

MACUA-WAMUA Launched a Social Audit Report Titled: “Looted Promises”: The **Crumbs Economy** of Mining and the **Myth** of the Just Transition

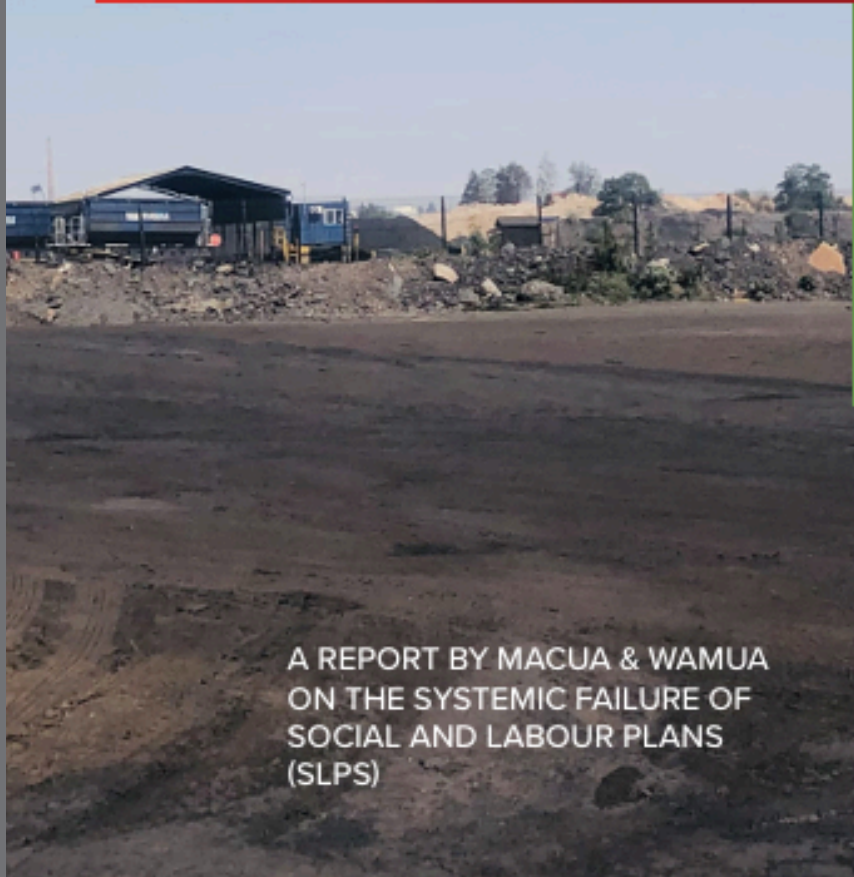
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Mining companies in South Africa leverage PR campaigns to mask gaps in their social commitments. Community-led social audits cut through the gloss, exposing unfulfilled promises and holding mining companies accountable to the communities they impact.



2025 LOOTED PROMISES

THE CRUMBS ECONOMY OF MINING
AND THE MYTH OF THE
JUST TRANSITION



A REPORT BY MACUA & WAMUA
ON THE SYSTEMIC FAILURE OF
SOCIAL AND LABOUR PLANS
(SLPS)

The social audit is grounded in years of community-led research, verified documentation, and field-based interviews. And the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Mineral and Petroleum Resources held a meeting on 1 July 2025 and saw it fit to dismiss, without substantiation, MACUA’s report **Looted Promises: The Crumbs Economy of Mining**. This dismal comes after they had kept quiet since the launch.

The Council flippantly labelled our report as “riddled with mistakes” and “simply wrong,” yet provided not a single shred of evidence to refute the extensive and verifiable data presented in our investigation.

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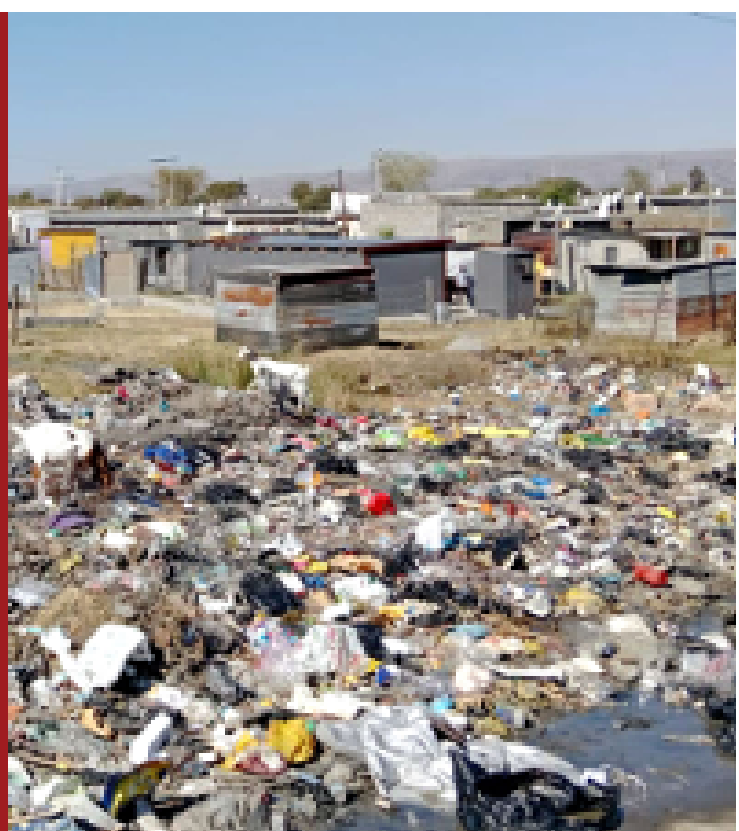
Crumbs Capture and the False Benevolence Economy

The audits confirm what MACUA & WAMUA have long argued: that mining in South Africa operates under what we call “Crumbs Capture”—a morally obscene system where even the minimal resources meant for the poor are looted in the name of development.

