



**“We have
to talk,
we need
changes”**

**voices from platinum belt
mine workers
and worker communities**



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- mineworker, Bleskop Focus Group, 29 Jan 2015





Picture: Focus Group participants at Mmakou



Report on focus group research on the views and experiences of mineworkers, and mine-affected communities, in South Africa's platinum mines in 2015

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Abstract

This paper reports on the experiences and perceptions of mineworkers, families and communities living with the impact of South Africa's platinum mines today. It is based upon in-depth qualitative research with 101 participants, through seven focus groups; (four held in the platinum belt); and three in the Eastern Cape; between December 2014 and June 2015 (*see guide to focus groups p. 5*). In these groups, people recounted lived experiences and perceptions of platinum mining today, and suggested measures to improve their lives. (*See pages 69 ff. for study methodology.*)

The overwhelming message from these discussions stands out: despite twenty years of democratic dispensation, too little has changed from the apartheid years in the impact of mining on the lives of workers, families, and communities.

In the workplace (*pages 9 ff.*), conditions are physically harsh and damage health. Pay is inadequate given the hard work and risks. Employment practice entrenches short-term employment without adequate security, seniority, promotion and career pathing. Discrimination remains common (over race, ethnicity and gender), in employment practice, pay, and in micro-aggression in the workplace. Housing and living conditions around the mine are dismal.

Living near the mines today (*pages 35 ff.*), established communities continue to be removed to make way for new mines, even today. No alternative housing or jobs are provided for those displaced. Land and water are polluted. In-migrant workers spend living-out allowances on rented rooms and shacks. Mines fail to provide decent houses; municipalities are unwilling to provide infrastructure; local traditional authorities refuse to sell houses or land to in-migrant workers. These become service delivery protest flashpoints.

Labour sending areas (*pages 48 ff.*) were forced into extreme poverty under apartheid and the migrant labour system. Today, extended families survive on what a miner sends home. Injury and occupational disease end that income; while the ex-worker becomes an added burden on the family. Ex-mineworkers and families fail to access pensions, disability and death benefits. Families have no choice but to send young sons to the mines, continuing the cycle of poverty.

Participants propose interventions (*pages 61ff*). These interventions fall into three categories:

- **Administration:** monitor and enforce pro-labour legislation; determine who is responsible for housing, infrastructure and land ownership in mine-adjacent areas; enforce existing health and safety regulations; ensure that payouts for pensions, disability, and death benefits reach beneficiaries.
- **Communication and Representation:** Represent miners and mine affected communities in all decisions by companies and/or by government that affect them; ensure communication between companies, government, workers, community/civil society.
- **Financial investment in a sustainable labour force on the mines:** wealth from mining must go to those who work for it: higher pay for workers; lump-sum payouts to ex-miners, families and communities to redress entrenched poverty; invest in job creation and economic development in mineworker communities (both near mines and labour sending areas.)

Guide to focus groups

This project conducted in depth qualitative research on the experiences and perspectives of platinum belt mineworkers, families, and communities affected by platinum mining. This covers a huge and varied population, divided by language, gender, home area, affiliation (political and trade union), amongst other factors. No survey so far has mapped the relative size of these segments.

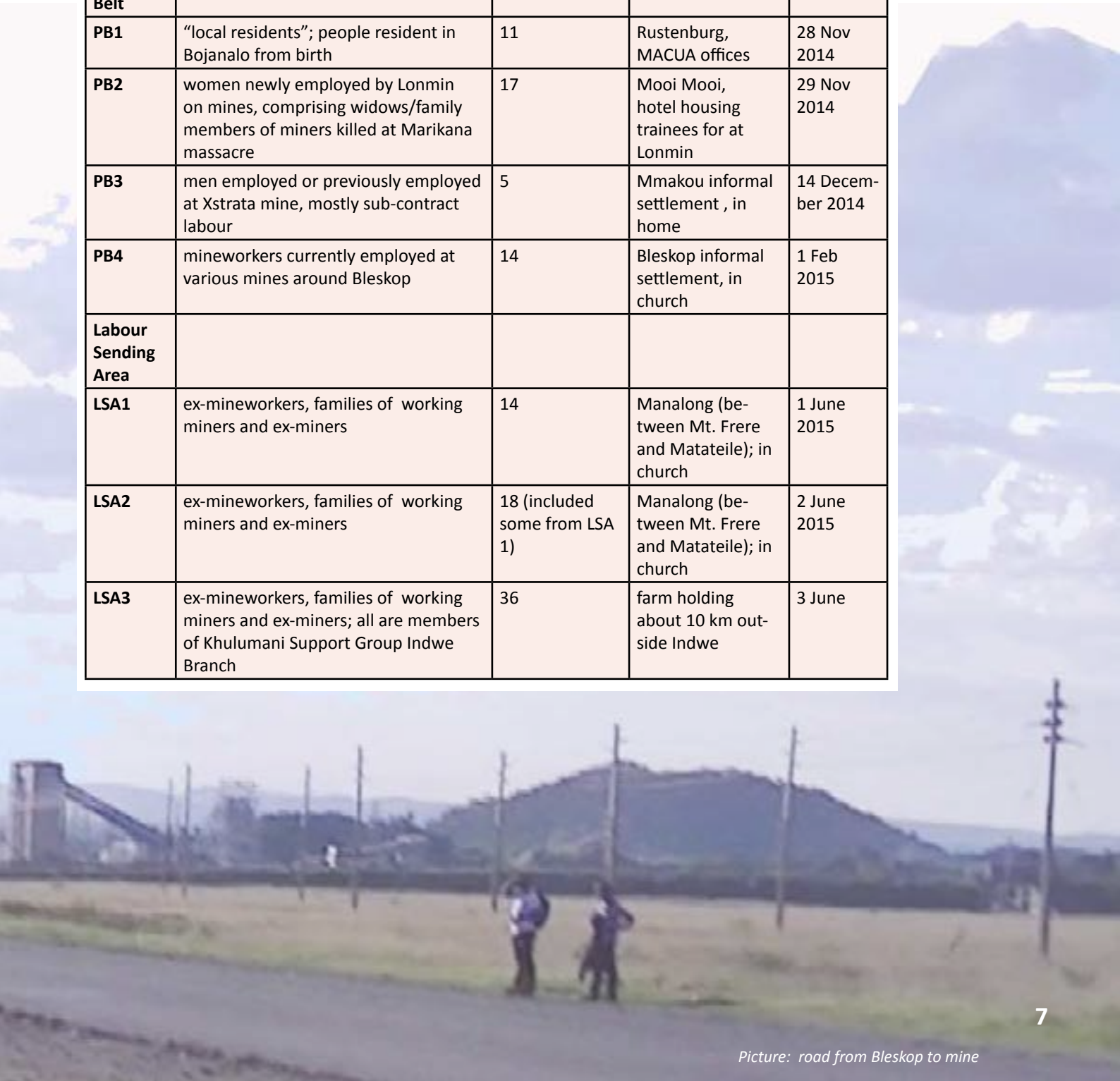
The research design therefore chose focus groups comprising people from clearly defined segments of this broader population. From this, we hoped to identify similarities and differences in responses to key questions which would suggest the broad contours of the terrain. In effect, iteration from different segments provides validation that the statements reflect actual experience and perspective of people whose lives are variously impacted by working in the platinum mines. This iteration, in turn, allows construction of a meta-narrative with a fair degree of confidence. (A description of study method is on pages 66ff.)



Table 1: Focus group descriptions

Note: quotes in this text from focus group discussions are indicated by focus group designation in this table: eg. PB1 refers to Platinum Belt Focus Group 1; LSA3 refers to Labour Sending Area Focus Group 3. In cases where participants have asked to remain anonymous, quotes identify the focus group where the discussion occurred, but not individual names.

Focus Group designation	Segment description	Number of participants	Place	Date
Platinum Belt				
PB1	“local residents”; people resident in Bojanalo from birth	11	Rustenburg, MACUA offices	28 Nov 2014
PB2	women newly employed by Lonmin on mines, comprising widows/family members of miners killed at Marikana massacre	17	Mooi Mooi, hotel housing trainees for at Lonmin	29 Nov 2014
PB3	men employed or previously employed at Xstrata mine, mostly sub-contract labour	5	Mmakou informal settlement , in home	14 December 2014
PB4	mineworkers currently employed at various mines around Bleskop	14	Bleskop informal settlement, in church	1 Feb 2015
Labour Sending Area				
LSA1	ex-mineworkers, families of working miners and ex-miners	14	Manalong (between Mt. Frere and Matateile); in church	1 June 2015
LSA2	ex-mineworkers, families of working miners and ex-miners	18 (included some from LSA 1)	Manalong (between Mt. Frere and Matateile); in church	2 June 2015
LSA3	ex-mineworkers, families of working miners and ex-miners; all are members of Khulumani Support Group Indwe Branch	36	farm holding about 10 km outside Indwe	3 June





Picture: Focus Group participants at Indwe

Focus group outcomes

Overall perceptions

“To be a mine worker you come back unhealthy, and never get benefits.” (Nqwile Kheti, LSA3)

All of the focus group discussions centred around the perception that the nature of South African mining and migrant labour system shaped by apartheid are today perpetuated and reconstituted in the new mines of the platinum belt.

Older mineworkers and their families, especially those in the labour sending areas, describe an unbroken continuum of migrant labour and underdevelopment, which they perceive as inherited from and descended from the apartheid past. This perception reflects their own lived experience over the last thirty years.

Changes to legal structures (including fundamental changes such as ending apartheid laws that forced unemployed men and women and children into Bantustans) have not in themselves provided remedies for the entrenched poverty and under-development of labour sending areas. Rather, participants describe how the structures of employment and living conditions have adapted to new legal and political frameworks, leaving the labour sending areas still, today, reliant upon migrant mine labour for survival.

Mineworkers and their families maintain that, despite the changes of democracy, their choices and opportunities remain stunted.

This is highlighted in the life stories of mineworkers and their families. Many begin their stories recounting years and decades of mine work and work-related damage experienced under apartheid. They then tell how this continues into the 1990s and 2000s, until they reach a place today, in the developing platinum belt.

Younger workers, only now starting as migrant labour to the platinum belt, present a different perspective on that continuity. They define themselves as the new post-democracy generation, with expectations that the mines today should provide a better life. Yet the working conditions they endure down the mine, and the squatter camps they spend their lives in when they work on the mine, seem little improvement over what their fathers went through.

