

SPECIAL ISSUE FOR WOMEN'S MONTH



Women Should Stand With Women



I WAS RAPED AND HAD NO SUPPORT TO SEEK JUSTICE

I had just finished writing my matric examinations when my former husband came to pay for *lobola* in December 2014 to my parents in the dusty streets of Free State.

I was in my 20s at the time.

The following year, in 2015, I moved to Gauteng for the first time. But little did I know that I would encounter an experience that shaped and changed me forever. It was just a normal day, I left Carletonville using public transport to go to the Free State, where I needed to attend a class; I had to rewrite the mathematics and physical sciences tests.

On that day, my husband at the time gently requested the meter-taxi driver to look after me, because I was new in the area and had not become familiar with the surroundings.

The meter-taxi driver needed to drop me off at the Klerksdorp taxi rank where I would connect to a taxi going to the Free State. We arrived in Klerksdorp around 10am and the driver left the car, and when he came back, he said the minibus taxi would only be leaving at around 4pm.

He said he could not leave me alone at the rank. This he said, was to honour my former husband's request. He proposed to drive with me to Potchefstroom as he was dropping off commuters who needed meter taxi services. He insisted that I remain under his "care."

4pm came.

When we got back to the Taxi rank, my phone had run out of battery power, after the driver had borrowed it on our way back. He approached some men who were at the back of the rank, and when he came back, he said the minibus taxi would now be leaving around 6pm. This, according to him, meant that it was no longer safe for me to continue with my trip because it would be extremely late when I got home.

We both sat in the car.

I asked him if he could take me to the nearest cheap hotel. He said they were all expensive and suggested that I stay the night at his sister's house.

He overpowered me

Left without any choice, I reluctantly submitted to his proposal. He drove past Kanana township in the North West, until we reached one of the informal settlements.

Deep down it was becoming palpable that something was off. We arrived at one of the shacks in the informal settlement and he went outside to call one of his friends.

They caucused for a while, and both came to the car. The driver's friend grabbed my bag, threw it inside the shack and demanded that I get inside. I was so worried and terrified. When the friend left, the driver locked the door and forced himself on me. I tried to fight but he overpowered me.

After he was done raping me, he said that he was going to change the car. I begged him not to lock the door of the shack given that it was already dark, and that he could keep my cellphone.

He agreed.

I peeped through the holes in the shack as soon as he left, and I ran to a nearby shack for help. No one responded, and without anyone willing to help me, I was forced to go back to the same shack. When I arrived back at the shack, there was another man standing outside the shack by a car. He kept calling the name "Thapelo" and I did not know who that was. I asked him who he was calling. He asked: how come you do not know the name of "your boyfriend"?

I explained that the Thapelo he is referring to kidnapped and raped me. I was never meant to be in the North West. Upon hearing my story, he accompanied me to another woman who lives a few houses away from the perpetrator's shack. He explained the ordeal to the woman, and she eventually allowed me to stay overnight.



“Baby, I was so stressed where have you been?”

In the morning, the woman gave me water and asked me to bath, an offer which I respectfully declined with the hope to preserve the evidence. This seemed to upset her and she called the man who brought me to her. The man said in a firm voice: “Get into the water and bath.”

I bathed.

They said to get my clothes from the perpetrator’s shack we needed to make up a story. The devised plan was to call the perpetrator and tell him that there was a lady looking for him. He arrived around 7am. When the driver got there, he smiled, touched my chin and said: “Baby, I was so stressed where have you been?”

He was not aware that the other man and the woman already knew that he kidnapped and raped me. I explained, as per the plan, that I was looking for him the previous night when he did not come back, and I ended up getting lost.

He went inside the shack to take some KFC meat that he bought with my money the previous night and gave it to that man and the lady as a gesture of gratitude.

He gave me my phone and loaded my bag in the car. The other guy pleaded with him to make sure that I got to the taxi rank. When I got into the minibus taxi, I switched on my phone and called my husband at the time to explain what had happened to me.

I still wanted to get home in the Free State, I insisted. I went to the clinic, and they told me to go to SAPS. The officers took me to a hospital for a medical checkup.



Identify where the rape took place

After two days, I received a call from a detective in Klerksdorp to inform me that they will come to fetch me. They suggested that we drive to the informal settlement to help them identify the shack where the rape took place.

