

Report reveals unfulfilled promises and broken dreams in mining-relocated village

A study reveals the huge gap between the carefully constructed corporate spin and the real experiences of the locals when communities have to make way for mining operations.

One particular community is the subject of the latest Policy Gap report by the Bench Marks Foundation, published, called *Life before and during mining*.



Source: Anglo Platinum

Depression, unemployment, and substance and alcohol abuse are the legacies for a community in rural Sekhukhuneland of their relocation 14 years ago to make way for a new platinum mine, according to members of the community.

The report provides detailed research into conditions of living for the affected communities before and after their relocation. It paints a grim picture of the impact of mining relocations on people, particularly in rural areas, from economic, social, cultural and environmental points of view.

These social disorders, widespread among both young and old in the village of Magobading in the Limpopo Province, are the result of poor compensation, loss of opportunities, and unfulfilled promises made to them by mining operator, Anglo Platinum, at the time of their relocation.

Unfulfilled promises

Bench Marks' involvement in Magobading began when the community approached it in 2007 for assistance in effectively engaging with the mining corporation and the government over their grievances. The community strongly felt that undertakings made by Anglo Platinum, on the basis of which it agreed to be relocated, had not been fulfilled.

The relocation to Magobading from the Maotsi, Makobakobe and Botshabelo villages took place in 2002, following an announcement by Anglo Platinum in September 2001 that it would be developing a new platinum group metals mine on three farms in the Northern Province, some 40 kilometres from Burgersfort.

The following year, 98 households on the farms were relocated to a new village, Magobading, more than 20 kilometres from their ancestral homes.

The grievances articulated to Bench Marks in 2007, which had crystallised in the five years since the move, were many and far-reaching. The community felt it had not been adequately compensated, and the jobs promised had not materialised. They were dissatisfied with the quality of the housing provided, promises for grazing land and land for cultivation had not been honoured, and access to water was unreliable.

As a result, a community of self-reliant agriculturalists had become a potential but largely unused pool of cheap labour, unemployed and desperate, and without the means to continue in the manner in which they had lived before the advent of the mine.

Putting a spin on it

This, the Bench Marks report says, is in stark contrast to the impressions created by mining corporations, using their immense public relations resources, that “without mining there will be no development, no economic growth, no poverty alleviation and that any community resistance to mining is an act against the national interest and greater good.”

“What corporations tell society about why, how, what, where and when they engage with communities is very different from how communities experience them.”

Findings

As a result of its research, the report made a number of key findings in respect of the community of Magobading, most of which confirm the community’s grievances. They include:

- While the community consented to the relocation, it did not do so from a properly informed perspective;
- The community’s protests and actions have forced the mining corporation into a continuous and long-term engagement with it;
- Scant respect was paid to the culture and heritage of the community in the relocation;
- The community was uprooted from a self-sustaining customary economy into a spatial arrangement that resembles a modern urban township;
- The community does not have the skills or means to engage with the modern economy and is located far from opportunities offered by it;
- The community has not been given title deeds for the land on which their houses are built in Magobading;
- There is no evidence of an environmental impact assessment (EIA) having been done prior to the relocation. Serious

water and land issues have ensued as well as structural problems with houses;

- There is no indication of a water use licence for the relocation project having been given;
- There is no evidence that Magobading was properly proclaimed from a farm to a township;
- There has been no respect for customary leadership arrangements as a result of which simmering tension exists in Magobading; and
- Scant respect has been paid to graves and the custom of ancestor veneration.

Memorandum of understanding

The Policy Gap report notes that Anglo Platinum and Bench Marks Foundation signed a memorandum of understanding in 2010 that includes agreement that Anglo Platinum:

- Fixes the termite-infested roof trusses of the houses and schools;
- Secures the title deed to the land on which the houses are constructed;
- Sets up a community trust fund for the people of Magobading and pays rental for land lost by the community; and
- Sorts out the water problem in Magobading.

The research involved interviews with community members in focus group discussions and individual meetings. It also reviewed company literature and reports, and newspaper articles.

The team also did an extensive review of literature including anthropological reports, relocation contracts, housing plans and academic research. It also reviewed the national legal and regulatory frameworks of mining.

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