This comes through in comments from mineworkers at Bleskop, all of whom work underground on the platinum belt; all of whom come from rural areas in the classic migrant labour pattern. “It is still the same”, they say, and “it is critical”.

“We – like nearly all of the mineworkers in this community – are the youth, the post-apartheid generation. As we were talking about victims of apartheid, yes we have heard about this, but we are this generation of today, the generation of democracy. There are very few elders working with us here. we would therefore talk about the challenges of today, with the present government, as we are the mineworkers and the community here.

“First of all, if you look around here the conditions are too bad, the unhappy conditions we are facing in this area. No electricity, no housing, no water where we are living. *(Note: in a follow-up question the facilitator asked if this was true for all of them, and was told: in the informal area we were in very few shacks had water or electricity supply; although some other areas some living quarters but not all did have electricity. In the area near Kroonsdal, electricity has been supplied in the last year only.)*

“There are no changes from the old system in the mining industry, as compared from the old system, and the new system. It is still the same. There is no ventilation – that air

circulating from the fans underground, you can suffocate from that air. Even most of us, while we can cough, you can see the lungs now, how black they are.

“The second thing: hard work; the safety; it is still the same, like the old system, there is no difference.

“In certain categories, whereby you can find that one who is kissed or on the highest levels. But from general up to the third group it is still the same.. You are working hard underground, you come from underground, you come here to the squatter camp, there is no electricity, no water, you see that situation, it is critical each and every day, underground and here outside.”

Yes, we are the youth of this democracy. But we came here to find these same conditions where our fore-fathers, our fathers, were working, it has not changed: the same dust, the same air, polluted air, the tools and everything, the same that have killed our fathers. That is why we are saying, we have to talk, we need the changes.” (PB 4)

The narratives of mineworkers’ families in the labour sending areas - wives and mothers, children, elders – further underline that they still see no opportunities to break out of the long-set patterns of migrant labour. They have no alternatives, in their home areas, to struggling to survive on amounts sent home. They pray that their children may get the education to break out of the cycle that their parents are trapped in (but the schools are still a long walk away, and the quality of teaching is often not the best).

Greetings. The pain makes me stand up. My husband was Patrick Ndunana. My pain is the amount he received as a mineworker – R2 a month. How can you manage a household on that amount of money?

When my husband came back at the end of the term, you look at him wanting money for food, clothes, schooling – he has R10 in his

pocket, what can you do with that? You have nothing in this home.

We say government must try by all means to look at us, to care about us, to help us: we are wounded families who need help. We are living in these difficult conditions, even now. (Nokwa Ndunana; LSA3)

In the workplace, at the mine

Table 2: Summary of the outcomes of focus group discussion about workplace conditions and employment practice

	<i>Key points raised by groups</i>	<i>pages</i>
Working conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mine work is physically harsh and dangerous</i> • <i>Mine work damages health: from dust, heat, and noise, and accident</i> • <i>Living conditions around the mine do not support health and welfare</i> 	10
Recruitment and employment:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Recruiting, hiring and promotion continue to promote migrant labour</i> 	11
Pay, bonuses and promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Pay is too low for hard work and risks of mine work, or to support families</i> • <i>Employers do not communicate with workers about deductions, bonuses, changes to pay, and taxes</i> 	17
Retrenchment, dismissal, lack of security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Many platinum belt miners today have been retrenched from gold mines, and have lost seniority and benefits during retrenchment</i> • <i>Arbitrary dismissals and loss of job for health reasons are common</i> 	19
Health and safety issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>All mineworkers at risk of injury and disease</i> • <i>Mine prevention and treatment insufficient</i> 	20
Prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination at work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Racism is rife; in employment, pay, and benefits; in on-going micro-aggression</i> • <i>Ethnic discrimination and stereotyping continue in employment, pay, and benefits</i> • <i>The role of traditional authorities in mine-related areas aggravates divisions</i> • <i>Gender: measures to change entrenched gender discrimination on platinum mines are often inadequate and ineffective</i> 	24
Respect and dignity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Miners demand respect and dignity for their work in the workplace and in the economy</i> 	34

Working conditions

Every mineworker talks of working in the mine as the bedrock hardship.

“Hard working conditions, risky working conditions, unhealthy working conditions: the fear of going down and not coming back; we are afraid. Compared to what we are doing, we are earning too little. That is why we say if the government can come and see these conditions, they won’t say we are earning too much. After one day in the mine, the government official won’t want to go back again. This is our daily bread to be there, working under these conditions.” (PB4)

Several of the women (from the Marikana Massacre widows) training to be underground workers said they were scared of working underground; and one said she did not expect to survive more than five years as a mineworker.

“Even if the government can claim we are the youth of today, working in the mine, the work is still the same, the hardship is still the same. No change.

“The working conditions are the same. We are working in difficult situations. The same situations that our fathers were working under, there is no change. The tools which they were holding are the same tools we are holding today. The polluted air which they were breathing is still the same that we are breathing today. The disease which they have suffered from is the same disease which we are suffering today. We are going to be the same as they were, suffering. The same things that killed our fathers will kill us today. That is why we stood up and fight for change. We need the changes.” (PB4)

“Its hard work: the safety; it is still the same, like the old system, conditions as that of apartheid, there is no change.” (PB4)

“I was a supervisor. I want to talk about my own experience. There is a thing called busman, a drilling machine. The contractors come and build supporting steels so that

when we are blasting it will not fall down. They support these steels with rift bolts and cement. I need to come in as supervisor and watch and do the checking, then call people to come and work.

“Inside there it is too hot, you cannot survive. They are using ventilators; the busman, the stone, and the train to take out the ore. They are using chemicals to do this. These chemical are killing us.” (LSA2)

Women training underground at Lonmin describe the dust they breathe:

“We are working in risky conditions, as we are drilling the rock there is dust, where we inhale the dust. We do have facemasks, covering nose and mouth, but the dust still gets in. To show how the dust is, they tell us we must use water, spray from the water pipes to damp down the dust, even when you are drilling you are cautioned that the minute you take out the machine you must put the water pipe in, because there is a lot of dust coming out. Even though the water has been put there, you still breath in the mine dust.” (PB2)

Recruitment and employment

Laws covering recruiting and employment in the mines were extensively rewritten after 1994, in significant part to eliminate the migrant labour system. These included a commitment from mine companies to hire people on permanent contracts, and to hire people locally where possible.

Platinum mine companies today regularly cite adherence to the LRA and the Mining Charter. However, companies that use labour brokers and sub-contracting do not necessarily include workers hired by these in the reports made to show compliance.

Permanent work, contracts and subcontracts

Despite apparently clear government regulations covering employment contracts, mineworkers in focus groups complain bitterly that mine practice leaves a large area of confusion around what formed regular (“full-time” or “permanent”) employment, defined-term contracts (presumably employed by the mine for specific jobs with a time limit), and sub-contracted work (working for other companies sub-contracted to work at the mine). This is further complicated by the role of labour brokers.

[Note this research was done in early 2015: it is not yet clear what impact new LRA regulations on temporary and contract labour – which came into effect in early 2015 – and new laws covering labour brokers – to be implemented in July 2015 – may have on the mining industry.]

A search for written material on contracting and sub-contracting on the platinum belt suggests that it is quite difficult to find out numbers of sub-contracted and contracted workers compared to permanent employees. While the mines do report these figures, some researchers have questioned whether reported figures accurately reflect what is happening on the ground.¹

Studies suggest that the platinum mines, especially those undergoing expansion, have a much higher percentage of contract and sub-contracted workers than more established mines – as high as 60% in some cases. Recent reports (2012) state:

“The three main platinum mines in Rustenburg subject to worker unrest last year were Anglo Platinum (Amplats), Lonmin and Impala Platinum (Implats). According to their 2012 annual reports, Amplats had just under 52000 fulltime and 4434 contract workers, while Implats had 33062 fulltime employees and 15 245 contract workers. Lonmin says it now has about 27717 permanent employees and 7333 contractors.”²

“As at the end of December 2012, RBplats employs 7518 people with 3262 being its own employees (including 24 corporate office staff) and 4256 being contractors.”³

1 An example of the issues raised by researchers around contracted and sub-contracted labour can be found in: Kally Forrest, Ruth First Lecture abstracts, <http://mg.co.za/article/2013-09-13-00-marikana-was-not-just-about-migrant-labour>

2 Kally Forrest, Migrant labour: Discarded but not discontinued, Wits Journalism, 01 Oct 2013; <http://www.journalism.co.za/blog/migrant-labour-discarded-but-not-discontinued/> (accessed 5 July 2015)

3 Gillian Jones, Issue of labour brokers a work in progress - Financial Mail 27 June 2013, <http://www.financialmail.co.za/business/2013/06/27/issue-of-labour-brokers-a-work-in-progress> (accessed 5 July 2015)

Studies have noted that the experiences of men employed by sub-contractors follow a very different pattern from that found in “regular employment” in the mines.

“What exacerbates mistreatment of migrant workers has been the dominance of a handful of powerful, centralised mining groups which began to outsource non-production and production functions to a growing number of sub-contracting companies⁹ (Department of Labour, 2007). The use of these sub-contracting workers has been highest in the platinum sector (Buhlungu and Bezuidenhout, 2008.... For example, in 2005, 54 667 of a total of 96 734 employees in the platinum group metals were outsourced, while in gold sector only 23 373 of of 133 569 male employees were outsourced (Buhlungu and Bezuidenhout, 2008).”⁴

Labour researcher Kally Forrest has also investigated the differences between employment practice for contracted and permanent workers at the platinum mines:

“Mines also use brokers as a cost cutting measure and a means to circumvent unions, as a contractor put it, “Mines don’t want to go through all employment procedures, especially when they want to just subcontract sections of a mine for a short time.” Mines and brokers sign a service level agreement which is not available to workers. Some workers on longer projects join unions but this is mainly for protection against unfair dismissal. A labour broker commented, “We have no union members and we don’t bargain wages as our service level agreements with companies have their own rules and regulations and the pay is stipulated in the contract. Some do join unions but there is no bargaining.” ...