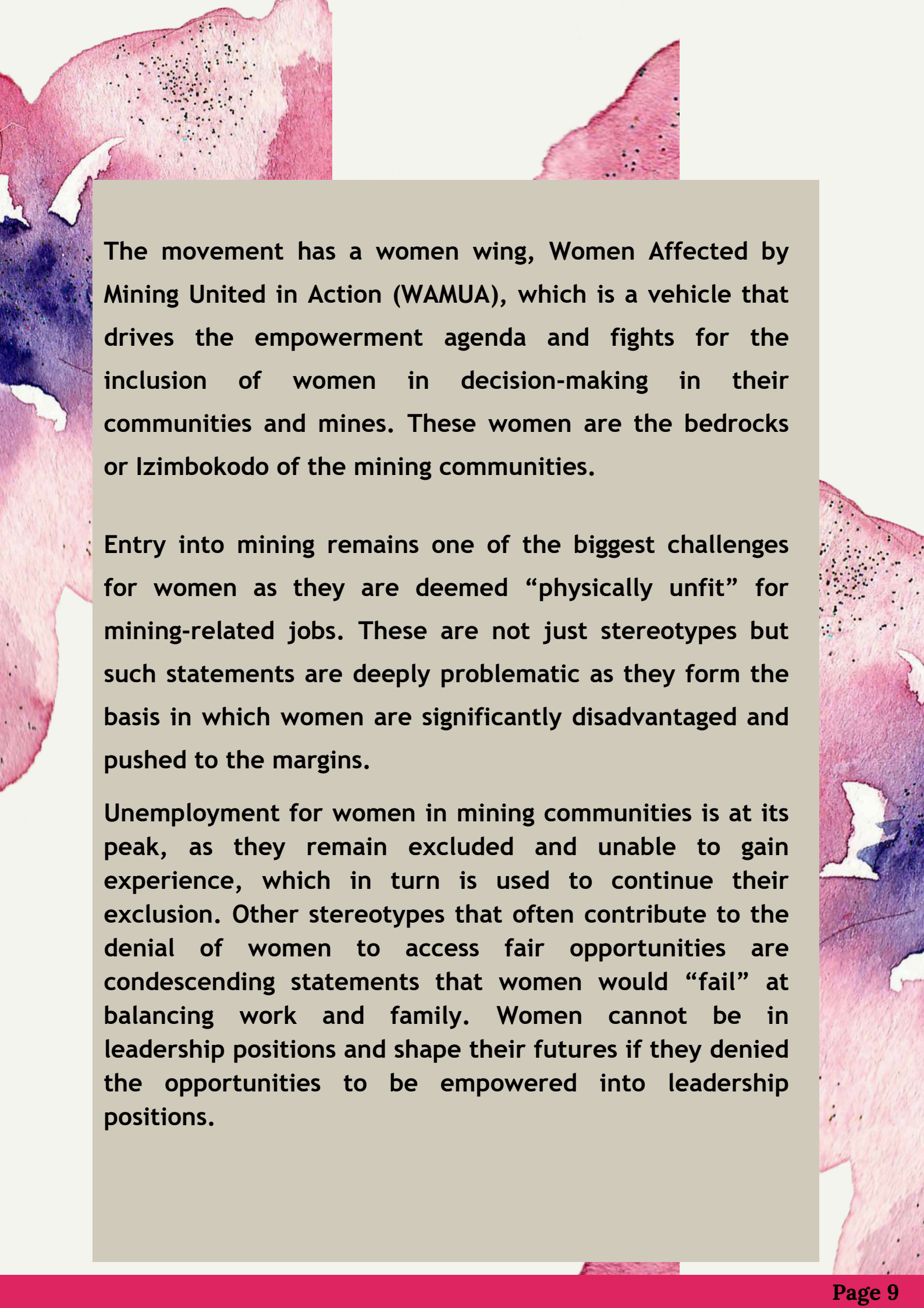
Unearthing the Truth: Women's Experiences from the Mining Frontlines



By Tholakele Thabane

In the rugged world of mining, women are often overlooked and underrepresented. Yet they are deeply impacted by the mining industry's presence in their communities. From the dusty pits to the boardrooms, women in mining face unique challenges and unprecedented amounts of discrimination from men, particularly those in managerial and leadership roles.

It is these unspoken realities and struggles in mining communities and mines that should set all of us alive and strive for women's rights and to seek justice, which will make a difference and create a more harmonious environment for women.



