

MACUA-WAMUA Launches a Podcast on Green Hydrogen Production in Mokopane Communities



RADIO MACUA

NOTHING ABOUT US,
WITHOUT US.

MACUA & WAMUA

By Tholakele Thabane and Senthathi Katlego Zasekhaya

MACUA-WAMUA in partnership with ActionAid Netherlands, has recently launched an exciting new podcast, called "Radio Macua." In this limited series, we uncover the hidden consequences of efforts to develop Green Hydrogen energy, focusing on AngloPlatinum's Mogalakwena Mine, impacting on Mokopane Communities, in Limpopo.

Radio MACUA is a platform for marginalised communities to speak about the issues that affect them, connecting local experiences with broader issues in South Africa’s mining sector and the just energy transition more broadly. Hosted by Musawenkosi Cabe, each episode engages with experts, activists and ordinary people to provide an insightful look into the social and environmental stakes of Green Hydrogen development. As the series unfolds, it covers crucial issues such as water availability, job security, women’s rights, community development and the extent of public consultation. Each episode aims to build an in-depth understanding of how Green Hydrogen development affects communities like Mokopane and Mapela, where the impacts of mining activities extend far beyond the mines themselves.

Gender plays a crucial role in understanding the impacts of Green Hydrogen development. In one of the episodes, *Radio MACUA* examines the unique challenges faced by women in Mokopane’s mining communities. Interviews with local women reveal that, although green hydrogen is promoted as a sustainable alternative, its development brings serious challenges. Women discuss issues ranging from water scarcity, limited job opportunities and health risks due to environmental degradation. They share both their concerns and hopes for a greener future that is more inclusive and just for all.

Radio MACUA also explores the unfolding story behind South Africa’s green hydrogen plans, questioning whether these ambitions will uplift communities or exacerbate existing inequalities. With the R8.5 billion in funding promised by wealthy nations to support the transition to cleaner energy sources, concerns grow over whether this investment will truly lead to economic independence, or if it places South Africa in a new cycle of economic dependency. Through in-depth discussions, *Radio MACUA* considers whether green energy projects will empower local communities or largely serve external interests, encouraging listeners to rethink what sustainable progress means for South Africa’s future.

Radio MACUA embodies the motto “Nothing About Us, Without Us.” As Green Hydrogen production begins to reshape South Africa’s economy and environment, it is crucial that the voices of those affected and least consulted are heard. This podcast is not just a collection of stories. It is a call to action, urging policymakers, companies and everyday citizens to recognise the basic rights of communities that are directly impacted by these development projects.

Check out our released episodes and follow our radio channel: [YouTube](#) [Spotify](#)



EDITOR'S CORNER

South Africa's "Democracy" provides intellectual cover to the Systemic Oppression of Mining Affected Communities

By Christopher Rutledge

Not long after the dawn of the "democratic state", the government of the day sets its sites on the immense wealth of the mineral sector and under the guise of "progressive" intentions.

In its earliest iterations in the 1998 White Paper on Minerals and Mining Policy, the state immediately seeks to remove the common law principle, that ownership of the land includes ownership of the minerals in the land. In one foul swoop, the state sort to keep millions of South Africans in poverty, for the so called greater good of feeding the looting hordes that were soon to devour a great part of the state and the country's wealth.

Today, the biggest beneficiaries of the wealth extracted with great violence from the belly of our lands, are the shareholders and the state. The State, who is ostensibly the custodian of the wealth on behalf of the entire nation, has failed to not only distribute that wealth in an equitable way, leaving millions languishing in poverty while they ride high on the hog, they have also failed to protect the environment and our collective heritage, and perpetrating a grave injustice on the very people on whose behalf they claim to act.



The diabolical deception and betrayal of the values and aspirations of the liberation movement, that all would share in the wealth of the country, is nowhere more clearly articulated than in the content and structure of the existing Minerals Petroleum Resources Development Act (MPRDA).

The Institution of the MPRDA, which essentially limits and excludes communities from having any meaningful say about what happens on their lands and how their health and well-being is affected, is also supported by a range of other legislative and common law institutions which have all interact and accumulate the oppression of communities across institutions - and across history.

So while the MPRDA limits and excludes communities to a large degree from having any say about how their lives are impacted by the vast wealth extraction system led by government and private capital, and are often left to survive in harsh economic circumstances, communities often seek to express their anger and frustration at the injustice of a system that extracts wealth amidst the poverty of daily life.