For example, a permanent rock driller at Implats in 2012 earned a basic of R6 540 whilst an Amplats permanent RDO earned a R8 804 basic plus an RDO allowance of R1000 amounting to R9 804. By contrast one brokered RDO I interviewed earned a basic of R3 060 whilst another earned R3 920. Contracted labour nearly always earns significantly lower than permanents in the same job category sometimes by as much as R3 000 – R4 000. ... All platinum workers do overtime, often up to 12 hours a day in order to meet targets, but whereas permanents receive bonuses for meeting targets contracted labour is frequently not remunerated on the basis of targets, or inaccurately or not paid for overtime. All permanents received benefits. Some contracted labour got benefits, although less than permanents, and some received none.”

A news item from 2011 gives further evidence that sub-contracted workers are treated differently, and worse. In response to a report that deaths at South African mines increased by 27 per cent in the first three months of 2011, Solidarity researcher Leigh McMaster commented that a major contributor to this increase came from the poor safety and health record by subcontractors and contractors working on mines, as contractors were not on the same level regarding safety as full-time employees.⁵

4 Tendai Gwatidzo and Miracle Benhura, Mining Sector Wages in South Africa, LAMP working paper 1, Labour Market Intelligence Partnership, 2013, p.14, http://www.lmip.org.za/sites/default/files/document-files/WP%201%202013%20Mining%20Sector%20Wages%20WEB_0.pdf

5 The report in question referred to Anglo Platinum, AngloGold Ashanti, Harmony, Lonmin, Gold Fields – cited in news report by Dineo Matomela, Business Report [So. Africa] , Published on: 12 April 2011; <http://www.iol.co.za/business/rising-sa-mine-deaths-need-urgent-attention-1.1055349#.VZIQZu2qpBc> (Accessed 5 July 2015)

Participants in focus groups talked of sub-contracting in the same terms: an ongoing problem on the platinum mines.

In PB Group 3, a group of young men tell of coming to the platinum mines looking for work when they could not find work at home in Venda. They were recruited at Marikana, for unskilled, general labour in the mines through a labour broker. They were told their employment would be in Xstrata Elands mine near Brits; they assumed they were employed by Xstrata.

In several focus groups, participants explain that it is often not clear to the worker who the employer is. Workers employed by different sub-contractors are sometimes –

“And when you ask, who is your boss, who is your employer? You won’t know, it won’t be easy to find out, it is difficult.”
(PB3)

Picture: Focus group participant shows mine access card issued to sub-contracted worker, identical to that of a permanent employee.



but not always - identified by different overalls. At times, people work together on the same team, but some are paid by a subcontractor and some as permanent employees of the mine company. Participants in the focus group who were in fact sub-contract labour showed the group their mine security access cards, which are identical to those carried by “full-time” mine employees.

Although the miners work on the same team, sub-contractors often offer conditions, pay, and work structures which differ from those given to employees of the mine itself.

One participant who describes the impact of sub-contracting is a shopsteward at Xstrata, a permanent employee with 16 years mining experience, and a certified boilermaker. As a shopsteward, he is concerned that people who work for sub-contractors are often not covered by agreements negotiated between unions and the mine company – even though the work they do is covered by the agreement. The sub-contractors are not bound by agreements between the mine and the union (this includes union wage agreements). This occurs even where subcontracted workers work within the mine, on shifts and on teams with “full-time mine employees” who are covered by the agreement.

“This is worse for contracted labour as there is no clear chain of command, and way to seek for CCMA protection. I have problems like this: people are getting fired every day and every night. But where I am working, I am shy to say something because if I say it, tomorrow I am going to be fired.”
(PB3)

Participants also believe that contracted and sub-contracted workers often work under poorer safety conditions than full-time mine employees.

One worker tells the group that he was injured while on shift; but his employer – a sub-contractor - told him he could not claim for compensation from the mine, but rather should lie about when the accident happened, to say that it did not occur during work. The mine company would refuse to pay compensation if it happened on shift, and the sub-contractor would not take responsibility either.

Participants point out that sub-contracted workers are on short-term contracts. They have no career path, promotion, or job security. A frequent justification given for short-term contracts is the mine is exploring a potential new shaft. Until the potential of the new shaft is confirmed the mine will not commit to long-term jobs, but lets a sub-contractor manage the exploratory phase.

Several people also stated that sub-contracted workers earn substantially less than permanent mineworkers in similar jobs. They believe this is one of the reasons for the apparent discrepancies between what mines claim mineworkers earn, and what the workers themselves see in their take home pay.

Local employment Vrs migrant labour in recruitment:

Mines in the platinum belt have formally agreed to hire workers where possible from local (mine-adjacent) communities. In order to claim they have reached targets set out in social responsibility agreements aimed at lessening migrant labour, mines recruit people locally even though they are not resident in the area prior to employment.

“Firstly in 2002 the MPRDA (Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act) was enacted under which the Mining Charter and Social Labour Plans fall. The Mining Charter calls for the promotion of employment and advancement of the economic welfare of mining communities while Social Labour Plans, which companies must submit to obtain a mining licence, require information on the impact of mining on local communities including numbers of jobs created. Secondly the new Immigration Act of 2002 has been widely interpreted by industry as meaning a reduction in foreign labour and its replacement with trained local workers. Mines must obtain special exemptions to recruit foreign workers and the Act regulates migration by charging employers a levy for every migrant employed.”⁶

And again:

“The Mining Charter requires that the migrant labour system be gradually

6 Op cit., Kally Forrest, Migrant labour: Discarded but not discontinued



Picture: Mineworker housing near Bleskop

eliminated. Impala claims a policy of employing people with a 60km radius of their operations, Xstrata claims a 100% local employment policy, yet unemployment in Phokeng and Ledig (in Moses Kotane) remains disproportionately high, despite the fact that mining operations are very labour intensive. “⁷

Forrest notes that on the platinum mines, labour brokers often prefer to recruit skilled mineworkers as “local” rather than register them as in-migrant labour.

“Labour brokers prefer experienced retrenched mineworkers as they come with skills, such as rock drilling, and tend to be less educated whilst requiring little or no training. Many of these workers had previously been recruited by Teba for the gold mines but now return to register with brokers. In order to get employment they present themselves as locals thus allowing mines to comply with the Mining Charter and simultaneously avoid the levy on the recruitment of foreign labour.”⁸

From the focus group discussions:

In the research, workers and people living in mine-adjacent communities question whether the mines are committed to local recruitment, certainly to the extent the companies claim.

From personal experience, participants maintain that locally born and raised residents rarely get prioritised access to work on the mines, either by the mines or the local authorities. Participants argue that work at the mine is if anything harder to get for locally raised residents.

Several focus group participants state that they are qualified for mining sector jobs, but that the mines refuses to hire them in jobs for which they are qualified.

In one focus group (PB1) people tell of sending their certificates and qualifications to the local Employment Forum (which appears to be a joint municipality-mine venture), only to wait for years with no response, or to be hired in an unskilled job on contract. This is attributed to massive corruption in the management of the Employment Forum (“We went to the community meeting that was supposed to elect a committee to supervise

⁷ Benchmarks Foundation, *The Policy Gap, Review of the corporate responsibility programs of the platinum mining industry in the platinum producing region of the North West Province, 2006*, p. 39 http://www.bench-marks.org/downloads/070625_platinum_research_full.pdf (accessed 5 July 2015)

⁸ Op cit., Kally Forrest, *Migrant labour: Discarded but not discontinued*



the Employment Forum, but the local councillor stood up and announced the names of the people on the committee without any discussion...”).

At a different group (PB3), however, several participants feel their local Employment Forum works well. These youth apply through the Employment Forum after getting matric and get short-term contracts at the mines. However, one person in the group complains that he was initially hired, then fired from the job when the mine discovered his parents came from Taung (when he was a child); he was not born in Brits area.

Moreover, in the focus group which was selected as people who were born and raised in mine-adjacent communities, with 11 participants present, responses on the financial diary questionnaires⁹ showed that: of 5 who did work at the mines, 4 had jobs as short-term contract workers (two now unemployed); only one was a permanent employee (survey assistant, 14 years, no promotion to date).

The focus group at Mmakou calls on the mines to take prime responsibility for the living conditions of people who live there:

“We would like the mine companies to come and hire these people who are staying in these houses here, so they can work. To offer the youth these bursaries, so that that one can go... Eland must come and build that school; so that we know something about Eland, about their existence. But where Eland are hiding themselves there, we don't know them, they don't know us. We would like as the community to say: Eland must know we are here, who we are, they must get to know us. Eland must know they are here because of these people, they must invest in us. Because they are investing here; thousands of millions of rands. Every hour, even now people are at work, in there in the mines.” (PB3)

Moreover, the group holds the view that the mines must hire people from the immediate area, not bring in new people.

“The people who get jobs in that mine, they are not staying here. They are coming with the sub-contractors from there. The mines cannot hire someone from here. They will just take someone from there to

come here...

“I can tell you this boy is staying here for a long time, I know him from his mother in this place. He is not working. He has a house here, and three kids; he has a woman, that woman is going to run away from him because he cannot support his child. Why are we allowing this – people from overseas to come and make a mess where we are staying, where we work. Those people must come and hire people from here, so we know that we will have work. They must come and help us. With our hands we can do this job.” (PB3)

Here, people claim that the mines do not want to hire local youth -- that a local graduate, with good qualifications, could hand in his CV and wait six, seven, and eight years, never hearing anything. And one anecdote:

“When the workers at Xstrata were on strike, not allowing the buses to come here, I see some CVs lying under the bridge, they had thrown them there. I had taken some boys to give their CVs to the mine... I found that CV there (by the bridge). I went to that boy, I said I see that you have given your CV there, he said yes, my CV is at Elands. I said no, it is not at Elands, it is there under the bridge.” (PB3)

9 Focus groups in the platinum belt were asked to fill out financial diary questionnaires; for a description of this process and outcomes, see page 74 and appendix A

In June 2015, newspapers reported a violent protest by local residents of Bapong near Brits. Residents set alight four cars and a bus belonging to Lonmin, and blocked the Sun City road, in a bid to force Lonmin to employ local residents, after the company reneged on its promise to employ local people.¹⁰

Pay, bonuses and promotion

In the past few years, labour unrest on the platinum belt has centered around what, for many observers, seem out-sized wage demands. Companies claim they pay permanent employees significantly more than workers in other fields earn. Participants in focus groups say first, that many workers do not take home the large amounts that companies claimed; and second, that the cost of staying near the the mines is excessive, while living conditions remain unacceptable.

