

# **Zambia: Mining companies accused of environmental negligence**

Zambia's mines are coming under increasing and sustained criticism for repeatedly polluting drinking water sources in the Copperbelt mining region, the country's economic heartland.

Last week the country's second largest copper producer, Mopani Copper Mine, which has mining operations in Mufulira town, near the border of the Democratic Republic of Congo, accidentally discharged polluted water, after a pump malfunction failed to purify it, into the reticulated water system of a private water utility company.

Nearly 1,000 residents visited local clinics, complaining of abdominal pains, severe diarrhoea and vomiting. No fatalities were recorded, but the widespread poisoning prompted residents to take to the streets in protest and police were called in to calm the demonstrators.

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