

AT THE MINE GATE

NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US!!!



October ISSUE

2022

Special Interest Articles:



With all this in mind, there have also been issues with Sibanye and Dolamatic mines evicting people from their homes



Broken water valves, burst pipes, and low reticulation pressure have become the norm in Atok villages



The creation of space elevates visibility, reducing the probability of LGBTQIA+ exclusion in the fight against climate change



Coordinator's Corner



In this activism instalment, I tell you more about myself, and the anti-mining resistance movement in the Phalaborwa region of Limpopo. For decades, men have risked their lives to protect their homes and ways of life. To sustain their struggle over time, knowledge has been passed to younger generations, who learn about the struggles of their elders through activism. Young and old are united as they protest against those who use force and as they dedicate their lives to educating communities affected by these injustices.

Meet Lan Tebogo Mashale Our National Organizer

It all started in 2004 in Pretoria. After seeing a lot of unemployed people, I registered an unemployment union of South Africa. And after returning to Phalaborwa in 2009, myself and friends started the Khaloni Development Agency where we assisted the community with computer training, how to use the internet, and educational and business advice.

While we were consumed with wanting to do more to help our forgotten communities, community members in Phalaborwa started uniting to fight mining houses that were exploiting them. In 2015 there was a huge strike over mining houses exporting our minerals instead of adopting beneficiation. In 2016, I became the Chairperson of the Ba-Phalaborwa Local Municipality LED Forum and I was also the community liaison officer for mining (small-scale). After that, I was the Mopani District LED Forum's Chairperson on Trade and Manufacturing until 2019, when I resigned over those only concerned about self-enrichment.

Between 2013 and 2019, the Ba-Phalaborwa Community Forum asked MACUA for assistance. Eventually MACUA was launched in the area and I became its National Organiser. I still hold this position because I believe we still have much work to do.

With mandates from local community members every step of the way, Lan began mounting a campaign against the Phalaborwa Mining Company and Foskor Mine. He filed complaints with government authorities, bringing along community representatives to meet representatives of the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy. He organised a local assembly where community members were given the opportunity to formally voice their concerns. He also led a protest where people peacefully demanded their rightful say in the project.

All of Lan's campaigns are meant to bring attention to important environmental and social issues, as well as inspire positive change. They may appear unattainable to some, but they comprise an abundance of simple lessons and tips that can be adapted into anyone to live in a manner that is beneficial to the community. Through his life, he inspires others to make simple, small changes that blossom into a great change at a personal and societal level.

Letter from the editor:

Although we are over 300 days into 2022, it is never too late to start fresh and make a change in your lifestyle for the better. Even if you have already given into those old habits, continue to push yourself to renew and redirect your energy to achieve all of the plans and goals you made for yourself, your family and community during the remaining days of the year.

If you are reading this, welcome to the *At The Mine Gate* community. As Editor of this historical publication that was recently founded by the MACUA-WAMUA Media and Communication Desk, I invite you again to fully indulge yourself and join our staff on a journey through time, history and culture as we celebrate and critique this edition, our progress, and the experiences we have gained from our two previous issues.

The remaining days of the year should not be treated as a passing holiday with us only engaging in trivial "soul food" dinners in dining halls and regurgitating the same tired facts. Celebrating and acknowledging the achievements of people from the African diaspora from all over the world is a lifestyle that can only be demonstrated through the love and respect of Black people and our culture on a day-to-day basis.

What we have achieved so far inspires me to challenge myself as a Black activist in South Africa to be excellent, intelligent and successful, while at the same time combating white supremacy at every social and economic level. I challenge you to think about your own impact during this time of remembrance and celebration. I challenge you to self-reflect and self-critique. We can all learn from the mistakes and successes of others, no matter their race. Black history is South African history at the end of the day. Do not let the textbooks lie to you.

Some people have asked why we decided to start *At The Mine Gate*, a publication for mining-affected communities to tell their stories and voice their opinions on how they are exploited by mining companies and suffer because of poor service delivery from the government, and poor treatment from the rest of the world. But instead of providing those persons with a defence of why we should exist, I will respond with this.

