We did not put them there to protect corporate interests and promote a way of development that is destroying us. We did not put them there to outsource community development to big corporations in the pretence that this 'offsets' the damage corporates are allowed to do. This only divides the people.

We did not put them there to negotiate false solutions to the climate and environment crisis. These false solutions work for corporate control and against democratic control. They include nuclear power, carbon capture and storage and other projects misnamed as 'clean coal', and all offsets and market mechanisms.

We call on all government departments and institutions to work with us to create awareness of climate change. We call on them to build resources at local level and to work with us in creating a transition to clean energy and production, in restoring the land damaged by dirty production based on fossil fuels and by industrial agribusiness and plantations, and in building well-made homes and settlements. We call on them to do their work in the full awareness of the climate and environmental crisis.

At all levels, our government is evading its responsibilities. This stems from the collusion of political and corporate elites that have captured the state for private gain. Government claims to act on the authority of the people. We commit ourselves to holding them accountable for what they do.

At our first climate camp in Durban, November 2013, we set out our positions in the People's Climate Camp Declaration. We reaffirm that agenda for climate and energy justice, for environmental, social and economic justice. We reaffirm the conclusion that we can all live well with each other and with the earth. Where no-one grabs a surfeit, everyone can have enough.

Left: A community monitor surveys a dump site in the Vaal. Right: Community member's planting. ***Image credit: Community Monitors***

ACTION VOICES

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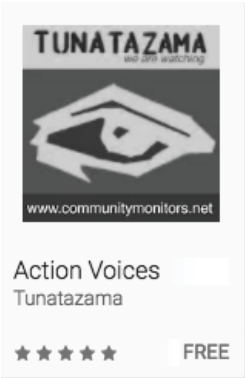

Now you can keep up do date through our Action Voices App.

This is currently only available for Android through Google Play Store (iOS for iPhone to follow soon).

How to Download the App:

1. Go to "Play Store" on your phone
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COMMUNITY ACTIVISTS ALERT - A NEW ACTION

Our most important tool so far has been the monitors Investigative Report which we publish on our web page, in this magazine, or broadcast as a podcast.

Now we have added a new tool: The Community Activist Alert. This is a short, sharp, quick report on any incident, happening or event in the village or township.

The alerts are posted on our website, and appear on our App (download it!) as well as on our Facebook page (like our page).

We are piloting this new action over June – August and hope to have it up and running from September.

Monitors involved in developing the Community Activists Alert in Johannesburg on the 8th of June, 2016.
Image credit: Community Monitors

ABOUT ACTION VOICES MAGAZINE

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- Rustenburg: BUA Mining Communities
- Klerksdorp: Justice and Peace
- Welkom: GUBICO
- Vaal: VEJA
- Ekurhuleni: EEO
- Mpumalanga: MYACC, SAGRC, MEJN, Ihawu Lemvelo
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