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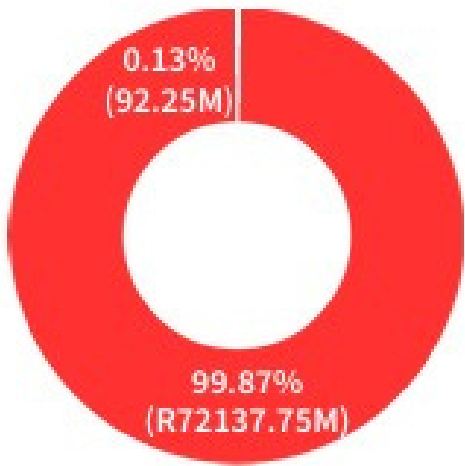
“Crumbs Capture”—
where even the minimal crumbs of development funding meant for poor communities are looted not only by corporations, but by the political elite who claim to represent them.



KEY THEMATIC FAILURES INCLUDE: EMERGING AND CROSS-CUTTING THEMES:

LACK OF CONSULTATION In the majority of cases, communities had no say in the identification or design of SLP projects. Traditional authorities often signed off without democratic mandate, while women, youth, and informal settlement residents were systematically excluded from consultation processes.	UNMET EMPLOYMENT COMMITMENTS Promised job creation was hollow. Youth centres were built without programs, skills development plans were abandoned, and local employment quotas were bypassed through subcontractor networks that often excluded community residents entirely.
WATER AND INFRASTRUCTURE FAILURES Despite urgent community needs, water infrastructure was frequently deprioritised or abandoned. In places like MNS and Mononono, communities face daily hardship fetching unsafe water, while companies operate with impunity.	GENDERED EXCLUSION AND HARM Across all audited communities, women bore the heaviest burdens of mining-induced poverty, environmental degradation, and failed development. They were absent from consultation, excluded from job opportunities, and left to manage the fallout of extractivism without support or recognition.

SYSTEMIC NON-COMPLIANCE: The average SLP project completion rate across all 11 sites was just 24.9%, with several communities—like MNS—reporting 0% delivery. This is not poor project management—it is institutionalised failure	REGULATORY COLLAPSE AND COMPLICITY The Department of Mineral and Petroleum Resources (DMPR) continues to rely entirely on unverified self-reporting by mining companies, despite overwhelming evidence of misreporting, ghost projects, and fabricated claims. It has ignored multiple audit submissions and community complaints without investigation.
FINANCIAL OPACITY AND UNACCOUNTABILITY Of the R376.25 million in SLP funds committed across the 11 sites, R284 million remains unaccounted for. In many cases, projects that were reported as “complete” were either non-existent, locked, or dysfunctional. Procurement records were missing, and no transparent systems exist to trace where funds went.	EROSION OF TRUST, AND THE WEAPONISATION OF THE LAW Communities increasingly view both the state and corporate actors as colluding in a system designed to protect elite profits and suppress dissent. When residents protest broken promises, they are met with interdicts, police violence, and SLAPP suits. Meanwhile, corporate misappropriation of millions in development funds continues unchecked and unprosecuted.



Estimated Profit vs Actual SLP Delivery

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No regulatory action has been taken. No penalties issued. No compliance audits conducted. The Department of Mineral and Petroleum Resources (DMPR) has remained silent—not due to oversight, but due to complicity enabled by political entanglement.

It is not just **Crumbs Capture**. It is the **systematic theft of futures.**

EDITOR'S CORNER

Mining companies are **breaking their promises - and the state is doing nothing about it**

MACUA report finds mining companies are not sticking to their Social and Labour Plans

By Magnificent Mndebele

A three-year study by Mining Affected Communities in Action (MACUA) has found that 11 mining companies have failed to meet the promises they made to their communities.

The report, titled “Looted Promises: the Crumbs Economy of Mining and the Myth of the Just Transition”, also finds that Parliament’s mining portfolio committee and the Department of Mineral and Petroleum Resources (DPMR) have failed to hold mining companies accountable.

The report studied the five-year Social and Labour Plans (SLPs) submitted by 11 companies Mpumalanga, North West, Free State, Northern Cape, Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal ending between 2022 and 2024. Mining companies are obliged to submit SLPs to the DPMR as part of their application for a mining right. SLPs are valid for a period of five years, in which they need to be implemented.

In their plans, the 11 companies – South32, United Manganese of Kalahari (UMK), Palabora Mining Company (PMC), Tumelo Colliery, Bushveld Vammetco Mine, Glencore Waterval Mine, Seriti Resources’ Klipspruit Colliery, Ikwezi Vanadium, Lentswe Tshipi Mine, Siyanda Bakgatla Platinum Mine (SBPM) and Tetra4 – promised to spend R376.25-million on community projects including roads and schools.

But when MACUA visited the communities, the organisation found that only R92-million in projects had been spent. Projects worth R284-million had not been completed.

MACUA conducted the social audits between 2022 and late 2024.

MACUA said collectively the companies had generated profits of R72-billion over the five-year SLP period. Yet less than 1% of profit had been spent on SLP projects.

“This is not underperformance. It is developmental theft— a system of Crumbs Capture, in which even the legally required entitlements of the poor are systematically looted, while mining companies and politically connected actors continue to profit from public deception,” said MACUA in the report.

According to the Minerals Council of South Africa mining companies claiming to represent 59% of the industry reported spending R4.9-billion on social investment in 2023. If the rest of the industry spent the same, the annual spend on community projects must have been R8.3-billion, or R16.6-billion over two years. If all the companies spent as little as the 11 surveyed by MACUA, this means more than R12.7-billion designed for community projects has not been spent.

The audits found only six of the 11 companies had made their SLPs publicly available, and only two had provided SLPs in a locally spoken language. Several companies, Glencore Waterval, Bushveld Vammetco, Ikwezi, and Tumelo, refused direct requests to share their SLPs, citing internal policy.

The MACUA audit found that in Mononono, a rural community in the Moses Kotane Local Municipality and in Robakala in Madibeng Local Municipality, North West, fewer than one in ten promised projects had been completed by Lentswe Tshipi Mine and Bushveld Vammetco Mine.

The auditors found Glencore Waterval Mine's had failed to build a high school in Ikemeleng near Kroondal despite making such a commitment. Bushveld Vatmeco Mine in Robakala had failed to finish promised roads.