“The issue of earning more pay: to us it is the challenge that we are not earning enough... no one could feel happy having to live under these conditions. We want more pay because we don’t today earn enough to live a good life.” (PB 4)

‘James’ is perhaps a case in point. He earns R8000/month, with no living-out allowance, after sixteen years in permanent employment in one mine, working as a certified boilermaker. He says:

“I came here to work 16 years ago, but I don’t have nothing. You come here with the boots and overalls, the money is too small, you are going to stay in that shack for maybe your life. So when you are a pensioner, you say you want to ask for that house... You see when I am working at the mine, now I have some 14 years in the mine. I am not working for some other company, I work in the main department. Why even a car allowance is not there? Even a house allowance? I am not going to be an old man in that mine, for that.” (PB 3)

James has had no promotions in his job at Xstrata, although he does earn a seniority notch of 0.5%. When he went to Xstrata he was sent on a course to gain new skills; but he did not receive an increase after this. He comments:

“They do take us to learn some skills; but I am not earning that money. The company comes and says we can take us to school, but when they take you from the school, they say they won’t give you that money. They say you have just come from the school -- wait for ten years, maybe you can have a position. Why? I’m now a teacher at the school, I teach people something there, but I am not earning money for teaching.”¹¹

Moreover, he used to earn a regular production bonus, which significantly boosted his take-home pay. But several years ago, without explanation, this dried up.

10 Citizen newspaper, Lonmin locals torch vehicles in protest 12 June 2015 <http://citizen.co.za/401958/lonmin-locals-torch-vehicles-in-protest/MULT> (Accessed 12 June 2015)

11 Xstrata advertises that it offers advanced courses for boilermakers, to upgrade people to use the new machinery; the ad offers potential employees “learnership training that could set on on a path of career success” <http://www.puffandpass.co.za/xstrata-alloys-artisan-learnership> (advert posted in 2012, accessed 5 July 2015)



Picture: Focus Group participants at Mmakou

For too many, there is no way forward in this job:

“The honest part is, I have been working as a mineworker, let alone I started down, I ended up working as a supervisor. I am ashamed to tell you I never earned more than R7 000 a month. “ (LSA2)

‘Not paid what we are owed’

A common complaint, across all mineworkers in the focus groups, is that workers are not clearly informed of what they earn, or why this goes up or down. When questioned, other participants working at different mines commented that they too had previously earned a high amount as a production bonus. But after 2011 the bonus stopped, without explanation.

In another group participants have a problem with what they call “illegal taxes” on their pay. Asked what they mean by this, they said they were taxed “double-sided”; that they got one tax on their basic salary, but a different tax on production bonuses when they earned them. “It goes way down” on the bonus. They do not understand why, on their payslips, they would get a basic pay of R5000, with R600 taken off as tax. But when they get a production bonus and overtime, they are taxed at a higher percentage.

“We have done this hard work, overtime and bonus, let us say we earn R15000 for that. They will take off R5000 in tax. We want to know why We are double-taxed. And we don’t know why that tax is at different rates.” (PB4)

Most of them say they earn more in their basic salary – R6000 or R7000. But then when they earn a bonus of R4000, the company deducts more of that in tax. This does not make sense to them.

“They will take 38% or 45% off that bonus, and you do not know why.”

“We talk about less money from the basic income as it is. It is worse after deductions. The worst part is this tax that we were talking about, the PAYE. We are having a question for which we need an answer. According to us

we are double taxed. We are taxed on our salary, and we are taxed on our bonuses. I will make an example as you have done. Let me say, at this month end we have been paid, and our salaries have been taxed. Within two weeks we will be getting our bonuses. The example is of 15 000; we will be taxed R5000 from the bonus. As we have been taxed in our salary. Our question is how come we are taxed twice – where is this money going to? That means, within one month we are taxed twice. That R5000, where is it going to? We did ask our employers about this; they said they don't know, it is our government. We are left with a question mark, what type of a government are we having that is doing this to us? They don't explain to us – they talk about the percentage, but they do not tell us what percentage they are taking, they only tell us: it is your government.” (PB4)

They say that when they get their pay slips, there is no explanation as to what taxes are taken off and why. They ask management to explain why there was such a high tax on the bonus: “If you ask the mines, they will just respond: this is your government, government has put these laws, we are acting on what government has put.”

They say they want government to show them these laws, and urge that the law be interrogated, amended, or removed. They feel this law is oppressing mineworkers.

Retrenchment, dismissal, lack of security

Workers in these focus groups talked about their fears about job security. As described above, contract and sub-contract workers have little legal protection, and commonly no union support. But even permanent workers feel their jobs are always at risk.

Occupational disease and injury are commonly cited as reasons for losing jobs.

“Here at that Elands Brits – lets just say that the world platinum, it's from here. In terms of healthy, it can go unhealthy. And then you just get fired, like spit out, without getting any aid.” (PB 3)



In several discussions, participants describe being sent home from ill-health or injury, which terminates the employment contract. If or when the worker is able to return to the mines, they are not accorded the seniority of their previous work. Several people implied that the workers themselves do not inform the new job of existing health problems (and thus their previous work record), for fear that they will not be taken on by the new mine.

“As I am sitting here the person working in the mine (Vaal Reefs) was my husband; he worked there for several years. He was retrenched from Vaal Reefs, then went back to work in the mines. My husband was hurt in a rockfall but was not paid for this. He had to come back home and passed away in 2000. My husband’s name is Mcebisi Masobolo .” (Nosavakazi Masobolo: LSA1)

Skilled and older workers on the platinum mines remember the retrenchment blood-bath in the gold mines in the 1990s. They fear it happening again.

I was working in Carletonville; and retrenched from there in 1994. I never received all my payments. I worked in Carletonville for 26 years. Then at Elandsfontein Mine until 1995 for some years. Then I worked in Rustenburg Impala Platinum. I was retrenched in 2012 because of old age. (James Letsela: LSA1)

III - Health and lack of safety on the mines

“When you want to know about disease, go to the mine hospital now , go to that hospital now to check how many people go there, who sleep at hospital because of disease.” (PB4)

Mineworkers in all South African mines – platinum as well as coal and gold – breathe in fear and insecurity about their wellbeing with every breath they take.

Focus groups agreed without exception that the mines today remain fundamentally unsafe and unhealthy, with every underground worker at daily risk of loss of life, ill-health and disability.

Working conditions for miners underground were historically dangerous, and remain dangerous today. This is an ingrained part of all mineworker narratives that we hear – from older, retired miners to young women starting work as underground workers at Lonmin today.

Health, Safety and Occupational disease:

Despite numerous commitments by the mines themselves and by government regulators, working in the mines is in itself an exposure to health hazards: TB, asthma, silicosis; loss of hearing; injury.

Occupational disease is rife and uncontrolled. Regulations in the new dispensation provide for yearly checks by the mines. Those showing occupational disease are treated at the mine at the mine company’s expense. However, mineworkers are convinced that the company health programmes in practice are structured to protect the company from having to take on the burden of ill-health (as legally they are obliged to do).

“When we are getting down there, we are highly exposed to anything at any time. Sometimes we develop different types of diseases, like TB; because of the air we are breathing. Even most of us, one can cough, you can see the lungs, how black.

“That lift that takes you down, it has three different areas which takes on 50, 60, 70 people at one time to take them down. This is risky. In that risky situation sometimes that rope is cut and so many people die. How can you want me to earn the same as a person who is safe, who is earning on top of the ground?

“The conditions which we have already explained, rock can fall any time; you want me to earn the same as people in a normal space? What kind and what amount do you think is fair for the risks we take? And I am telling you that today there are people earning less than R4000 a month, working in these conditions.”

(Enoch: LSA2)

“I am Mabala, Maseti Hardrekin. I started as a mineworker in 1968 at Stilfontien underground, I noticed that they checked you when you start in the mines, they measure you so that if you die underground there is a payment, that you are

supposed to get paid if you die underground. Then they deduct this amount from your pay. When you go home without dying, they don't give that to you.

“I went to Roodepoort which was liquidated in Johannesburg, I went to Deep Levels, also in the Free State and in Welkom; I went to Brant mines, to St Helene... there is that dust underground, you inhale it when you are working. When it is bad they blow it with water, while you are working there. You work many hours, they don't calculate overtime, you don't get paid for overtime.

“When you go home you get paid for the month – after they deduct the money for death payment.

“The mines have damaged us. We have ill health, asthma, mine TB we are unhealthy today because of working in the mines.

“When we went to work in the mines we were at risk. We came back with the knowledge that the mines have paralysed us. Some are injured. I was also injured: you don't receive money for the injuries you get down the mines.” (Mabala Maseti Hardrekin: LSA1)

Picture: Focus Group participants at Indwe





Picture: Focus Group participants at Indwe

“In the mines I can say yes, they are hiding that you have been damaged by the mine. The first time you complain about hearing, they take you to hospital and check. The nurses will write a report saying you are healthy, and sending you back to work until you get so ill you sleep in the mine hospital. They then look for a way to send you go home without the company paying out disability.

“If you go to the mine hospitals, they keep people in the hospital to make them better, until they can be sent home. Those who are so ill they give them an injection until they die, then they pay for the death. That is the reality. People are suffering.” (LSA 2)

“In the mines they don’t want to say, even if you complain you are not well,

they say you are healthy as long as you can stand. You agree because if you continue to complain they will dismiss you without any benefits.”

(LSA2)

“All those years I was working underground. When I went to the hospital they found I have TB; they said I must stay in the mine hospital for six months and get treatment. I went for Xrays. They said I was 100% all right and sent me underground again.

“But when I returned to the mine they said I needed to go back to hospital -- I had already been in hospital for six months. I was told pay was there, but they only gave me R1000. When I asked, is this the only pay for illness? This was all that I was given. Even our gearboxes are not right even now, we have difficulty with breathing, we are suffering.” (Pekeni Pitou: LSA1)

In the discussions, workers describe measures to preserve miners' health – through prevention, through treatment, and through disability pay - as insufficient. More: despite apparent compliance with government regulations, the companies shift the burden of ill-health, disability and death from illness on to the mine workers and their families; and on to the public health system.