But in a society where systemic oppression has become so ingrained into the fabric of our daily existence, we hardly notice how the beneficiaries of the vast wealth extraction, uses the very wealth stolen from beneath the feet of communities, to further humiliate, degrade and deny them the dignity promised in the Constitution.

In what has become a growing trend among the selfish & wealthy exploiters of our collective mining wealth, mining companies have started to use the vast wealth they loot every day, to access the courts, knowing full well that those living in poverty, who merely seek justice, have no hope of being able to defend themselves in the courts.

This type of litigation is called Strategic Litigation Against Public Participation, or 'SLAPP' suits, and the Constitutional Court has found that this "abuse of litigation would fall within the common law doctrine of abuse of court process" which would "consist of a consideration of both the merits and the motives for bringing the case".

On the face of it, the mines approach the courts and make a range of claims against local community activists, ostensibly to protect their rights, while ignoring the obligations that they have in terms of the law. They also fail to tell the courts that the community has been peacefully requesting consultations with the mine and that the mine has consistently evaded their obligations to the community and even to the law.

The mine would often argue that if the community has complaints they should speak to the regulator, The Department of Mineral and Petroleum Resources. But what they fail to tell the court is that the Regulator almost never acts against a mine and that mines are generally allowed to operate without any regulatory oversight. Complaints are lodged with the Department, which are either ignored, or whitewashed in a longstanding collaboration between mines and the Department.

This Systemic collusion to exclude communities who bear the brunt of mining activities, often leads to growing levels of frustration which result in increasingly agitated and violent protests.

There is literally no recourse for communities. Not with the government and not with the courts.

In one instance, which highlights the absurd levels to which the institutional and structural system of oppression is willing to go to, a court in the Free State interdicted an entire community. The offensive nature of an interdict which seeks to prevent an entire community from protesting, is not only an affront to the Constitutional right to freedom of expression, it is also an egregious denial of the right to equality.

These court interdicts are then used by the mine to authorise the Police to arrest and act violently against protesters.

Communities affected by the industrial scale violent extraction of wealth have been placed in a structural position of oppression by design, and this structural oppression continues in the full glare of day and public attention.

With a democracy like this, who needs a dictatorship?



Community Struggles

The Fight for Universal Consultation in Disake: A Community's Ongoing Struggle

By Senthathi Katlego Zasekhaya

The Community of Disake Village, located in the Moses Kotane Local Municipality in the North West, lives under harsh conditions. Residents are sidelined in terms of critical decisions impacting their lives, with no meaningful consultations or adherence to mining regulations by the nearby mines. The village is surrounded by six major mines: PPC Dwaalboom Cement Mine, Siyanda Bakgatla Platinum Mine, Anglo (Amandelbult), Northam Platinum Mine, Kalaka Mining, and Andelusite Mine.

Since these mines began operating, the community has not benefited. Instead, they continue to face limited employment opportunities, a lack of business and skills development, and exclusion from decision-making processes that directly impact on their lives. These frustrations have boiled over into protests, most notably the one that occurred on 12 March 2024. Community members submitted a memorandum to PPC Dwaalboom Cement Mine, demanding consultation and action. Despite this effort, the mine has failed to follow through on its promise to engage with the community, leaving residents disillusioned and frustrated.

The PPC Dwaalboom Cement Mine case is a clear example of a larger issue in Disake Village. Mines continue to promise communities consultations and cooperation but fail to deliver. After the protest in March, there has been no positive response or follow-up from the company, even after the community and MACUA-WAMUA reached out to the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE).



Thabo Nkgobo, Branch Coordinator for the Disake MACUA branch, emphasises that the ongoing issue is not limited to PPC. Other neighbouring mines also fail to properly consult with the community, despite the direct impact of their operations.

The lack of consultation and compliance has far-reaching consequences. The community is already economically disadvantaged and has not been considered for employment in the mines. Ngcobo points out that youth in Disake have been denied opportunities for skills development or business partnerships, further exacerbating poverty in the area. The dust from passing trucks contributes to pollution, leading to serious health risks. However, the community remains excluded from discussions about how these impacts will be mitigated or how the mines will contribute to the community's long-term sustainability, which they are obligated to do in terms of existing legislation and in terms of their mining licence.

The crux of the issue in Disake is the lack of consultation, a fundamental right enshrined in South Africa's constitutional framework. The Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act (MPRDA), which generally is not favourable to communities, at least mandates that communities must be consulted on mining activities that affect them, and how Social and Labour Plans are developed and implemented. However, mines continue to flout these laws, exploiting legal loopholes and benefiting from weak enforcement by government bodies like the DMRE.