In Magojaneng community in Northern Cape, where United Manganese of Kalahari operates one of South Africa's most profitable manganese mines, the mine promised to spend R172-million in its 2018-22 SLP. UMK promised that a 55km Khathu-Hotazel road project worth R28-million would benefit both the industry and local communities.

But MACUA found that the road's design only benefits mining companies who transport minerals to Khathu. Most Magojaneng community members expressed no knowledge of the road project. Hardly any could recall any information about it. Three years after its supposed completion date, the road is still unfinished and invisible to the community it was intended to benefit.

UMK, co-owned by Chancellor House, the ANC's investment vehicle, and Russian oligarch Viktor Vekselberg, has never published its financials, but claims compliance through the DMPR's self-reporting regime.

Many communities indicated that they had never been consulted by the mining companies operating in their communities and had no knowledge of what an SLP is.

"Decisions are made for us, not with us," said one participant in MACUA's survey.

In Pullens Hope, which is affected by the operations of Tumelo Colliery in Steve Tshwete Local Municipality in Hendrina, Mpumalanga, the mine failed to implement a road improvement project listed in its SLP. Residents who raised concerns at local forums were ignored or redirected, and no mechanisms were available for follow-up or resolution.

In Meloding, in the Matjhabeng Local Municipality, Free State, residents said a promised borehole and rain tanks project had vanished right after media appearances and political announcements.

"We feel like our suffering is used for paperwork," one resident said during the audit.

This sentiment was echoed in nearly every community MACUA visited, reflecting the broader disempowerment and disenfranchisement that defines the relationship between mining companies and affected communities today.

Christopher Rutledge, MACUA-WAMUA Advice Office's executive director, said MACUA's findings were not based on speculation. "They are grounded in verified audit findings and reflect a consistent under-delivery rate of 77% —a rate that, if even partially representative of national performance, would constitute one of the largest public development failures in post-apartheid South Africa."

"We are witnessing what can only be described as a national developmental crisis," said MACUA in the report. "The scale, consistency, and audacity of this under-delivery — backed by ghost infrastructure, falsified reports, and complete absence of enforcement — requires immediate action at the highest levels."

MACUA has consistently reported its social audit findings to the DMPR, but the department has failed to initiate any investigations or impose penalties on mining companies.

Parliament has similarly failed to act.

Magnificent Mndebele is a media and communications manager at MACUA-WAMUA Advice Office and a lecturer in journalism and communication at Eduvos Midrand Campus and the University of Johannesburg. MACUA's report will be launched on Thursday, 15 May at 87 De Korte, The Forge, Braamfontein, from 10h00 to 14h00.

Views expressed are not necessarily those of GroundUp.

The article first appeared on [GroundUp](#)

Community Struggles

Case Studies

MONONONO, NORTH WEST CASE STUDY

By **MACUA MEDIA TEAM**

“the municipality recognises the potential economic benefits of mining, it has been criticised for not adequately representing community interests in negotiations



69.6% of Audited Local Development Projects Not Completed by Mining Companies (MACUA Social Audit Report, 2022)

6%

6% of the participants attained tertiary qualifications

67%

67% of the participants in the survey did not pursue tertiary education



69% Earn less than R4000 monthly

Mononono is a small rural village in the North West province, under the Moses Kotane Local Municipality, not far from Northam. For many years, this village survived through farming, looking after cattle, and culture. All that changed when mining companies like Lentswe Tshipi and Ikwezi Vanadium discovered vanadium on their land. What was supposed to be an opportunity for jobs and development turned into a nightmare for the community. These mining companies were granted prospecting rights in 2011, and the community was cut off from their ancestral land which they had been using for decades. This land was not only used for they had used for grazing, but burials and ancestral rituals. Instead of creating job opportunities, these mining companies brought environmental destruction, poverty, and violated the community's cultural heritage.

But Mononono's struggles don't end with Ikhwezi Vanadium. The community must contend with Lenstwe Tsipi Mine, linked to the Bakgatla-Ba-Kgafela Traditional leaders through their investment arm known as Bakgatla-Ba-Kgafela Investment Holdings (BBKIH) and Sedibelo Community Development Trust (SCDT). These structures were developed to ensure that mining benefits would get to communities like Mononono, to help with the development of the village but that has not happened. Instead, the community was a part of a Social and Labour Plan (SLP) that allocated just R300,000 over a period of five years for the village. That's R60,000 a year, such an insulting figure for a community living near a multi-million mining operation.

Despite the millions made from mining around Mononono, the community has very little tangible benefits. The relationship between mining companies in Mononono and the Moses Kotane Municipality has been marked by exclusion and broken promises, with residents being sidelined from critical discussions about mining rights and development. Although the municipality claims to have engaged communities, official records show that only 8 people were consulted on key SLP projects, none from Monono itself. Socioeconomic conditions have worsened in the village, with only a handful of short-term jobs created during mining exploration and no sustainable employment or infrastructure improvements.

The social audit conducted in Mononono uncovered failures in consultation, transparency and accountability between the village and the surrounding mines. Despite legal obligations under the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act (MPRDA), 64% of community members didn't even know what an SLP is, and 71% had never seen one from Lentswe Tshipi Mine. The refurbishment of Mononono Primary school computer lab and upgrades to Ebenezer Day Care remain incomplete. Even the hawkers stalls project, supposedly part of local economic development, was rolled out without proper consultation or consideration of community needs. Alarming, most hawkers still operate from makeshift structures, while the stalls claimed by the mine don't exist for them.

“the assertion that the mine has consulted with the Mononono community is dubious at best, since substantial evidence suggests that these consultations have been inadequate.

15%

15% respondents indicated that their highest educational attainment was at the primary school level

“...the mining industry has been linked to increased rates of gender-based violence (GBV) within communities. With economic dependency on male family members or partners who may be employed in mines, women are often vulnerable to violence and exploitation.

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...the ruling by DFFE indicates broader issues within ²⁷ regulatory frameworks governing mining operations in South Africa. It suggests that existing protocols may not adequately protect community interests or ensure meaningful participation in decision-making processes

MONONONO
SOCIAL AUDIT

Beyond the broken promises, the audit exposed gender inequality in hiring, a lack of respect for cultural heritage, and deep-rooted mistrust between the community, the mine and the municipality. The financial reporting remains unclear, and R500 000 allocated to the hawkers stalls has raised questions about where and how the money was spent. These findings reflect a broader pattern of how mining companies are sidelining communities and prioritising profits over people. The community of Mononono continues to bear the costs of extraction without seeing the promised benefits.