The movement has a women wing, Women Affected by Mining United in Action (WAMUA), which is a vehicle that drives the empowerment agenda and fights for the inclusion of women in decision-making in their communities and mines. These women are the bedrocks or Izimbokodo of the mining communities.

Entry into mining remains one of the biggest challenges for women as they are deemed “physically unfit” for mining-related jobs. These are not just stereotypes but such statements are deeply problematic as they form the basis in which women are significantly disadvantaged and pushed to the margins.

Unemployment for women in mining communities is at its peak, as they remain excluded and unable to gain experience, which in turn is used to continue their exclusion. Other stereotypes that often contribute to the denial of women to access fair opportunities are condescending statements that women would “fail” at balancing work and family. Women cannot be in leadership positions and shape their futures if they denied the opportunities to be empowered into leadership positions.

In addition to these challenges that plague women in mining host communities, they suffer from illness caused by the mining companies that fail to take accountability and refuse to provide adequate health care services through the fulfilment of Social Labour Plans.



A YOUNG MOM'S FIGHT FOR JUSTICE AFTER CLINIC NEGLIGENCE

By Tholakele Thabane



Abigail Motshwaedi, 23, is a first-time mother from Westonaria in the West Rand of Gauteng and her birthing journey has been marred with gloominess.

It was on 30 March around 9pm when Abigail rushed to the Bekkersdal Clinic as she experienced labour pains. Her womb was still closed, she was told and was not ready to give birth. She was sent home and told to wait for the right time.

The pains worsened, and around 1am she called for transportation to the clinic as they do not have access to enough ambulances. Her water broke at 2:40am when she arrived at the clinic and she immediately alerted the nurses. The nurses sent her to urinate in a test cup.

When she walked out of the toilet the baby emerged through the birth canal and fell on the floor knocking her head on the floor. Since she gave birth to her daughter on 31 March, she has been in and out of hospital due to the negligence that the Bekkersdal Clinic staff committed during her birthing process.

Her story is one a new mom, or a mother in general, would not wish for during childbirth, when her baby slips and falls out of her at such a dangerous moment. Abigail was blamed for this, as it was alleged that she pushed before the time, even though she had mentioned her water had already broken and that she felt the baby's head when she was about to

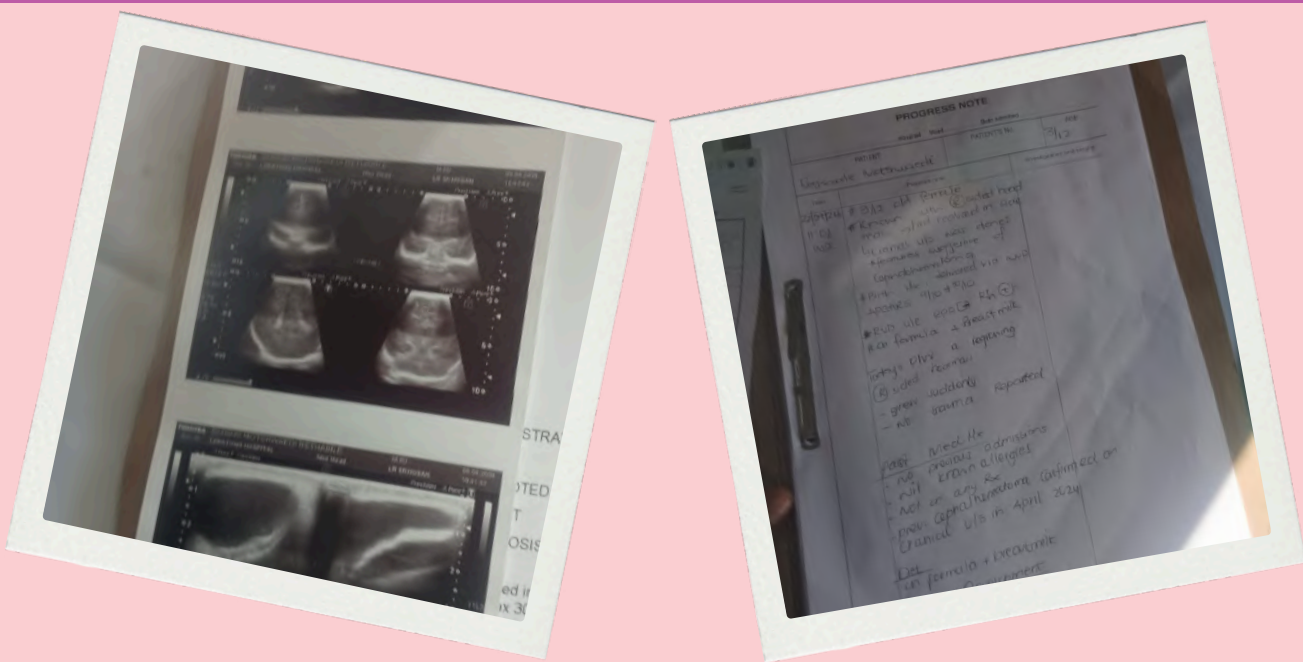
pee. Despite this incident taking place in the clinic, her daughter was not attended to immediately. She was then sent home without conducting any satisfactory check-ups on the infant.