The Disake community's struggle for meaningful consultation and compliance reflects a broader issue faced by many mining-affected communities across South Africa. For true progress to be made, mining companies must prioritise their obligations to these communities, not only as a matter of legal compliance but as a vital step toward ensuring social justice and sustainable development.



Community Struggles

Newcastle Ikwezi Mining's Toxic Heritage in KZN Leads to Poisoned Waters

By Tholakele Thabane



The Mbabane community, under the Dannhauser Municipality in Newcastle KwaZulu Natal (KZN), lives in disturbing conditions that result from the devastating environmental and health impacts of Ikwezi Mining's operations according to local activists. They claim that the mine has contaminated their water streams, destroyed crops and created respiratory issues for the community.

You may at this point have heard of almost the same issues faced by other mining host communities. This is no different for the once-thriving community surrounding Newcastle Ikwezi Mining Kliprand Colliery and Emoyeni coal beneficiation plant, where a devastating environmental disaster is unfolding. Living conditions for this community have been unfavorable for the past 7 years.

The environment suffers the same fate as community members, dying slowly but surely. The community used to be green and lively, and has since Ikwezi started operating in 2018, turned into coal dust. Their operations emit a very dark smoke which has been the reason community members suffer from respiratory related issues.

Activists claim that the mine has been dumping coal waste and pollutants into the nearby Mbabane River, causing livestock to fall ill and die. Community members have also reported respiratory problems, sinus issues and other health concerns due to the constant dust and smoke emanating from the mine. Despite repeated requests for consultation and action, the mine has refused to engage with the community, citing a 7-year-old consultation as sufficient.

According to Themba Khumalo, MACUA KZN Branch Coordinator, the mine consulted in 2012 where other villages were not present.



The mine currently has a 30-year lifespan and affects 16 villages. The mine continues to operate in the area, stating they do not see the need for further consultations, as one was done in 2012. How does that one consultation, done 12 years ago, and done without proper notice and information provided to the community, qualify as consultation?

But it was all in vain, according to Gcina Nxano, the artisanal miners allegedly blocked the water from reaching the community and have it all to themselves. “We have one JoJo tank per street filled by the councilor once a week. We use it sparingly even though we don’t know if it is safe to drink,” said Nxano.

“We are tired of being ignored. Our livelihoods, our health and our environment are all suffering. We demand justice and action now,” Khumalo says with a steely determination.

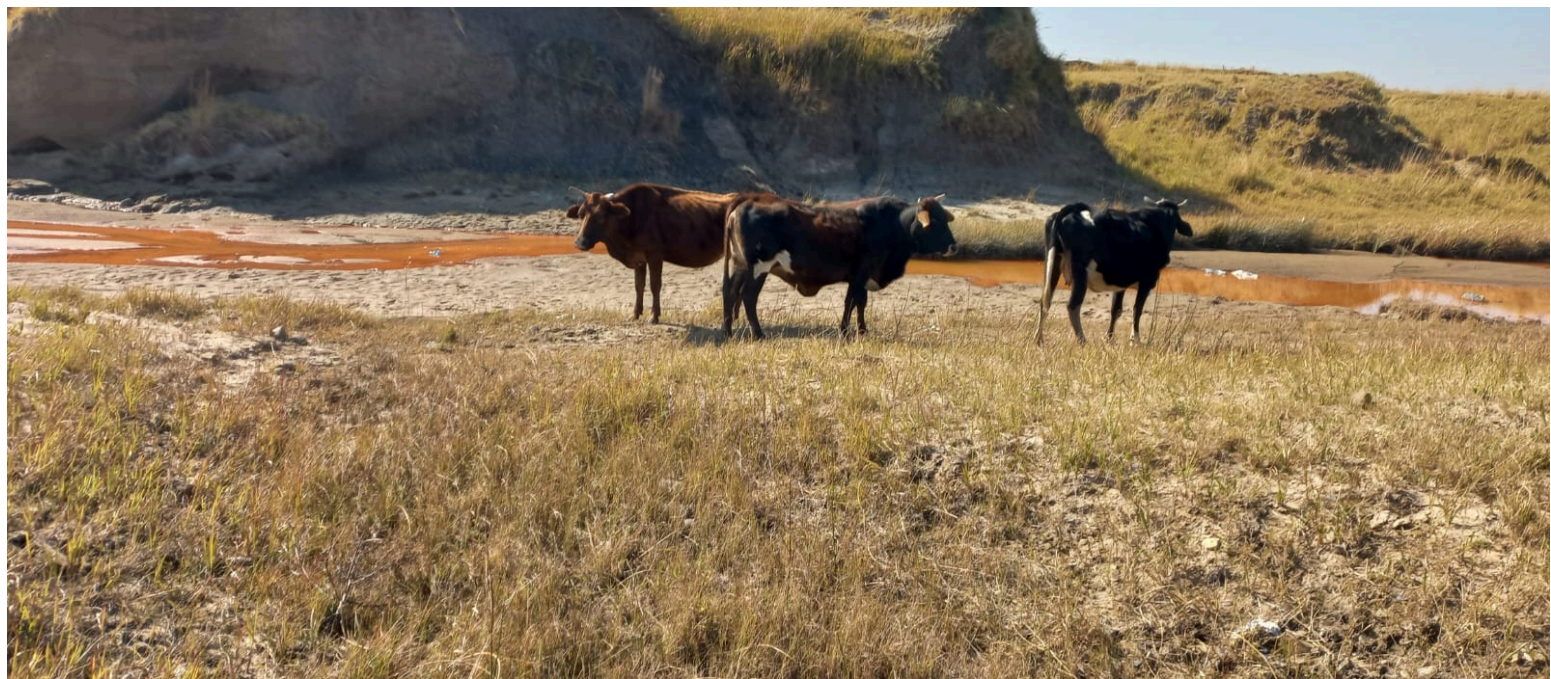
Ikwezi mines coal using an open pit operation, which is considered the most dangerous and destructive mining method. And one would expect that safety measures by the company would be a priority since the mine is so close to the communities, but that does not appear to be the case with Ikwezi.