Enjoy Your Reading
Gilbert Moela



Bridging the Knowledge Gap with Obakeng Ramare

The Importance of the Climate Justice School Workshop

This project seeks to provide a space where those directly impacted by climate change can share their concerns, stories, and ideas about how to respond to their immediate needs and build resilience, while building the community agency to articulate their issues to contribute to ensuring a transition that is just and equitable.

A critical focus of the project revolves around ensuring that global priorities and local realities can be engaged on together. Decisions taken at a local level have a significant contribution to make towards resolving the global crises. By the same token, decisions that are made at a global level often have consequences, often severe, at the local level.

The need to build strong and resilient organisational structures in communities that are both marginalised and directly impacted by climate change, are critical to address the egregious structural violence that continues to legitimise patterns of disadvantage, such as racial and gender inequality.

The Climate Justice Project School Workshop has been pivotal in the Climate Justice Project. It is important for the young generation to be aware of the impact of climate change in the world and how it directly affects their communities.

The workshops have been a great success with the selected students being very active, interested and engaging. These workshops are important as we believe that through this initiative, we are also grooming young activists who will always look out for the betterment of their communities.

Corruption has led our youth to digging their own graves

By Seipati Mokoatsi

The community of Klerksdorp is living in fear every day. We have a huge problem of crime in our area where young people choose to break into people's houses and work with illegal miners so that they have money. Most of them say they do this because they have been applying for jobs for a long time, but are still unemployed, so they have no choice but to do what they must to get money.

The mines are not engaging with the community at all. When you ask the youth who are employed on the mines how they got their jobs, most of them say the same thing: you will never get employed by just submitting your CV, but you have to have connections and money for cold drink to be able to get employed. Even in the municipality, you pay to get employed. This has led our youth to do terrible things that puts their lives and their loved ones' lives in great danger. Nowadays they collect bottles from people's houses so that they can go and sell them at bottle stores and get money in return. If they see them in your yard and you refuse to hand them over, they come at night while you are sleeping and take them. They also go around asking to clean yards, but they don't just clean them, they look around for things to come back for at night to steal them.

"Since this thing of children being allowed to sell bottles to people who sell them to bottle stores, we have a big problem. We do not sleep at night because we are scared that they will come and take our things in our yards and maybe rape those of us who live with our children only without any males. This must end. We cannot take it anymore," says Joyce Jasson.

We once had community members who volunteered to deal with criminals by beating them because the police did nothing, but the very same police arrested them saying they do not have the right to do that and they have to report to them. These community members gave up and crime has escalated. Now, we are receiving help from local taxi drivers to deal with crime. You pay them, they get the criminals and beat them until they give you your things back.

"It is not like we enjoy taking money from the community, but we have to because paying us is for us to be able to pay for bail if one of us gets arrested. We save that money we do not spend it. We just want to see our community be better than it is. These criminals are stealing from us too and must deal with them so that they can know what they are doing is wrong", says Ntate Talaki.

The most heartbreaking issue is our youth working with the illegal miners. They make deals with them that involve money and often end in our youth losing their lives in the most painful way.

Also, innocent people continue to die because they fight with guns. Some claim that it is illegal miners, but we are not sure about this because there are some gangsters who use guns. Corruption must come to an end so that things can go back to being better.



The creation of safe space elevates visibility, reducing probability of LGBTIQ+ exclusion in the fight against climate change

By Maria Baloi

The LGBTIQ+ community in Mogalakwena has come together to fight against climate change. We met Elina Mashao, who is the co-founder of the LGBTIQ+ Go Green Foundation in Mogalakwena and asked her to tell us what inspired her to start this initiative. This is what she had to say:

I was born and brought up in this very municipality. I always heard and saw the community complaining about service delivery etc. and I took it upon myself to gather my rainbow community so that we can bring about change within our communities. What gave birth to this initiative was the fact that we refuse to be dependent on the government for everything. Instead of always complaining, we decided to inspire change through working together. The name of our initiative is LGBTIQ+ Go Green Foundation and we pride ourselves in bringing change where it is mostly needed. We are actually focused on keeping our environment clean and to fight against climate change.