Her daughter experienced swelling after two days of birth and when she took her to the clinic for the three-day check-up, the bump had not yet healed. She demanded that the staff conduct an x-ray which revealed the baby's head was injured, and again, she was informed by the medical staff that the injury was nothing serious.

She was then referred to Leratong Hospital for further examination on 22 July and had to come back for a further examination on 12 August and was told that the bump was nothing bad.

Which left her confused and she was not given a chance to ask questions and is currently unsure if the bump is worth worrying about or she should relax. Her daughter has not yet healed and emotionally the whole issue has been daunting for the new mother.

The gap between the appointment dates took a toll on Abigail as the wait left her under suspense, not knowing what the bump on her daughter's head is and how it may affect her in the long run.



Bafentswe's Journey From Church Leadership to Community Activism

By Senthathi Katlego Zasekhaya



Bafentswe Morake, 42, who holds a certificate in retail and wholesale operations and a degree in psychological counselling, is known for being assertive, eager to learn and good at multitasking.

She uses both her practical skills and understanding of people to help her community. She has been a leader since her teenage years at church and now she is an activist in the villages of Kgabalatsane and Rabokala in the North West.

Bafentswe joined Mining Affected Communities United by Action (MACUA) so that she could meet people from different backgrounds and bring change in her community. She is the Secretary General of Rabokala branch.

She is also in charge of the Rustenburg Region Branch Development Team, where her responsibilities include keeping the branch informed of local events, increasing membership, and assisting community members with their problems. As a member of the Branch Development Team, she has learned a lot about the movement and how to start a branch from scratch.

Unemployment, single parenthood, societal pressures, a lack of education and skill development, teenage pregnancy and health concerns are among the most pressing issues confronting women in her communities.

Women are also subjected to societal comparisons and labelling, which exacerbates their struggles. Bafentswe believes that platforms such as Women Affected by Mining United in Action (WAMUA) help women grow together and individually. She believes there is still much work to be done for and by women, especially in rural areas where there are limited resources.

Bafentswe has faced challenges such as witnessing women put each other down due to misunderstandings and ignorance. She also noticed that many women lacked leadership abilities in various areas of life. Personal issues and emotions can lead to women bringing each other down, but Bafentswe is working to change that.

Bafentswe sees Women's Month as an opportunity for women to shine and achieve more. She envisions a future in which women collaborate without doubting one another and help build a strong nation.



MACUA's Equal Legal Education Workshop Triggered Refiloe Mofokeng Into Activism

By Senthathi Katlego Zasekhaya

Refiloe Mofokeng, who is in her late thirties, was born and raised in the mining town of Khutsong, Carletonville in the West Rand of Gauteng. She is a proud mother a daughter who is in matric and has always been deeply involved in her community.



During the Covid-19 pandemic she witnessed the struggles of her community members firsthand and it inspired her to take action. It was a period of extreme hardship for her community, and Refiloe found herself looking for ways to bring about positive change

Her path led her to Mining Affected Communities United in Action (MACUA), where she attended a workshop on equal legal education. The movement's transformative power was clear and the empowering information she received was a turning point in her life.

Refiloe knew right away that she needed to be a part of the movement and to contribute to its mission. She currently serves as the Branch Coordinator for WAMUA and Branch Organiser for MACUA.

In her role, she organises, plans and oversees the work and implementation of WAMUA activities in her branch. She leads the movement with passion and dedication. Her responsibility involves communicating with WAMUA members, assisting them with planning branch activities and writing proposals.