MNS KLARINET CASE STUDY

By **MACUA MEDIA TEAM**

SOCIAL AND LABOUR PLANS (SLPs)

LEGALLY BINDING

SLPs serve as legally binding documents used to ensure benefits flow from mining companies to communities.

VALID FOR 5 YEARS

The SLPs are valid for a period of five (5) years and must be renewed every five (5) year period to ensure continuous benefit for communities such as Magojaneng.

PUBLICLY AVAILABLE

The mining rights holder is obligated to publish the approved SLP on their website, place copies in public areas and make announcements in newspapers and other mediums as to where copies of the approved SLP can be found in English and a language that is predominant in the area.

THREE MEETINGS PER ANNUM

The mining rights holder must convene a minimum of three meetings per annum with mining affected communities & 'interested and affected persons', to update stakeholders on progress and developments made with regards to the implementation of the approved SLP.

The MNS informal settlement in Emalahleni, Mpumalanga, is one of many communities in South Africa's coal belt that developed through economic migration, as people moved in search of employment in nearby coal mines. Over time, it became a densely populated settlement, now facing unsafe housing, poor infrastructure, and serious environmental risks. The legacy of mining has left the area with underground smoldering coal fires, sinkholes, and polluted water, threatening the health and safety of the community. Adding to these challenges, is the presence of the Bushveld Vanchem Processing plant, a major player in South Africa's vanadium industry, located just a few kilometers from MNS. The community has seen no meaningful benefit from its operations despite its strategic role in producing minerals for the country's energy future.

Despite Mpumalanga being central to South Africa's coal production, communities like MNS remain trapped in poverty and unemployment. According to Statistics South Africa, Emalahleni is the third most unemployed municipality in the Nkangala District, with an unemployment rate of 36.9% and youth unemployment at 41%. These figures reflect a larger pattern where mining wealth does not benefit local communities, leaving the community especially the youth locked out of formal employment. While the **Just Energy Transition** promises a shift to cleaner energy, for MNS the real need is justice. All they need is access to clean water, safer living conditions, proper basic services, and to have a say in decisions that impact their daily lives.

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THE TIME FOR MINOR ADJUSTMENTS AND PERFORMATIVE ENGAGEMENT IS OVER. WHAT IS REQUIRED IS A FUNDAMENTAL REORDERING OF POWER, PARTICIPATION, AND ACCOUNTABILITY—A TRANSITION NOT ONLY TO CLEANER ENERGY, BUT TO A MORE JUST AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY.

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overreliance on low-wage, unskilled labour further entrenches inequality and disempowerment.

Although many residents in MNS have completed secondary school, the lack of access to tertiary education continues to limit their chances of securing better paying and skilled jobs, making it difficult for families to break the cycle of poverty. The income levels in the settlement paint a bleak picture, with many households earning far below the minimum needed to cover basic living costs. Most families are surviving on less than R2000 a month, while the cost of a basic food basket has risen to over R3694.62. Many households are supporting multiple dependents on a single income. These families are trapped in a cycle of hardships that block access to healthcare, education, and better opportunities. These harsh realities expose the deep gap between the promises of a Just Energy Transition and the lived experiences of communities like MNS.

Access to water remains one of the most urgent challenges facing the MNS community. Even though mining in this region generates huge profits, residents of MNS are still forced to rely on inconsistent water deliveries from municipal trucks. Even these have become unreliable, with cutbacks leaving households without a stable supply. The 2024 social audit found that only 15.62% of residents have access to water, and only 12.5% have access to clean water. This is a direct violation of their constitutional right to basic services. The reality of communities living without water, while surrounded by profitable mining operations, exposes how mining profits don't translate into better lives for local communities.

Most households in MNS still live without reliable electricity, even though are surrounded by major power plants. Instead, families are forced to rely on unsafe and expensive energy sources like coal, paraffin, and wood often collected from abandoned mine dumps. This exposes them to serious health risks while eating away at what little income they have. For many, its a choice between buying these energy sources or putting food on the table. If South Africa's Just Energy Transition is to be truly meaningful, it must start with bringing reliable, affordable energy to communities like MNS, where the need is urgent, and the promises have not been delivered.

The social audit has exposed the ongoing failure of both the state and Bushveld Vanchem to respect the rights and dignity of the MNS community. Communities remain excluded from their benefits and denied a voice in decision making. Just Energy Transition must break these patterns of exclusion and put communities like MNS at the centre of development.



**THE TRANSITION CANNOT BE
JUST IF IT PERPETUATES
INEQUALITY, IGNORES FRONTLINE
VOICES, AND EXTERNALISES
ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL
COSTS TO ALREADY
MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES.**

RABOKALA BRITS CASE STUDY

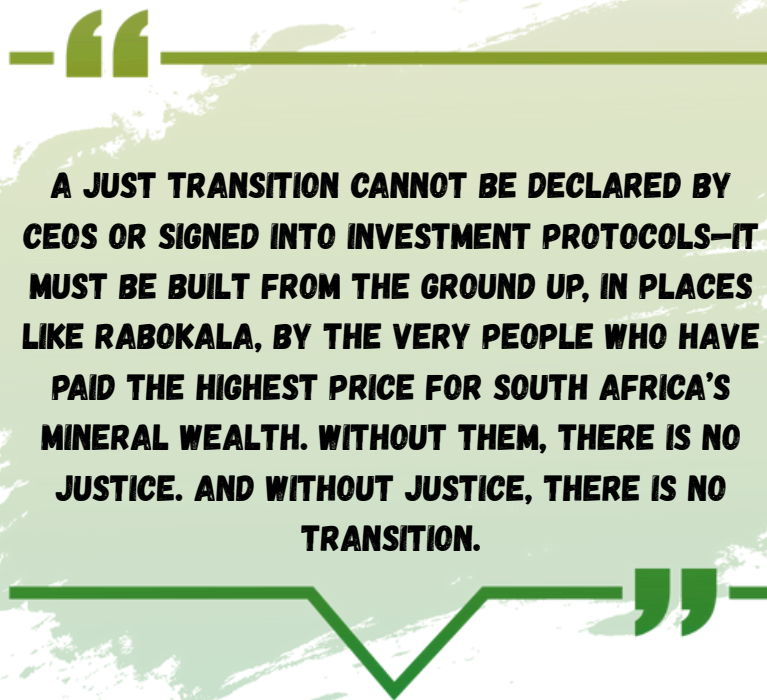
By MACUA Media Team

Rabokala is situated in the Madibeng Local Municipality and is a predominantly rural area and is a part of Ward 36 within the municipality. The Madibeng municipality's economy is diverse with significant contributions from agriculture, mining, manufacturing, and tourism. The village is situated in an area underpinned by a diverse economy that includes significant mining operations.