“The problem we face, the mines when they see they have damaged you, they will retrench and dismiss you, but they won't reveal that you are disabled. Although their medical machines do show them the condition – we need that compensation from the mines for being how we are.” (Enoch: LSA2)

One participant, a permanent employee working underground, acknowledges that the company provides regular medical checkups and services for the miner himself at least while the person is working at the mine. In accordance with the law every mineworker receives a medical check once a year. However, he argues, a check-up once a year may pick up a serious illness only after it is well established. He says: “If the medical services find that you have an established serious illness, you are hospitalised until you recover enough to be retrenched and sent home, or you die in hospital. Rather, companies should carry out medical checks on working miners every few months; so that illnesses can be identified sooner, and treat at the mine, so that the worker can continue on the job.”

From the miners' perspectives, they are sent home with uncured or partly-cured illnesses and disabilities, leaving their families to support the ill miner. The companies further look for ways to avoid paying benefits.

(Issues around ill-health and disability pay for miners sent home to the labour sending areas are dealt with in more detail on pages 52ff.)

All mineworkers in our focus groups cite the risk to life and health as a key reason for demanding higher pay: they anticipate they will not live and earn for long in their jobs in the mines, and they fear they are unlikely to receive sufficient benefits to support their families if health or life fails.

“When we work there, we are having chains on our bodies; if these are cut, you will fall deep down. When you are injured, you will not be able to earn money for your children.” (LSA2)

“There is the demand for 12.5 (wages of R12 500 per month). The demand 12,5, it is better, when you start at the mine and go to get 12,5 it is better. Even because when they build that hospital for us, then we go free there, and we say we get that 12,5, it is better. You go hospital and you go to die, you get R8000 or R4000 or R6000, and our children will suffer.” (PB4)



Picture: Participant in PB2 describes physical work underground

Predjudice, stereotyping and discrimination

Another pillar of the apartheid mining system was the legalisation and structural embodiment of discrimination – around race, ethnicity and gender. The post-apartheid government has worked to eradicate this, at every level of the the economy and society. Yet focus group participants still see discrimination in all of these areas as embedded in behaviour in the platinum mines today, despite the raft of laws and measures in place.

Racism is rife:

“Racism remains a daily problem here in the mines. It is rife here at Xstrata. But black managers and supervisors are often just as bad-- without the excuse of apartheid history.

“We are the top producer (of platinum) in the world, but we are poor, we are working and earning nothing. We are now in freedom, but the freedom now is shivering. I don’t know why. We are saying white people are dominating, they are whites, they give us the way we want, but we deny each other. Why? ... people are robbing our brothers who are digging gold in the mine.

Even myself, I am still going inside the mine, but I can tell you at the end of the day I’m the one who is going to be at the back. Why? Just because I am black, I am stupid? No, I have knowledge, I have a mind to do everything I want to do at work. I must get something like anyone. We are the last, we are supposed to be the first class; the priority is the working class in South Africa. We make money for South Africa: because of me. I wake up in the morning, I go to work; they subtract from my chit; they take the money. I buy some goods, I wear some goods, I eat some goods...and then the company they get the profit... and the parliament they are happy.” (PB3)

A news item from 2012 reports on a wildcat strike at Xstrata to protest racist behaviour by management¹². And every focus group we met with gave racism a prominent place in the litany of oppressive conditions that are viewed as the nature of minework.

From the perspective of older mineworkers, the patterns of racist treatment continues:

“In 1997 I was retrenched (after working from 1972 as a clerical job in Milro Drillian at Diepkloof). What I noticed as a black we were sent back home. The whites who were retrenched were paid a lump sum, then employed on the next mine.” (Sakele Ziba: LSA2)

Participants working today in the platinum mines report that discrimination over race remains embedded in work practice. Even today in the platinum mines, they see that there is often not equal pay for equal work; that whites get promoted and blacks do not; that benefits offered to employees depend upon skin colour.

12 According to newspaper reports in October 2012, “About 400 mineworkers at Xstrata in Brits have downed tools demanding a R16 000 basic salary . . . A spokesperson for the striking workers, Justice Mabaso, said they were also calling for the immediate dismissal of one of the company’s managers, whom they accused of being racist. The workers were also against management’s decision of changing their working conditions without consultation.” South African Labour News, <http://www.salabournews.co.za/index.php/home/archives/6945-xstrata-platinum-mine-is-the-next-to-be-hit-by-industrial-action-report.html> (accessed 5 July 2015)



Picture: Focus Group At Mmakou, writing financial diaries

The statistics confirm this. In the 2013 Mine Sector Wages publication compiled by the HSRC, mine workers median wages per month by race in 2007 (most recent figures) were: African R1821; Coloured: R1763; Indian R4701; White R7051.¹³ In other words, the median pay of a white worker is almost four times that of a black worker on the mines.

First, whites are paid higher and given a range of benefits that are not offered to blacks working on the same level, even today.

“Going down underground with a rope, there is supposed to be another payment for risking your life. There is that money for white workers, but never for black workers because we have been under an oppressed situation.” (Enoch LSA2)

“Racism is still very high in the mine sector.

“We don’t know people’s salaries, that is supposed to be top secret. But as we see it, whites usually get higher pay than blacks, even in the same jobs.” (PB 3)

Mineworkers literally see racism in promotion and careers:

“There are black and white officials – but 20% of the officials are black, 80% are white. From Level B7 and down, only blacks are employed. From C5 up to D1, mixed, some black, some white. But from D1 or D2, its all white. “Is there racism in promotion? It becomes tougher to get advanced, as you go up each level. We do not know why one person will get a higher position, but not another. So, we don’t know for sure if one person is promoted because he is white, if someone else is not promoted because he is black. But the whites do get promoted, and we do not get promoted.” (PB3)

13 Op cit, Tendai Gwatidzo and Miracle Benhura Mining Sector Wages in South Africa, p.24 http://www.lmpip.org.za/sites/default/files/documentfiles/WP%201%202013%20Mining%20Sector%20Wages%20WEB_0.pdf

Some participants admit that they have no proof that white workers take better positions while blacks are denied them. But we also hear personal experiences where racism appears quite explicit:

“I am born in Limpopo, down there by Thoyandou. I grew up there. I was born in 1982. I started my schooling in Standard A in 1989. I completed my matric in 2000. I went to the college and did computer literacy. Thereafter I came to Jo’burg but I could not find even a job. I went through to Marikana, to stay with my brother; thereafter, I trained for such work in another group of mines. They sent me to go and work in Brits-side, where I started to work; only to find that I was not getting any more money, I was earning less...

“I came to work at Xstrata. When I came here, I came to do the tests – I passed those things, they told me you are going to work, do you have a license-- a driver’s license? I said no. they asked me if I had matric. I said, ‘Yes, I have matric, I have computer literacy.’ They said, ‘No --we are not going to allow you to work in here with us.’ I said: ‘Me I will just work, I can do whatever.’ I collected these

guys, we went together to work at Xstrata.. When we get there at the office at Xstrata, they give us these cards, an access card, so you can clock in.

“And then I asked: how come when they give us a pay slip, it is not a proper pay slip, it is just a paper. They say: no, there is this guy they will call, called Jermain. He said, ‘you, you must come and work with me.’ He is a manager, this guy. He said, ‘You, you must come and work at my place, you are not allowed to work with the guys on that site.’ They give me a shovel, a wheelbarrow, they say you have to carry too much, it is too much heavy. They say each and every month, if you want payment, salary, sometimes they say you must go far away, around the place here; to get liquor or meat for them. So I say, No, we must talk about salary.’ He says, ‘No, you, you are fired.’”¹ (Mpho, PB3)

1 In this story, Mpho was switched without reason given from mine work to working as a gardener and labourer for the manager called Jermain. However, in compiling this report we noted that Xstrata and Merafe Ferrochrome on their website speak of having started a gardening company in Brits, as their contribution to local employment for local residents who are not working on the mines. Possibly Mpho’s work as a gardener was technically under that company.

A further area where groups see differential treatment based on race is in access to housing for mine employees. Whites working in the platinum mine are assured of housing with infrastructure and services; and their pay is always adequate to cover these houses on the private market. For blacks working in the mines, lack of housing is one of the heavier burdens.

“Even when we are working in the mines they don’t look at us who are creating this wealth, they don’t look. At the end of this we are thrown out without anything.” (Enoch, LS1)

“Different treatment of white and black in the same job must stop – we must earn the same amount for the same work. The housing issue: a white person transferred from somewhere is given a house, but a black man is still expected to stay in a hostel or a squatter camp. The issue of racism must be stopped.” (Denil Thlaya Sizane: LSA3)

As well as the impact on hiring and promotion, workers in focus groups report stigmatisation and hostility around race and ethnicity, as a constant backdrop to work in the mines, especially underground. Narrators speak of micro-aggression on a daily basis:

“Underground – there is a lot of anger. They tell us we are standing around doing nothing, we must work harder. That we are lazy. . . we are not people who know what we are doing.” (PB4)

Ethnicity

Ethnic stereotyping and discrimination are also historically embedded, both in work practice on the mines, and in the issues surrounding housing and communities growing up around the mines.

Stories told by miners working in platinum confirm that ethnic stereotyping continues to influence hiring, firing, and promotion. Participants mention, often as an aside, that they are told that Xhosas make good rock-drill operators (as opposed to Tswana-speakers or Venda-speakers).

As a result of this, mineworkers say, benefits such as the living-out allowance are paid out differentially:

“We (mineworkers in PB4, mostly Xhosa-speaking RDOs) get R1 800 for living out allowance. People from North West get R2 500; people from Eastern Cape get R1800. Officials at the company get R5000 living out allowance, to pay for those flats. RDOs get R1800.” - PB4 participant

In focus group in the platinum belt, participants also argue that ethnicity, ethnic stereotyping and discrimination are reinforced and entrenched by the changing role of traditional authorities in mining areas; including issues of residence, land rights, and representation. (This report looks at these problems below, page 46ff.)

Gender

Gender discrimination and oppression also holds a long and dishonourable history in the structuring of apartheid mining. The pass system combined with recruitment to ensure men came alone to the mines, and families – women, children, those too old to work -- were left in (or removed to) bantustans or homelands; the places formally labelled “labour sending areas”. Women’s lives in these areas were tenuous, dependent upon remittances and whatever might be grown for sustenance, holding together families (often extended families) while their men were gone to the mines. Where women tried to break out of this, they were forced back to the homelands by apartheid law, and a battery of gendered behaviour.