As a female activist, Refiloe has faced a lot of challenges such as self-doubt and uncertainty about her leadership abilities. She also faced criticism from problematic male comrades who questioned her ability to lead. Refiloe persisted and demonstrated her worth as a leader.

Refiloe strongly believes that MACUA-WAMUA's initiatives have had a significant impact on the lives of women in her community. Through educational workshops, WAMUA provides women with knowledge and support, giving them the tools they need to boldly advocate for their rights. These initiatives give women opportunities to become leaders in their respective fields, instilling a sense of empowerment and self-confidence.

The key issues affecting women in her community served include the challenges that women face in the mining industry, exclusion from social labour plans (SLP), gender-based violence, obstetric violence and pervasive patriarchy. Refiloe is deeply committed to addressing these issues and promoting the rights and well-being of women in her community.

Her advice to young women aspiring to be activists is to step outside of their comfort zones, pursue their passions and goals, believe in themselves and always be authentic. She encourages them not to limit their potential and to recognise the power within themselves.

In her role, she organises, plans and oversees the work and implementation of WAMUA activities in her branch. She leads the movement with passion and dedication. Her responsibility involves communicating with WAMUA members, assisting them with planning branch activities and writing proposals.

As a female activist, Refiloe has faced a lot of challenges such as self-doubt and uncertainty about her leadership abilities. She also faced criticism from problematic male comrades who questioned her ability to lead. Refiloe persisted and demonstrated her worth as a leader.

Refiloe strongly believes that MACUA-WAMUA's initiatives have had a significant impact on the lives of women in her community. Through educational workshops, WAMUA provides women with knowledge and support, giving them the tools they need to boldly advocate for their rights. These initiatives give women opportunities to become leaders in their respective fields, instilling a sense of empowerment and self-confidence.



One of her proudest moments in the movement was when she represented WAMUA internationally. In 2023, she attended the 2nd Global Thematic Social Forum on Mining and the Extractivist Economy in Indonesia. Here, she met with activists from all over the world to exchange ideas and discuss issues affecting women in mining-affected communities

Refiloe sees the MACUA-WAMUA expanding across Africa and possibly in the future to consider obtain seats in Parliament to influence the development of policies that affect mining communities.

She envisions women as change agents in their communities, decision-makers and policy influencers. She sees women in positions of authority, influencing policy decisions across the country

Her message to women facing challenges is to avoid remaining in negative situations because they affect their way of life. “Women are essential to society and their presence is constantly felt. They must remember that giving up is not an option because they are always required by society,” she says.

Women's Month is very important for Refiloe. She says she has celebrated the month by making a difference in her community. She attends events and activities that recognise women's contributions and accomplishments. Refiloe's contributions to MACUA-WAMUA and her community continue to make a significant impact in her community.





By Tholakele Thabane



Monica Ngcobo, 49, is a traditional healer and the Kagung branch coordinator in Northern Cape. Monica—who has been with MACUA since 2013— is a passionate activist dedicated to fighting for women's rights and marginalised communities.

Monica grew up in Ellendale village on the outskirts of Joe Morolong Municipality, where she developed leadership skills from a young age. She was a "clap and tap" leader in school, where her mobilising skills began.

Having grown up as a leader, activism is one thing she dedicates her life to and being situated in a province rich in minerals, it pains her that beneficiation from mines is something they do not know.

Since joining MACUA, Monica has learnt a lot about mining related laws and how to tackle them. She has had a chance to learn about the Social Labour Plans and the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Department Act.

Living in a mine community

Living in a mine community for Monica is a struggle as a mother who is unemployed. Issues like water and electricity are the biggest challenges. To outmaneuver this daily struggle, the community where Monica lives must walk long distances during midnight or the early hours to fetch water. This is the only time water is accessible.

This temporary situation leaves women vulnerable and become victims of gender-based violence crimes like rape. While this is the daily reality for the community, their host mines Black Rock Mine Operations, Kumba Iron Ore Resources and Kolomela Mine consistently have more than enough running water.