The municipality is notably the third-largest chrome producer in the world and hosts rich reserves of Platinum Group Metals.

Even though that is the case, the village hosts Bushveld Vametco Mine, an open pit vanadium mining and processing located approximately 8km northeast of Brits in the North West province. The village is a clear example of the harm caused by mining companies who fail to deliver on their promises in host communities.

The community today faces lack of infrastructural development, unfulfilled commitments and poverty as a result of the lack of promise keeping by Bushveld Vametco Mine in their Social and Labour Plan. The case study reveals the community's struggles and shocking findings highlighting systemic injustices and institutional neglect.



Rabokala, living in a promised legacy that never came, hosts a mining company that pledged alignment with South Africa's Just Energy Transition through sustainable development projects. The promise instead turned into a hollow gesture which has been followed by the mine's liquidation early this year.

Bushveld Vametco left without an exit strategy, no meaningful community consultation, and no completed projects of substance. Community members were never informed or prepared for the collapse, and no mitigation measures were put in place.

Key projects that were meant to uplift the community and the results are shocking with a budget of R4.7 million towards High Mast Solar Lights for public safety improvement however, 72,6% of the residents were not aware of this. In places where the lights were installed, no maintenance was done. A budget of R3 million was put aside for a 1km Km Internal Road in Rankotea: Budgeted at R3 million, this road simply does not exist.

Despite appearing in both municipal Integrated Development Plans and SLP documents dating back a decade, physical inspection found no infrastructure. The community has been waiting for it since 2012. Cluster Sports Facility for youth development was allocated R3 million then later abandoned and only 13,8% of the community knew about it. The Clean Water Provision project, according to 83% of residents, was never delivered leaving them to rely on private water purchases and spending up to R1200 per month and over 60% of them depend on social grants.

The community left to deal with all these injustices was never a part of the process. 7,2% stated they were never included in decision-making, 77,8% do not know what an SLP is until MACUA came in and 86.32% of the respondents said where there were consultations, women were excluded.

This community led (2018-2022) audit reveals that no efforts are ever made to include and support disadvantaged and marginalised host communities even though there are laws that mandate it.

RABOKALA
SOCIAL AUDIT

“Section 2(d) of the act further states that¹² the objectives of SLPs are to ‘substantially and meaningfully expand opportunities for historically disadvantaged persons, including women, to enter the mining and petroleum industries and to benefit from the exploration of the nation’s mineral and petroleum resources.

“Projects with clear development potential are consistently undermined by bureaucratic inertia, insufficient planning, and a lack of community participation.

Meloding CASE STUDY

By **MACUA Media Team**

Meloding located within the Matjhabeng Local Municipality in the Free State, is a historically marginalised community. Established during apartheid laws times, the township was deliberately designed to exclude black South Africans from economies. The community is situated near Virginia, which is a central hub for the country's gold mining industry. Despite this, local communities remain on the margins with no beneficiation. Instead, they have been left to bear the brunt of environmental degradation, chronic underdevelopment, and persistent socio-economic inequality.

The case study exposes failures in how mining is delivered or denied to their host communities, the Meloding residents were promised water infrastructure but no deliveries were made. This broken promise was done on a community that relies on farming and livestock for survival, and the destruction of land and depletion of water supplies have robbed women of key income and food security strategies.

In Meloding specifically, not a single project was completed, despite clear community needs and legally binding obligations on the part of mining companies. The audit reveals that although millions were allocated for development projects such as road upgrades, youth skills training, and recreational infrastructure, very little has been implemented on the ground. Projects that appear “completed” on paper are either invisible or incomplete when visited by community researchers. In one case, a skills development centre listed as “delivered” was nowhere to be found.

Worse still, most residents had no knowledge of the SLPs or their supposed benefits. Public participation was minimal or non-existent, and communities were never given the chance to influence how the funds would be used. The audit shows a community systematically excluded from decision-making—while mining companies reported progress to regulators without verification.

The Meloding report also highlights a broader pattern: government departments responsible for oversight have failed to hold mining companies accountable. There is no consequence for misleading reports or undelivered projects. Meanwhile, communities like Meloding remain stuck in poverty, despite sitting atop some of South Africa's richest mineral deposits.

MACUA highlights that these failures are not accidental. They reflect a broader pattern of what it terms “crumbs capture”—where development funds are diverted, inflated, or misreported, often benefiting politically connected networks rather than the communities they are intended to serve.

In Meloding, the impact of this neglect is personal and immediate. Families continue to buy water at high costs or rely on unsafe sources, despite repeated promises of infrastructure. Community voices are consistently sidelined, and accountability mechanisms are weak or non-existent.

“SLP's are legally binding on business and the MPRDA gives communities the authority to demand these promises from the mining companies

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For a Just Energy Transition to have credibility, mining companies must demonstrate tangible, measurable improvements aligned with their obligations—not just in documentation, but in community experience.

MACUA-WAMUA is calling for legislative reform to make SLPs enforceable, require community consent, and ensure independent verification of delivery. Without these changes, mining communities will continue to be used, forgotten, and left with nothing but the scars of extraction.

Meloding’s story is not unique—but it is powerful. It demands that South Africa rethinks how mining wealth is distributed, and who gets to decide what “development” looks like.

METHODOLOGY



Data systematically
collected and
analysed



Preliminary findings
shared with
community



Physical verification
of the projects

Meloding families’ desperate need for clean water became media fodder—but afterward, they were left with nothing. Their suffering, they say, became paperwork and PR, rather than real development .