Narratives of older participants in the focus groups leave no doubt that these gendered structures within apartheid mining systems shaped the lives of both women and men.

Picture: Focus Group participants at Indwe



“I started to work in the mines in 1958 at Vaal Drift. I spent six months there, only receiving six pounds pay for the six months. I went to work at Engerson(?); again for six months (this was the joining time); I received now five pounds (R10) to go home with.

“Then I worked at a mine in Springs in 1961. I had 19 tickets as a worker there; then went back to work in the mine in Virginia.

“In Virginia where I worked for 18 years, my wife came to see me. I had to go to the location to see my wife, as she was not allowed in the hostel. While I was with her there in the location the police came, kicked the door open; we were both arrested. I had to borrow money to bail us out; I paid the fine for my wife; I tried to apologise for myself.

“Again my wife was arrested. I had to ask for her to be released. I got money from TEBA¹⁴ cash to do this. I changed from that area and that farm after she was arrested several times. What transpired was that the police targeted women: so when the police vans would come, the women would wear gym dresses and play ball so they would not be recognised. I took her home after that.” (Bufo Hlayio: LSA3)

Another story from a focus group participant illustrates the state- sponsored violence that enforced historical gender relations on the mines:

“My husband worked in Stilfontein, Western Deep Levels, Angeroff. In Western Deep Levels I had a child there in 1983. I was hiding in a farm near there. I was arrested in 1984. I slept in prison with another child and another child who was walking – next to the toilet you had to eat with those children. We were arrested in the day, and locked up at 9 pm. My child was vomiting from the smell, the dirt. The child could not survive – I lost the child because of this, a month after being released.” (LSA3)

With the end of apartheid in 1994, it was commonly assumed that the role of women in relation to mines and in migrant labour would change. The first step was to remove apartheid laws which relegated women to the bantustans. A second step entailed moves to end the hostel system for male mineworkers, which barred women and families from staying in the mine areas with their husbands. In the name of gender equality, government also eliminated regulations and practices which kept women out of minework. After 1994 the mine companies accepted and promoted these measure enthusiastically -- at least in theory.

Yet despite these steps migrant labour to the mines remains common today, with most women staying “at home” in the labour sending areas – and this pattern is replicated in the platinum mines. Therefore, our research design asked, have women’s roles changed in the platinum mines, what has been done to change women’s roles, and how has this impacted on the behaviours of both women and men in the mines?

As facilitators we planned to address this issue in two ways:

First, we organised a focus group exclusively of women who have been offered work on the mines. Lonmin claims that about 10% of its labour force today are women.

This focus group consisted of widows and family members of miners killed at the

14 TEBA, The Employment Bureau of Africa, is described in more detail on page 55



Picture: Focus Group participants at Mooi Mooi, describing work underground

Marikana massacre, who were offered work in the mines to replace the income lost by their husband's death. The practice of offering jobs to women family members of miners killed at the mine (commonly through mine accidents) has been introduced in the post-1994 period; the companies promote this as a remedy for gender injustices of previous years.

When questioned, the women in our focus group say they know of one other woman who has been trained by Lonmin to work underground, although she is now a surface worker.

“There is one other woman who is now working on surface; she told us that she also underwent this training, the regulations says that each and every person must undergo this training before the person can take any other position. That lady came to work there with certificates to work on the surface, but they said that she had to train as an RDO and in general production before going to work aboveground.” (PB2)

While accepting that this focus group was in many ways unique, we sought to concentrate on the work conditions women were offered today, and how they functioned within these conditions. We also note that this group finished their introductory training the day before the workshop, and are now deployed to Lonmin mines in the area. But at the time of the workshop they had no engagement in daily work relations in the mines; so this was not a topic raised during the focus group.

The second mechanism we put into place was to look at the changing nature of gender practice in the mines and around mine labour, on women living in the labour sending areas today. Do they see going to the mines themselves as workers as an option? How has the elimination of apartheid laws on gender affected their opportunities for finding work, or for changing their living conditions in the labour sending areas? Would they want to move to the mine areas with their husbands to keep families united, or to find work there for themselves? What are the dynamics that would prevent this, or promote it? (These issues are dealt with in the section on the labour sending areas, pages 43ff.)

Given the practical limitations of the focus groups, the information that emerged on gender has perhaps raised more questions than provided definitive answers. We hope however that these insights point towards further research, as well as suggesting action remedial actions.

The discussion with the focus group women workers at Lonmin leaves the uncomfortable sense that the solution offered to these women neither assists them to take control of their lives, nor addresses the problems of inherited gender inequalities. Rather, the jobs they have been offered working at the mine seem to entrench existing client relationships between management, mineworkers and their families, and indeed may be reinventing the more harmful elements of migrant labour in a new shape.

Thus, the women themselves express fears that this “solution” could cause damage to family cohesion; further entrench oscillating migrant labour as the sole employment opportunity in labour-sending areas -- now on offer for women as well as men; further divide worker unity along gender and ethnic lines; and further undermine their agency as workers and as women to control their own destinies.

The women express uneasiness that they are being pushed into long-term situations as workers that they would not themselves choose, if they had any choice at all in how to support their families.

They have no doubt that they want to work to earn incomes in some way. Asked what they wished for the future, the overwhelming majority say they want and need to earn enough money, and to gain skills, to enable them to return to their home areas and earn a living there (most often running a small business). A number talk about returning “home” to finish building the house that they and their husbands had begun, or planned.

Several participants expressed the fear that mine management has offered a “quick fix” that will, amongst other things, appear to address gender inequality, and provide a measure of desperately -needed economic relief for damaged families. It appears to be a “cheap” solution for Lonmin, compared to paying compensation if found responsible for the massacre of their husbands.¹⁵

Lonmin accompanied this gesture of employing these women in the platinum belt with a second measure to assist after the massacre: the company agreed to educate all the children of mineworkers killed in the massacre. All children over the age of five are being sent to boarding schools, proposed as a better education than that available in their home areas. Sending children to boarding school makes it feasible for mothers to take up work in the mines, without struggling to bring children with them to their new jobs.

At the end of the training (the day after the workshop) the women expect to rent space to stay in Wonderkop; as with other in-migrant mine workers; they will get a living-out allowance. During workshop discussions, they do not anticipate that they will be able to bring their children to live with them.

15 Lonmin’s CEO describes the steps that the company has taken to help the widows:

“Mr Magara said that “as a company we have worked hard over the past two-and-a-half year years to build a more open, transparent and mutually trustworthy environment, and in the process make Lonmin a safer, better place to work. . . .This is in addition to the assistance rendered to the widows and children of the employees who died during that fateful week. While we can never replace their loved ones, we have offered employment opportunities to their families and every child of school going age is a beneficiary of the 1608 Education Trust. This is in addition to the statutory payouts from pension and life funds.”

Source: Release of Marikana report a ‘vital step in the healing process’, RDM News Wire, Jun 26, 2015; <http://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/2015/06/26/release-of-marikana-report-a-vital-step-in-the-healing-process/> (Accessed 26 June 2015)

In the focus group all of the women in the group initially say they are “happy” to be taken up as workers at the mine. The women recognise that Lonmin management consider this offer of work for them as a generous and responsible gesture after the loss of their family bread-winners. They also realise that by employing them as women at the mines, management might well portray their action as a step towards redressing historic gender imbalances. When discussing their desperate need to support their families after the loss of their husbands, several agree they are grateful for this opportunity.

However, as the discussion progresses they state that they have no choice, this work in the mines is their only option to support families and children. They are very unhappy about separation from children. They seem angry and depressed about the lack of choice.

The women do not feel that this gesture was necessarily the solution that they would have sought, or welcomed; and that management made little effort to consult with them about whether offers best met their needs and desires.

“My children seem like orphans now. First their father was killed, now when they come home from school I will not be there either.” (PB2)

Two of their stories stand out:

One of the group, Zyanda Sokanyile (daughter of Phumzile Sokanyile) had to quit matric studies in order to take up Lonmin’s offer of work. While it was a family decision that she was the most appropriate person to go to the mines, it was pointed out that the situation must be viewed as tragic for her personally.

Another woman had been pregnant at the time of the massacre; her child is now barely two years old, cared for by the grandmother. She feels she is now failing to care for her child; “He will never know his father, now he will not know his mother either”. But she has no alternative.

The group is acutely aware that management had decided not to include in the job offer those women whose husbands were not on the payroll as Lonmin workers. Three women were told their deceased husbands were sub-contracted by other companies; management apparently decided they had no “obligation” to offer them work. The women collectively have protested this.

Moreover, the person implementing the education program for their children had decided (apparently on his own initiative, after an agreement to the contrary had been reached) not to offer education to any children who were not direct descendants of the deceased (that is, where the deceased was raising the children of siblings as his own). On this issue, the woman confronted mine management and insisted that there must be no exclusion from education for any child of a miner killed in the massacre. The management agreed with their position; and the women were subsequently told the person responsible for this had been removed from implementing the education programme.

The participants also show a conflicted response to management’s offer of jobs in terms of the implications for their relations to other mineworkers.

The women comment that they are concerned to learn – after they started training in their new jobs– that Lonmin retrenched a number of contract workers to “open up” posts that they would occupy. The women say some of these retrenched workers are still in the area, and watch them go into the mines for training with hostility.

The women felt this was completely unacceptable on management’s part – “Our husbands did not fight and die so that we could take another worker’s job. They



wanted a better life for all workers, not this.” There was some implication that they feel threatened by hostility from displaced workers.

In terms of the work itself: of the 32 women in this group taken on as workers by Lonmin, 22 were employed as surface workers, and ten as mineworkers underground. The decision of where a woman was sent to work was based upon physical fitness, following a thorough medical and physical testing.

Eight of the women were training to work underground as “general non-production workers” (which they described as pushing and shovelling soil – “lashing”, carrying chains, and other non-skilled labour), and two as “assistant winch handlers”.

“To explain the work we are doing, working with winches; we are using a big wheelbarrow and big spades, which are called mine spades; to load rocks into the wheelbarrow. To clarify the general work: you are under training for different kinds of work; you can do any of the minework like RDOs. If you want to be a loader you can be a loader. At the moment you are trained for this different work so that you can do anything.