Climate change is a very crucial matter at this day and age, and it keeps getting worse by the day. We have noticed that many people within our communities have no knowledge regarding climate change, which is one of the reasons we took it upon ourselves to teach them ways in which they could be part of the solution and not the problem. A lot has taken a toll within our environment, we believe it is time to go green, and that is what inspired us to name our organisation the LGBTIQ+ Go Green Foundation. By doing so, we believe we will not only save our planet, but a lot of lives, and also preserve the beautiful species such as rhinos for our future generations and other generations to come.

What we do is to go around the communities picking up litter and recycling it. We plant trees where we see they are scarce and teach the community against tree cutting. Our journey has not been easy, but believe me, it is one journey worth walking. We are struggling with funding and seeds for the trees that we plant within our communities, especially because it is the rainbow family that is running this initiative, and we are hoping for the best results especially with capacitating the future generation regarding the dangers of climate change.

We are working with MACUA-WAMUA, Eviro Vito and 350.org as we are all fighting for the same thing. These are organisations that have given everything for the people and what is good for them. Partnering or rather them being our stakeholders is more than a privilege as they have been around and can take us through what is needed to succeed in our initiative.



They're being robbed. What will R40,000 for them?

By Pretty Ndaba

In Mogalakwena's mineral-rich eastern region, community farms and grazing fields are increasingly being taken over by mines. In the semi-urban rural town of Tshamahansi for example, landowners have seen the environment change drastically. What used to be a lush forest is now a vast mining field with open pits. Residents have been in conflict with mining companies for months, accusing them of land grabbing.

"Before I was born, villagers here were involved in subsistence farming, but things have taken another turn with the Ivanplats," says an elderly resident.

"Since they've arrived, we no longer have the possibility to work in our own fields. Firstly, because we've been expropriated and secondly, no one in the village has the right to benefit from the Ivanplats economic fallout. Once, there were big trees here, it was all a dense forest. Today, it has become more like a savannah. "

In this town, which is over 40km south of Polokwane, residents look at the past with envy. They regret how cohabitation with the mining companies has turned out. Ivanplats has resorted to paying R40,000 to those who have signed release papers for their land using traditional chiefs as witnesses to these transactions. "Some of the community members didn't agree to what Ivanplats mine is doing, some members raised their voice to the representative of Ivanplats that they don't sign those forms, unfortunately the mine and indunas overpowered their rights... Parents didn't have say to their land due to indunas who decided on their behalf... The unfair part is that the mine is going to remove some people that are close to the mine where they want to plant it...eish it's a disaster," says a community member. Ivanplats promised the community members who own the land that they will be paid around R40,000 per person. The mine has taken their banking details.

"They're being robbed. What will R40,000 do for them? It can't even take children to varsity, is just a change...What Ivanplats is trying to do in the community of Tshamahansi is really unfair. It seems like the community is desperate for money the way they're being treated with mine and indunas

"Our youth struggle to get jobs in our own land, while the mine is busy operating. They promised people jobs and still up to date nothing has changed...Youth of Hlongwane section in Tshamahansi rushed to an induna on Sunday the 2nd of October to complain about this issue of not having jobs in their land... So, the mine promised them jobs as they are going to plant another mine in the community of Tshamahansi" the community member says.

Residents are fast giving up hope. Not only are they losing their land, the mine is hiring people from outside the community, which is unacceptable.

By Gugulethu Mayaba

With all this in mind, there have also been issues with Sibanye and Dolamatic mines evicting people from their homes

Coming from bustling and vibrant Soweto, my family decided four years ago to move to a small mining town in the West Rand called Venterspost. It seemed dry and without many resources, with less than 3000 community members from different ethnicities, backgrounds and cultures. It had wildlife, including a variety of birds, and livestock farms. I decided to do some research to get to know my small town a little better by conducting interviews with some of the residents of Venterspost. The main focus was on mining activities, service delivery and other issues that continue to plague the community.