According to Sphamandla Khambule, a resident of Mbabane Village, the vibration and noise from the blasting that takes place at least 3 times a week, lead their houses to crack. He further mentioned that the mine's activities have also contaminated the soil and water, making it difficult for crops to grow and livestock to thrive.

“The water in the rivers has a yellowish color and is no longer safe to use,” Khambule noted, referring to the Mbabane and Ntendeka rivers which are affected by the mine's coal washing plant. He also expressed concern about the mine's trucks’ use of the same road as school children, putting their safety at risk.

Farmers have been forced to abandon their crops and the community's overall quality of life has significantly declined. The local clinic according to Khumalo was approached in 2022 to ask if there have been any new health issues recorded, and the report was that those who previously had respiratory illnesses like Tuberculosis were becoming worse.

The community's struggle serves as a stark reminder of the need for responsible mining practices and the importance of prioritising environmental and community well-being. As the situation continues to unfold, one thing is clear: the people of Mbabane will no longer be silenced.



ACTIVIST HIGHLIGHT

Paballo Mokwanatle – A Voice for Change and Community Empowerment

By Senthathi Katlego Zasekhaya



Paballo Mokwanatle is a 24-year-old from Springbokpan in the North West. He is the Youth Affected by Mining United in Action (YAMUA) Coordinator for the Springbokpan Branch. Paballo is a passionate activist who is driven by a deep love for politics and a strong commitment to advocating for change. His journey is built on self-confidence and a strong desire to create a better future for everyone. These values have made him a key figure in the fight for social justice and community development.

Paballo's activism is rooted in a desire to see real change in his community. “My love for politics inspired me to become an activist and advocate for change and better living for all,” he says. Paballo wishes to fight against the ongoing lack of social justice in South Africa. He is determined to fight for future generations to have equal opportunities and to inherit a better world.

He recognises that many communities lack empowerment and access to information, which makes it difficult for them to confront these issues. His activism seeks to bridge this gap by advocating for his community and empowering them to challenge injustices head-on. He joined MACUA last year and he has since empowered his community and the youth through the movement. “We share the knowledge together and empower each other”, he says.

Like many activists, Paballo has faced some challenges, especially when it comes to rejection and mistrust from his own community. “People think we are doing this for our own selfish benefits instead of seeing the bigger picture and supporting the movement,” he explains. However, he understands where this scepticism comes from, noting that self-enrichment at the expense of communities has become common. Paballo overcomes these challenges by constantly reminding his community why he and others are fighting. “This is for the greater good of us all,” he adds.