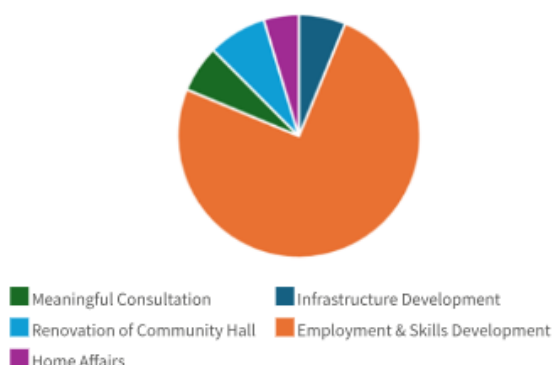
As MACUA chillingly notes: "If mining companies can steal legally mandated development funds with impunity, the constitutional project has failed the people it was meant to uplift".

In Meloding and beyond, the line between corporate statement and community reality is stark. One has been polished for public consumption. The other lies cracked, dry, and abandoned.

Besides clear community needs communication from the residents, and legally binding obligations, these injustices still affect communities.

The report calls for urgent systemic reform, including legally enforced transparency, community-led monitoring, and stronger state oversight to prevent future exploitation.

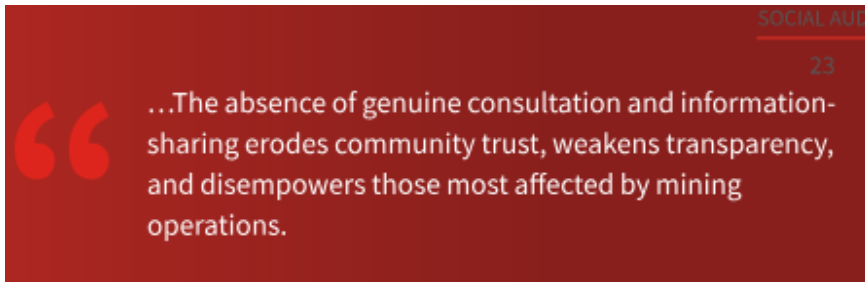
What Does Your Community Need?



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WITHOUT URGENT ACTION, THE SLP’S PROMISES OF INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC UPLIFTMENT WILL REMAIN EMPTY RHETORIC. THE SITUATION IN MELODING IS EMBLEMATIC OF WHAT IS AT STAKE IF SOUTH AFRICA’S JUST ENERGY TRANSITION FAILS TO CENTRE THE RIGHTS, VOICES, AND NEEDS OF MINING-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES.

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At the Centre of Power, Yet Left in the Dark

Phola, a mine host township located in Mpumalanga's Emalahleni municipality, usually referred to as the "place of coal" is situated right on South Africa's coal-powered economy. The community has over a century been surrounded by mines and power station who have fuelled national development, yet this community remains stuck in poverty, inequality and environmental degradation.

This mining community hosts multiple coal operations and very close to major Eskom power stations, but power outages are regular for Phola, enduring crumbling infrastructure and dangerously polluted water and air. The contradiction here is glaring: **the community provides energy for millions but struggles with basic services and opportunities.**

The report exposes that Phola is a clear example of how extractive industries fail to deliver on their legally mandated Social and Labour Plans. These plans are meant to ensure mining companies invest in local development, including job creation, skills training, and infrastructure. But in Phola, the audit revealed that these promises remain largely unmet.

Like most of the audited communities, Phola reported being unaware of the existence or contents of most SLPs. Projects that were supposed to be completed; such as training centres, road upgrades, or health facilities, were either not started, incomplete, or of poor quality. In many cases, no public participation took place in drafting or approving these plans, violating the principle of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent, which is what MACUA has been advocating for a while now.

One would not expect a community that hosts coal mines supplying electricity to the whole country to face unemployment, but it remains high, especially among youth and women in this community. Many residents rely on informal work or social grants to survive. Despite being surrounded by billion-rand operations, Phola has been left behind—its people treated as invisible stakeholders in decisions that affect their livelihoods and health.

The proximity to national wealth has not translated into development or opportunity.



A recent Social Audit conducted by MACUA-WAMUA uncovered deeply troubling patterns. Promises made in mining companies' Social and Labour Plans, which are legally required to guide local development remain largely unfulfilled. There are projects listed as “completed” on paper but were found to be non-existent a

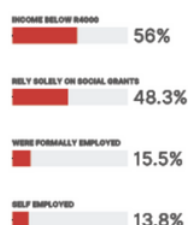
The lack of transparency and accountability reflects a deeper issue of exclusion and marginalisation. Environmental degradation is a big problem as open-pit mines and coal dust significantly contribute to a toxic atmosphere but there is no monitoring or redress being done. The audit found that neither government regulators nor mining companies had put in place effective safeguards for community health or ecological protection.

This community's lived experience is a clear warning as South Africa moves toward renewable energy, a **Just Transition cannot be just in name only**. For as long as existing inequalities are not addressed shifting from coal carries the same injustices and this time deepened which will then leave communities like Phola behind once again.

To be truly “just”, the transition must include:

- 1 Worker reskilling and retraining programs,
- 2 Community-led planning and decision-making,
- 3 Investment in social services and infrastructure, and
- 4 Clear timelines and transparency from government and industry actors.

Phola and similar coal-reliant communities must be placed at the centre of planning, not on the periphery, if South Africa is to avoid repeating the extractive injustices of the past.



Among the 116 participants:

56% (65 respondents) reported household incomes below R4,000/month, well below the current minimum wage threshold of R4,779.38²².

48.3% (56 respondents) stated that they rely solely on social grants as their main income source.

15.5% (18 respondents) were formally employed, and 13.8% (16 respondents) were self-employed.

The audit calls for binding legislative reforms, community ownership models, and independent oversight to ensure mining-affected communities are not simply sacrificed for profit. For Phola, justice means more than compensation—it means participation, restoration, and long-overdue recognition.