I spoke to an interesting 59-year-old white tannie (aunty), who had many stories to tell as she had spent most of her life (28 years) in Venties, as it is commonly referred to by locals.

All the houses on McWilliams, Carlton and Jones streets were privately owned. There was no public transport, residents had to ask for lifts from neighbours or hike into Westonaria Town to do their shopping. There was a mobile clinic with limited recourses, a shopping centre, a school, a public swimming pool and a post office. The mine bought some of the houses to accommodate its employees.

Transport became better and the mobile clinic moved into a building as the years went by. But then sinkholes started appearing. Buildings and other structures had to be demolished. All that was left was the clinic, a few houses, the primary school, a shop and a park. The once vibrant town has turned into a ghost town.

With all this in mind, there have also been issues with Sibanye and Dolamatic mines evicting people from their homes. Houses had to be deserted and some were destroyed. One such person is a mother of four children, who worked for Sibanye from 2013 to 2017, and was then retrenched. She refurbished the house to turn it into a home for her and her small children, who went to the primary school. A sit-down was arranged between affected community members and the mines in 2018, however, no feedback was given until May 2022, when they were served with court orders to evict the houses. The matter is pending at the Johannesburg High Court for November 2022, when she will hopefully know her fate.

As I travelled along the gravel roads, I met a youth who has lived with her family in Venties since 2006. She had much to say about being desperate for a brighter future.

“Venties is underdeveloped, with little or no opportunities. We had no public transport till 2019. The councilor seems to have forgotten about us as he never keeps to his word. We go months without street lights, the sewage is always blocked, and cables are always stolen so we also go days without electricity. The cutting of grass has completely stopped, which resulted in grass growing so long that you can barely see a small child. It is a great challenge to get the councilor to hold meetings with us to address or concerns and issues.

“The big trucks from the mines have ruined our roads as it is mostly gravel and the tar road is riddled with potholes. There is also the issue of sinkholes. Is it also not safe for us as they emit dust and drive very fast on our small roads. There is no skills development (agriculture, computer, sewing, tech etc.) to uplift the youth so that we don't only rely on employment as there are little or no job opportunities.

To my understanding, every community has a budget. Where does the Venties budget go?”





Broken water valves, bursting pipes and low reticulation pressure are the norm in Atok villages

For decades we have heard that access to clean water changes everything. Not only does it improve the health of entire communities, it also gives women freedom to earn income and children time to go to school because they don't have to spend hours walking miles daily just to fetch water

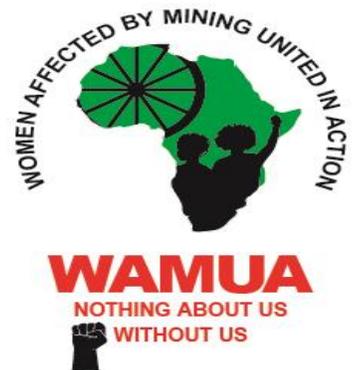
The scarcity of water in the communities around Atok, formally known as Bokoni platinum mines, is a pressing issue. People who lived here for long, such as Mr Kupa, say that in the past water was never an issue.

"In the old days the water here was never a problem because the mines did not have long shaft, and so they were not using too much water because the shafts were not that many," he says.

The lack of water has affected all the communities, and some like Monametse and Mafeane, don't have access to water every day. They receive water once a week, or twice if it's a good week. Miss Shikoane says sometimes they go to other communities to ask for water to do essential chores like cleaning and cooking.

Mr Riet added that due to the scarcity of water, they cannot plant anything or have backyard gardens. "And also, it's a challenge because the water sometimes takes more than four days to come... We are forced to fetch from the stream, drinking untested, and also we are drinking with both wild and domestic animals."

In Sefateng, a pipe burst recently. People living in homes made from mud were put in grave danger. When Mr Mabotha, who is a member of the community was asked how they had been affected, he replied: "We (live in) fear. If this happens again, we are not sure if the outcomes will be like this. The people will become victims of floods."



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