Paballo is a strong advocate for youth involvement in politics and activism. He believes that today’s activism is crucial for the future, especially since older generations may no longer be around to continue the fight. Activism can be challenging, but Paballo doesn’t let criticism stop him. He firmly believes in staying true to oneself. “Even if they try to create a monster out of you, just smile knowing you are nothing like what they say.” For him, the key is not to take things personally. “What happened, happened –it comes with the job,” he says.

Since it’s Mental Health Month, Paballo has an important message for other activists: “You need to be sure of yourself. Even if people try to tear you down, know that you’re doing it for the greater good. Focus on your goals and not the noise around you.”

Paballo wishes to transform his mineral-rich community into something that the younger generation can be proud of. “Activism gives us a chance to ensure that the future becomes a reality,” he says. He is determined to fight for a community that benefits from its resources rather than being left behind. Through his work, he is not only advocating for his community but also laying the foundation for future generations to thrive.



Nothing About Us Without Us!!!

ACTIVIST HIGHLIGHT

29 Years of Activism as a Rock for Women in Kwa-Thema

By Tholakele Thabane

Molly Mbangula is struck by a deep feeling of being overwhelmed. So many moons and nights have gone by, turning into decades, yet so much still needs to be done. It is already 29 years that she has been an activist. This is 29 years of running the streets in protest, singing and mobilising.

Affectionally known as “Mam Molly”, she has been a rock and a safe space for the women in Kwa-Thema, East Rand of Gauteng.

Mam Molly started her activism journey in 1995, and the decision was motivated by a Gender Based Violence (GBV) encounter she had at the Kwa-Thema police station. She describes the experience as disheartening and brutal.

An uncomfortable situation influences activism

On the day of the encounter, she was at the police station to certify documents, and a woman walked into the office and was visibly traumatised crying for help. “She was not taken into consideration, and they handled the situation in an unprofessional and less empathic way” Mam Molly says, herself now visibly distraught. She continues, “in a room full of children you would take the victim to a private area, right? That was not the case, she was questioned right there, and she could not answer,” Mam Molly narrates.



This was when Mam Molly saw the need to take the traumatised woman outside for privacy and to comfort her. From that moment, Mam Molly recognised that women were not being protected and lacked private spaces to discuss such issues when they needed help.

From this encounter she decided she was going to advocate for vulnerable and abused women in her community. She did some research on how she can assist women who find themselves in these situations and to find ways to put an end to the daily negligence experienced by women when it comes to GBV related cases.

Mam Molly in WAMUA

Mam Molly joined MACUA in 2012 when it was introduced to the Ekurhuleni Environmental Organisation(EEO). She was at the time an active member of EEO which fights against injustices against the environment and how women are affected by these injustices.

“I became a WAMUA Ekurhuleni Branch Coordinator in 2020 and I have since learnt a lot from the other WAMUA comrades who I call my sisters,” Mam Molly mentions.



Mam Molly has established herself well in the organisation and her community as an activist, a mother and as a counsellor. As a victim of domestic violence, she has dedicated her life to women’s struggles and those affected by mining.

She was recently a part of the WAMUA GBV Report Launch and her contribution proved her long-standing experience and passion in the matter.

She describes her experience at the GBV report launch and workshop as educational and very emotional. “I loved seeing women talking about their GBV experiences and being able to be vulnerable around each other so freely and we exchanged love and support,” Mam Molly mentions.

A rock for the women in KwaThema

After the encounter she had at the Kwa-Thema Police station, along with her research findings, she then contacted People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA) for assistance.

She met Nthabiseng from POWA who tasked her to collect rape statistics in Kwa-Thema, Tsakane and Duduza. This was followed by counselling training at NICRO (a social crime prevention and offender reintegration for adults and children Non-Profit Organisation) and obtained her counselling certificate.

After obtaining the certificate, Mam Molly went to the Kwa-Thema police station to offer her services. She was then given an opportunity to counsel GBV victims before reporting their cases. “This is where a lot of women in Kwa-Thema met me and have since been visiting my home. They also call when in need of advice and GBV related assistance,” Mam molly mentions.

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Mam Molly opened an organisation called Society Helping Against Women Abused (SHAWA) in 1998. The organisation was aimed at creating a safe space for the women in her community.

She has become a well-known GBV counsellor in her community and women are able to freely come and speak to her on their GBV related issues.

Being a single mom and an activist has not been easy, but Mam Molly has juggled both for the past 29 years and is an inspiration to her daughter, grand-daughter and many other women in the community and movement.

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