A JUST TRANSITION IS NOT JUST ABOUT RETIRING COAL-FIRED POWER STATIONS—IT IS ABOUT REPAIRING THE SOCIAL INJUSTICES THAT HAVE ACCOMPANIED EXTRACTIVE ECONOMIES FOR DECADES. PHOLA'S AUDIT OFFERS A WINDOW INTO THESE INJUSTICES AND A PATH FORWARD, ROOTED IN COMMUNITY VOICE, LEGAL RIGHTS, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE.

Mogajaneng CASE STUDY

By MACUA Media Team

Magojaneng, a rural village in the Limpopo Province, lies in the shadow of some of South Africa's wealth-generating mining operations. Yet, despite the billions extracted from the ground nearby, the community faces a stark reality: poverty, environmental degradation, and a state of near-complete exclusion from the supposed benefits of mining-led development. Unemployment, low levels of literacy, widespread reliance on social grants and limited access to piped water, electricity and sanitation services mark this community.

The community hosts United Manganese of Kalahari (UMK) which was established in 2005 and South32 and despite the billions the company generates, there has been little to no meaningful redistribution to the communities whose land and labour sustain this industry.

The recent social audit uncovered a deeply unsettling picture of systemic neglect and unmet promises by UMK, the mine's SLP was implemented in ways that offered minimal real impact. The audit revealed that several projects listed as completed were either not visible to residents or delivered without the promised quality or scope. Local job creation, a cornerstone of most SLPs, was virtually non-existent. The few opportunities that did arise were outsourced to external contractors, leaving local residents unemployed and disillusioned.

Worse still, the report highlighted the complete lack of community consultation. Residents were not meaningfully engaged in identifying their development priorities or in tracking progress on promised projects. This absence of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent points to a broader structural exclusion, where decisions about Magojaneng are made in boardrooms and government offices—far from the village itself. Environmental impacts were another concern. Dust, water pollution, and land degradation were all reported, with no clear mechanisms in place for redress or rehabilitation.

“ A RADICAL SHIFT FROM SYMBOLIC DELIVERY TO REDISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE. UNTIL THEN, MANGANESE MAY POWER THE GREEN TRANSITION GLOBALLY, BUT FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE NORTHERN CAPE, IT WILL CONTINUE TO SYMBOLISE AN ALLTOO-FAMILIAR MODEL OF EXTRACTION WITHOUT TRANSFORMATION. ”

Despite the clear health and ecological risks posed by nearby mining operations, there was minimal government oversight or corporate accountability.

► PROJECTS SELECTED FOR AUDIT

COMPANY	SLP DATES	PROJECT	PARTICIPANTS
South32	2013-2018	Community Water Supply Project	175
South32	2013-2018	Rearata Primary School Project	175
South32	2019-2023	Paediatric Unit at Tshwaragano Hospital Project (should have been completed by 2022)	175
UMK		Sedibeng Bulk Water Supply Project	105
UMK		Joe Morolong Training Centre Project in Mothibistad	105
UMK		Rehabilitation of Kathu to Hotazel Road (R31) project	105



FINDINGS FOR UMK'S LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (LED) PROJECTS

PROJECT 1: REHABILITATION OF KHATU TO HOTAZEL D3340 ROAD - RESURFACING

MINING PROJECT PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME	BUDGET	COMMUNITY AWARENESS
Assmang, South32, UMK, Vela VKE, Basil Read	2018-2019	R24 Million	⊗ 1.9%



PROJECT 2: SEDIBENG BULK WATER SUPPLY INFRASTRUCTURE

MINING PROJECT PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME	BUDGET	COMMUNITY AWARENESS
Sedibeng Water, with long-term operational responsibility	Jan 2018 - November 2022	R96 Million R19M pa	⊗ 23%



PROJECT 3: JOE MOROLONG TRAINING CENTRE

MINING PROJECT PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME	BUDGET	COMMUNITY AWARENESS
ADCORP, a workforce solutions provider	2018 - 2022	R35 M Tech skills R6.7M Computer Based	⊗ 23%
Simtrain - Driving School		R11M	

The Magojaneng audit does not stand alone. It echoes patterns seen in mining-affected communities across the country: profit-driven extraction, paper-based compliance, and community abandonment. MACUA-WAMUA's call for reform is loud and clear—SLPs must be enforceable, monitored independently, and grounded in genuine community participation.

For Magojaneng, the audit is more than a report—it is an indictment of a system that benefits from their land while offering little in return. Unless structural change occurs, this village will remain a stark symbol of South Africa's unfinished struggle for mining justice.

COMPANY	SLP DATES	PROJECT	PARTICIPANTS
SOUTH32	2013-2018	COMMUNITY WATER SUPPLY PROJECT	175
SOUTH32	2013-2018	REARATA PRIMARY SCHOOL PROJECT	175
SOUTH32	2019-2023	PAEDEATRIC UNIT AT TSHARAGANO HOSPITAL PROJECT(SHOULD HAVE BEEN COMPLETED BY 2022)	175
UMK		SEDIBENG BULK WATER SUPPLY PROJECT	105
UMK		JOE MOROLONG TRAINING CENTRE PROJECT IN MOTHIBISTAD	105
UMK		REHABILITATION OF KATHU TO HOTAZEL ROAD(R31) PROJECT	105

Sandfontein CASE STUDY

By MACUA Media Team

The Sandfontein Social Audit reveals significant gaps between mining commitments and realities on the ground, highlighting deep-rooted issues of exclusion, poverty, and inadequate development despite the community's proximity to valuable mineral wealth.

A critical finding is the failure to engage the community. An overwhelming 98.37% of Sandfontein residents reported never being invited to a single consultation regarding the Social and Labour Plan (SLP), in direct violation of legal obligations under the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act (MPRDA). Additionally, 76.42% were unaware of the mine's supposed commitment to the Sedimogang Poultry Project, pointing to a severe lack of transparency and effective communication channels.

The audit also uncovered widespread exclusion from decision-making processes. Community members have been systematically left out of meaningful consultations, contravening standards of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). This exclusion has eroded trust and left residents without a voice in decisions that directly affect their livelihoods and environment.

A stark disparity between paper and practice emerged from the findings. While the mine operator, SBPM, reports an investment of R60 million into host communities, local residents have seen little to no tangible benefit from these funds. The absence of publicly accessible financial data raises concerns about how profits are shared and whether any meaningful reinvestment is occurring in Sandfontein.