“From the surface we go down the lift underground; then we climb up the chains from underground to the squares where we will be going to work.

“The other supervisor asks us to go up with sacks on our backs, you have to climb up chains to the squares, and also you sometimes use steps, to where you are going to work. There are tools in the sacks. The chains go from the ground up, you climb them hand over hand, with the chains clamped between your thighs.

“it is difficult – it needs power and a lot of energy.”

(Subsequently, in other discussion groups male mineworkers talked about the stress and danger of working carrying or tied with chains.)

One of the women comments:

“They do not say to us, that you cannot do these jobs because you are women, that this work is too hard for a woman. But we ourselves wonder if it is possible for us to do this work, if we can be strong enough.”

The surface workers are all employed as cleaners (primarily cleaning offices and toilets); the women have been taught basic first aid skills as well (emergency, accident,



*Picture:
Focus Group
participants at
Mooi Mooi*

injury and epilepsy). The surface workers are divided amongst different categories of cleaners, apparently (they believe) based upon each woman's ability to speak English.

"We are trained to know the different kinds of chemicals, to know the different areas where we should use the cleaning chemicals, in the offices, the kitchens, and toilets; and they are teaching us how to clean the mine-working tools. We are trained for different skills. This group of 25 are trained to do this particular job of cleaning, this is what we will be hired for.

"With the first aid training, we have started to undergo one day, but we have already been trained to know when a person is broken – whether the backbone or any part of the body is broken, how to help; how to help a person who is in shock, how to put them on a stretcher, how to make him begin breathing again. That shows us that there can be casualties out of the mine. As we are sitting here, if there is someone who is shocked or unconscious, we can start doing that first aid help."

In the focus group, participants repeat their hopes that this work at Lonmin would provide skills that could be transferred to other (non-mining) jobs at some later stage. The women appear dubious that the training would lead to the income-generating work they hoped for.

They want better work, with more skills that are transferable. Most feel that if they could, they would find a way to earn a living in their "home" area. There are several exceptions to this, where women say that if they could have a decent quality home, community, and especially schooling at their job, they would be happy to move permanently to the Platinum Belt.

All these women support their husbands' demand for the R12 500 wage. For them, both as wives and as workers themselves, meeting this wage demand would provide a major step towards allowing normality in the lives of miners and their families.

There is strong sentiment that the mining companies "owe" restitution to people in the historic labour sending areas, that will enable miners and their families to build quality lives, putting an end to embedded migrant labour. They view the company's provision of education to the children of miners killed at Marikana as part of this redress owed. But they are not reconciled to the company's decision to send their children to boarding schools while they themselves became migrant labour to the mines. Rather than repairing lives, the women fear that they are taking jobs and education at the cost of further damage to their families.

"First they kill my husband; then I am not there; the children are sent away; my the house is closed; I do not have a family any more." (PB4)

Respect and dignity

Above all, focus group members speak about the lack of respect and dignity they get on the job. They do hard, dangerous, work, often demanding skills and experience; they produce wealth; then they are “spit out” when they cannot work any more.

One participant, employed underground for years, says this:

“Platinum – that product - without the platinum nothing will turn, no cars, no computers.

“The rock where you are supposed to drill. If you do break so many rocks, they say, you have just made so much money for the company, two hundred thousand. We do not know what we have done. We just know that they are getting those hundreds.

“We are not stupid. We know the product which we are taking out – the platinum, it is a mixture of things, the chemicals, the soil, the gold, that product that comes out of this mine is the one that makes gold, it is very important, it is valuable, we know about that.

“Amongst ourselves as ordinary workers, does anyone know what are the products we are making? Has anyone explained this to us? No we never get any training or education on this issue, what is the outcome of what we are doing.

“It’s what we as miners feel and say, that our employers fail to do this, to give us training as workers, in order to get the good product from our work.

“Like an example, telling us about the gold which is coming from the ground or the platinum; what is this product good for, what is the value of this product? How do you manage to produce a proper good quality, if you don’t know what it will be used for, and where this product going to be taken to? We sometimes see the helicopters flying around above us with different badges, some signs of America or our international countries, then we are told these

are here to take these products to these different countries.

“Again, what we know is what we know. The person who we are working for – they don’t tell us who is that person – is getting lots and lots of money out of what we produce.

“We only see when they come to us and put a mark, and say this is a wealthy and important rock, we need to make sure that we work it and do not damage it. They only tell us the cost of that rock. They put a sign on the important rock, which they say that one is going to do many pounds, they say thirty metres is doing thousands and thousands, we must be careful working with it. They also mention that each person is doing two hundred thousand per day and we are counting on so many people in the mine who are making two hundred thousand a day, how many thousands and millions we are making a day for the mines? That is why we are able to need to ask for a better salary, we need more money also.

“We are told if there is a delay, if we lose production for a single day, they come and tell us they are losing four point something million, just in a single day. If we work for a whole month, we produce I don’t know how many millions. But they complain that one day we lose 4 point something million rands, just a small section we lose one point something million rands. Or the machine, you can’t believe, one machine you can buy for three million rand. But us, we use those machines, and we get .. ugh....

“You pay peanuts you get monkeys. You pay peanuts, and you see the monkeys, they will follow you.” (PB4)

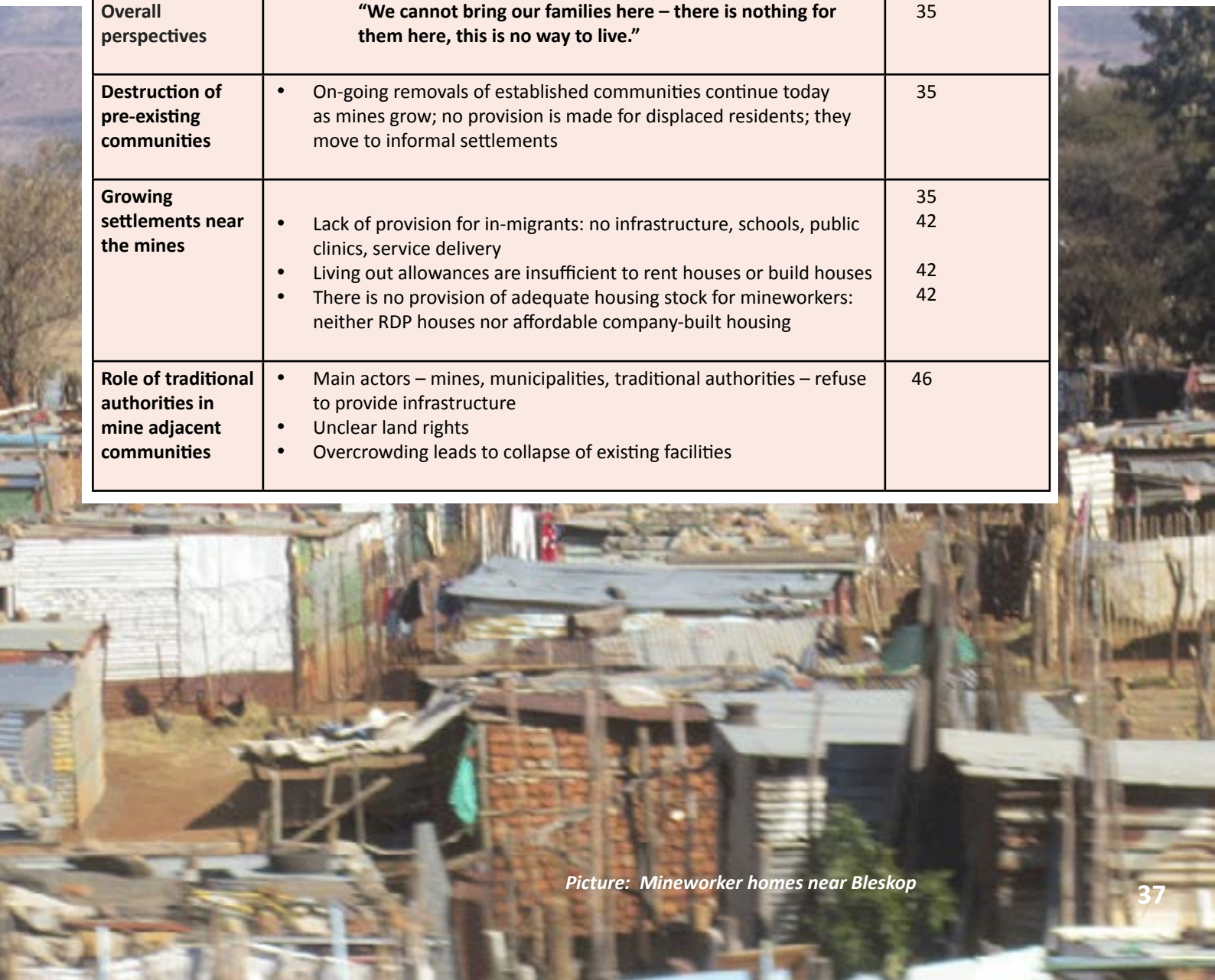
“How can we be happy living in these conditions? Normally we would want better houses, to have electricity, to live in healthy conditions.

“Many of us do not come from this area, some are coming from other areas. We are not happy leaving where we were staying, where we lived before, but we did not want to come here to stay here, to stay in these conditions. We cannot bring our wives and families here – there is nothing here for them, this is no way to live.” (PB4)

Living near the mines today

Table 3: Summary of the outcomes of focus group discussion about living conditions today near the platinum mines

	<i>Key points raised by groups</i>	<i>pages</i>
Overall perspectives	“We cannot bring our families here – there is nothing for them here, this is no way to live.”	35
Destruction of pre-existing communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-going removals of established communities continue today as mines grow; no provision is made for displaced residents; they move to informal settlements 	35
Growing settlements near the mines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of provision for in-migrants: no infrastructure, schools, public clinics, service delivery Living out allowances are insufficient to rent houses or build houses There is no provision of adequate housing stock for mineworkers: neither RDP houses nor affordable company-built housing 	35 42 42 42
Role of traditional authorities in mine adjacent communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Main actors – mines, municipalities, traditional authorities – refuse to provide infrastructure Unclear land rights Overcrowding leads to collapse of existing facilities 	46



Picture: Mineworker homes near Bleskop

“We cannot bring our families here – there is nothing for them here, this is no way to live.”