“We wake up at 2am sometimes for only a 20-litre bucket of water, drinking water we need to buy with money we do not have,” Monica says, adding that there was an incident where a lady in her community left her children sleeping at night to get water and they got raped

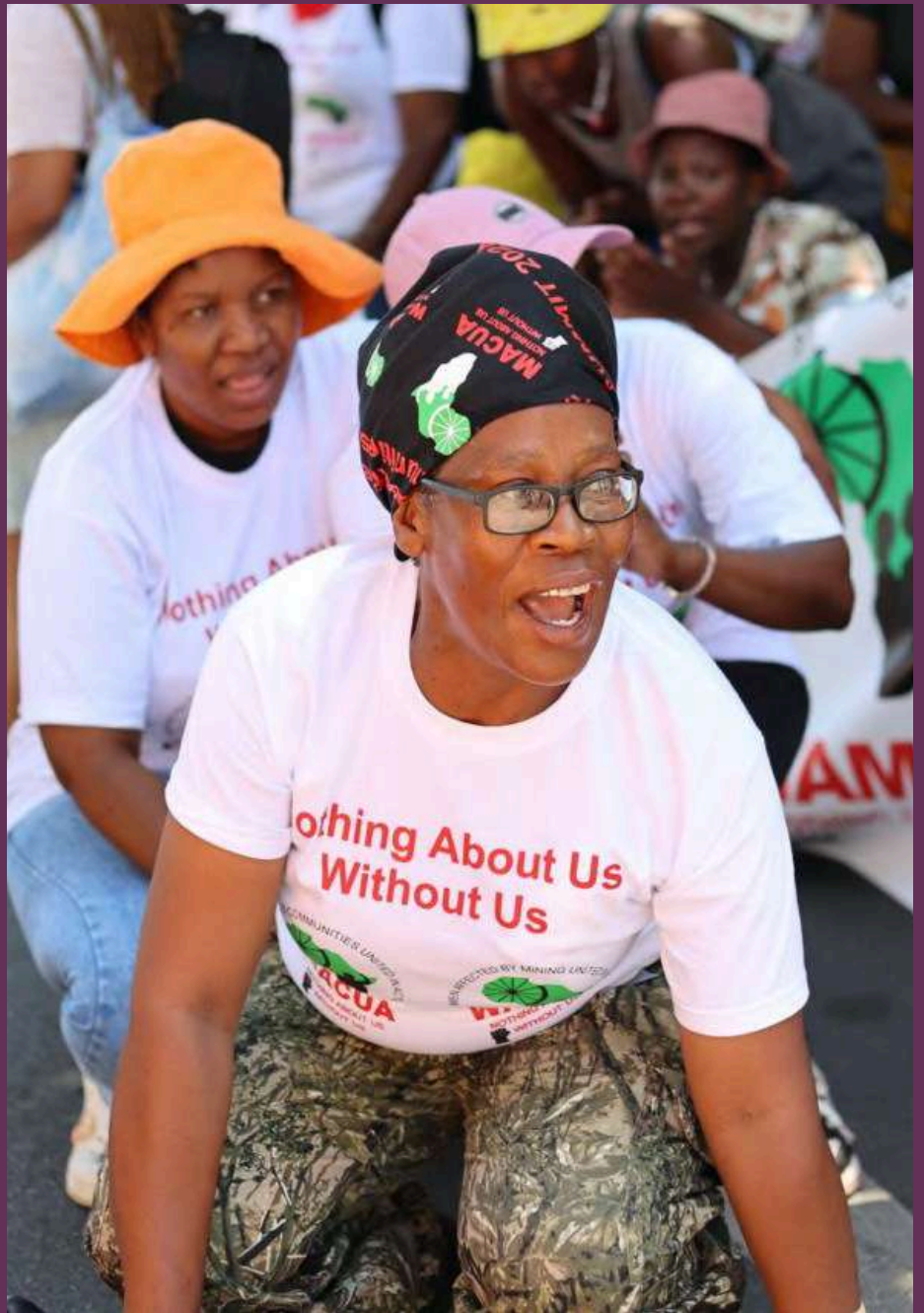


Monica is involved in various campaigns and discussions, including feminism, Agroecology and women’s rights. She currently represents women at JTG Civil Council, which participates in the 365 days of women and children abuse-free country campaign.

“Women need to know the politics on how to represent themselves in parliament and everywhere,” she mentions.

IZIMBOKODO







Connect with us



macua.org.za



macua_sa



Macua Mining



Info@macua.org.za



010 007 2137



MACUA&WAMUA



macuawamua