Despite being situated near lucrative platinum group metal (PGM) reserves critical for the green energy transition, Sandfontein grapples with severe socioeconomic hardship. The community suffers from a staggering unemployment rate of 87.74%, with 32.5% of households earning only R1,000-R2,000 per month. Just 5.6% of households earn above R4,000 per month—an income level still below South Africa's national minimum wage—underscoring the disconnect between the region's mineral wealth and local living conditions.

Local employment opportunities remain scarce, with only 26.02% of residents employed overall, and a striking 88% stating they have never worked in the nearby mine. Community members raised serious concerns about nepotism, bribery, and unfair labour practices, suggesting systemic barriers to accessing jobs meant for local people.



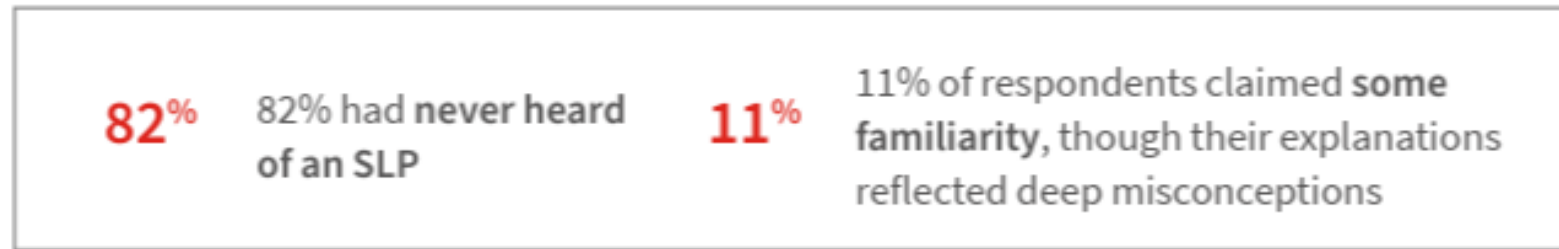
88%
Never worked
in nearby
mine.

AS SOUTH AFRICA POSITIONS ITSELF AS A KEY PLAYER IN THE GLOBAL GREEN ECONOMY, POWERED BY PLATINUM AND OTHER CRITICAL MINERALS, THE IDEA OF A "JUST TRANSITION" MUST BE MORE THAN A SLOGAN. IT MUST MEAN THAT MINING-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES LIKE SANDFONTEIN SHARE IN THE BENEFITS OF RESOURCE WEALTH—NOT ONLY THROUGH JOBS, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT BUT THROUGH DIGNITY, INCLUSION, AND A RIGHT TO SHAPE THEIR OWN FUTURE.

The audit also revealed poor implementation of development projects. The Sedimogang Poultry Project, listed as complete by SBPM with a budget of R2 million, was found non-operational and unknown to local farmers, who were neither consulted nor involved in its planning or execution.

Despite these challenges, the Social Audit itself served as a tool of empowerment, providing the community a platform to voice grievances and demand accountability. However, the audit stresses that such community-led efforts cannot replace the state’s fundamental responsibility to regulate and enforce mining compliance.

The findings issue a clear call for a just energy transition, emphasizing that the shift to green energy must be inclusive, equitable, and participatory. Sandfontein’s marginalization reflects broader systemic failures in South Africa’s mining governance, posing the risk of repeating past injustices if meaningful reforms are not urgently pursued.



SLP PROJECT AUDIT MATRIX – SIYANDA BAKGATLA PLATINUM MINE (SANDFONTEIN SOCIAL AUDIT)

CLAIMED SLP COMMITMENT	DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL	STATUS	CLAIMED VALUE (R)	ACTUAL VALUE ACCRUED	COMPLETION SCORE (%)	COMMUNITY VALUE SCORE (%)
Upgrade infrastructure Deliver chickens Empower women/youth Support economic development	HIGH Enterprise Development Women Empowerment Poverty Alleviation)	PARTIALLY COMPLETED Infrastructure built, no chickens delivered, no operational support	2Million	LOW Infrastructure delivered but no operational support, zero job creation, high community disillusionment	45	28
TOTAL / AVERAGE		45/100			45%	28%

Total Completion Score: 45 / 100

Average Completion Score: 45.0%

Average Community Value Score: 28.0%

MACUA IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE THE NEWLY ELECTED NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



WAMUA IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE THE NEWLY ELECTED **NATIONAL EXECUTIVE STRUCTURE**



WAMUA

NOTHING ABOUT US
WITHOUT US



”
I AIM TO DRIVE POSITIVE CHANGE,
PROMOTE WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT,
AND STRENGTHEN WAMUA'S
IMPACT IN MINING-AFFECTED
COMMUNITIES.

”
REFILOE MOFOKENG

WAMUA NATIONAL ORGANISER



”
MY GOAL IS TO HELP BUILD A
COMMUNITY WHERE WOMEN FEEL
SAFE, VALUED, AND EMPOWERED.
LET'S WORK TOGETHER TO MAKE
THIS HAPPEN. WE ARE THE VOICE
OF THE VOICELESS.

”
NOSIZWE SEKESE

WAMUA NATIONAL SECRETARY



”
I COMMIT TO LEADING WITH
UNWAVERING DEDICATION AND
SOLIDARITY.

”
MPHO NKAWANA

WAMUA CONVENER



”
TO SET PRESIDENCE THAT WOMAN
NEEDS TO BE HEARD AND LISTEN
TO AND NEED TO BE INCLUDED IN
DECISION MAKING AND ALSO
INCREASE THE FOOT PRINT OF
WOMEN IN MINING.

”
MARIA NGULUBE

WAMUA NATIONAL DEP. SECRETARY



”
WE WILL BE USING THIS
RESPONSIBILITY GIVEN TO US TO
ACCELERATE THE FIGHT
AGAINST WOMEN OPPRESSION IN
MINING AFFECTED COMMUNITIES.

”
MPHONYANE PHEZANE

WAMUA NATIONAL TREASURE

YAMUA IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE THE NEWLY ELECTED NATIONAL EXECUTIVE STRUCTURE



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