“Who wants to live in a shack? The condition of living in the shack, it’s cold in the winter, it is hot in the summer; this is not a good condition where a person can stay. This is our home because we spend a lot of our time here and we also need to have proper homes, and we don’t get enough money to build proper homes where we are coming from either. Even at home we don’t have enough money to build proper houses. The money we spend here is not even enough for us to stay in these shacks where we are living, for our basic needs here.” (PB3)

“As workers, we spend a lot of time working here, more than we spend where we come from. We are permanent here in a way – we spend more time here than at our homes. “ (PB4)



Many of the places where platinum mineworkers live when at work have grown haphazardly around the new mines. New ones spring up so rapidly that they do not even have names, and do not appear on municipality records. The narrative about where these communities come from, and how they were established, forms a key component of the anger and frustration of platinum belt mineworkers today.

Destruction of pre-existing communities near mines

One focus group in this research was defined as representing “people residing in the area before the mines came” (“local residents”). Their experiences of the mines gives another perspective on the broader problems.

Before the platinum mines came, the area that constitutes Bojanalo was partly commercial white farms, and partly “traditional communities” falling within the Bophutatswana homeland (or bantustan). The platinum companies bought the rights to mine the land from the commercial farmers, and negotiated with the local chiefs in the traditional areas.

For those black people who lived on the land before the mines came (either farm labour or in traditional villages), the new platinum mines damaged and even destroyed communities and livelihoods, without providing alternatives. Participants tell how people were – and still are – removed from existing homes and communities to make way for the construction of the mines; to become the first occupants of the shantytowns that now dot the landscape. For this, local residents get no recompense for relocation; nor can they get decent jobs with good pay in the new mines. Indeed, the first demand to government from the focus group consisting of “long-term local residents in the mining areas” (PB1) is:

“End forced relocation without negotiation with residents; and provide adequate alternative residence for those dislocated.”



Picture: pollution next to Marikana Karee mine

The focus group maintains that their long history of ancestors living on this land lays the foundations for their current interaction with the platinum mines. Their story encompasses a history of land ownership and dispossession, the creation by apartheid authorities of what are seen as unrepresentative tribal authorities, and the disregard of current “traditional authorities” for claims they as local residents might have to the land and mineral rights of the area.

Some members of this focus group refer to great-grandparents (eight generations back) who had been farmers with (private) title deeds to the land. The Boer republic over a century ago forced them to give up title to the Bafokeng chiefs, tribal authorities first approved by the Boer and later English governments (from 1880 onwards). Their ancestors did not accept these chiefs as rightful clan/traditional leaders; they were deprived of land rights in name of tribal leaders that they did not recognise. Yet these same chiefdoms are today recognised as legitimate “traditional authorities” by the government. The Bafokeng Land Buyers’ Association is challenging this in court. The government’s recognition of the Bafokeng chiefs, and the legal challenges to it, have important implications for who ultimately owns mineral wealth and land rights today. It also has a direct impact on how many long-term residents in Bojanala are treated – ignored and displace – by traditional authorities now confirmed as traditional chiefs in areas previously defined as Bophutatswana.¹⁶

Moreover, not all “local residents” in Bojanala after the sixties and seventies were traditionally Tswana clan members. Rather, those working on the white owned farms were often brought in as migrant labour. Some of these remained there permanently, but without legal rights under apartheid rule, and with no recognition by traditional chiefs as residents. One participant talked of a woman saying she was brought from

¹⁶ In June 2015, six months after this focus group was completed, a committee of Bapo ba Mogale residents went to court to stop a new contract between Lonmin and the Bapo ba Mogale Traditional Council, over mineral rights and payments for mine expansion. TABELO TIMSE, Bapo ba Mogale wants their millions from Lonmin, 12 June 2015; source: <http://mg.co.za/article/2015-06-12-bapo-ba-mogale-wants-their-millions-from-lonmin> (Accessed 5 July 2015)

the Eastern Cape in the early 1960s, as a teenager; she had never been “home” and now does not even know “where that home was”. Today, these people are not accorded any “rights” by traditional authorities in Bojanala.

When the platinum mines bought the rights to explore and dig for minerals, they displaced and relocated both farmworkers on white-owned mines and communities on traditional land. Many of those relocated ended up in informal settlements in rural areas (not in Rustenburg itself) which have little or no services or infrastructure. There is no provision – by the mine companies, the local authorities (traditional or municipal), or the national government – to support these people when they are removed. Some of these removals are recent and even on-going, as the mines further develop new areas. Those removed now form squatter camps such as Ikemelang, Chaneng, Mafenta. Participants in the focus group said there were at least 19 of these locations, some of which don’t even have formal names.

In-migrants working on the mines in turn move into these informal communities, further straining whatever infrastructure might exist. A major problem has emerged over water supply and sanitation. Water that had been sufficient for borehole supply to a small community is used and sometimes contaminated by the growing mines, and is unable to meet the needs of the fast-growing population.

All of this leads to the destruction of the land itself -- through pollution from mining, and overcrowding from in-migration.

Growing settlements near the mines: lack of infrastructure and service delivery

Some of these informal settlements occupy areas defined as traditional land; others are on alienated land. But in all group discussions in the Platinum Belt participants complain that neither local municipalities nor traditional authorities take responsibility for these dislocated people. Nor, when in-migrants arrive and join these informal settlements, do authorities or the mines themselves believe it is their responsibility to support these communities.

According to South African law, mine companies own the mineral rights but not the



surface of the land. As companies do not hold surface rights, and thus refuse to take responsibility for community infrastructure constructed on the surface. However, neither traditional authorities nor municipalities are willing to develop infrastructure for new settlements where the mines own the underground rights, as they see it as probable that the mines will expand production and uproot the (illegal) settlements in the future. Establishing clear land rights and responsibility to some authority, with commitment and capacity to develop infrastructure for these informal settlements, is a key demand put forward by the group.

The Legal Resources Centre, in a statement compiled for the Marikana Commission of Enquiry in 2014, describes the legal position around land ownership and services supply at Wonderkop/Nkaneng¹⁷ :

“The Rustenburg municipality complained that up until 2012 it was unable to provide services as most of the land surrounding informal settlements was owned by Lonmin. Attempts to access or buy land to lay sewerage and water pipes were often frustrated by Lonmin who wished to keep the land vacant for future mining. In addition, in the absence of state ownership of land, local and provincial authorities could not provide housing or proper services.

“The Madibeng municipality in its turn was frustrated in its attempts to provide services in Inkaneng because, again, the land did not belong to the state but to the Bapo ba Mogale tribal authority, who rented to mine workers illegally occupying its land and was not willing to pay for the provision of services.

“The rapid population expansion had put heavy pressure on services, severely curtailing the quality of life for both locals and migrant workers. Water was a constant issue.

“Lack of land, constraints with regard to land availability and delays in township proclamation and opening of township registers are raised as reasons for the lack of housing and services delivery by Lonmin and local authorities.”

17 Legal Resources Center Submission to the Marikana Commission of Inquiry, 23 September 2014; http://www.lrc.org.za/images/pdf_downloads/Law_Policy_Reform/2014_09_23_LRC_Submission_to_Marikana_Commission_of_Enquiry_Wonderkop.pdf



Picture: Mineworker housing, near Glencor Mine



Picture: Focus Group in Rustenburg:

Focus group participants maintain that these problems are aggravated by the lack of representative local authorities who have oversight over, and negotiate with, the mines. The traditional authorities do not represent even the “local” seTswana speaking residents, much less the in-migrant workers. Municipal authorities have no input into mine agreements. The mine companies deny it is their problem. The national government (which does negotiate contracts with the mines) is unaware of, or unresponsive to, community complaints.

All of our focus groups in the Platinum Belt argued that this needs urgent intervention: there must be local oversight and control of decisions about residents that cannot be overturned by a national ministry or any other body that is not accountable for the local population’s needs.

The LRC submission on Wonderkop reports:

“The geography of Wonderkop closely resembled apartheid homelands, with most Batswana living separately from the amaXhosa migrants. This separation translated into different services provided by local government in the former and by tribal authorities in the latter.”

A concrete example of how this happens can be seen in reports on the construction of the Xstrata mine. The company Heric Ferrochrome was started near Brits in the early 1990s by Mitsubishi, initially to mine and process chrome. Heric Ferrochrome expanded operations into an underground mine for platinum in 2003, and now works with the Xstrata mine to process tailings for platinum. Heric Ferrochrome’s 2003 Environmental Review Summary, submitted to government in pursuit of opening the new underground mine, reads:

“The project is not anticipated to result in any significant social, resettlement and cultural property impacts, as it is an existing site located in an agricultural area at the fringe of an industrial zone. The areas around Brits and Rustenburg consist of mixed-crop farming. In the Brits district there are citrus and vegetable production, with the latter mainly directed at the consumer market. The only people residing on the property are 11 households renting houses from Heric Ferrochrome, as well as approximately 40 squatter households. The squatters will, for the time being, remain where they are, as this area is not going to be affected by the mine and processing operations. If there is any land acquisition, relocation or economic displacement (including the squatters) then an appropriate Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) will be required. Community development activities will allow them to improve their livelihood. Land acquisition issues including compensation and housing/relocation will be integrated in the Heric social management policy. There are approximately 10 graves in the project area, some of them fall under the Natural Heritage Resources Act. A cultural properties management plan will be prepared and will involve all affected parties.”

Hernic Ferrochrome anticipated no problem with increased demand for housing; and admitted little obligation to existing residents. This assessment that there was no pressing need to deal with “11 households renting houses from Hernic Ferrochrome, as well as approximately 40 squatter households” set the tone for the next decade plus.

Nine years later, the Report of the Portfolio Committee on Human Settlements speaks as follows on the provision of housing for workers at Motlhutlung, adjacent to Mmakau (which is on traditional authority land), where workers at both Hernic Ferrochrome and Xstrata currently live:

“The project was approved on 21 September 2005 for the installation of Internal Services and Madibeng Local Municipality. Two show houses were built and during the construction phase the Council was notified that there were no bulk services in the area ... The engineers have struggled to complete installation of bulk services up to now. ... The construction of top structure has started but cannot be completed due to the unavailability of bulk services. ... The developer cannot complete the houses because beneficiaries cannot move into the houses without ablution facilities, which will create a health hazard. The completion of these houses may also lead to illegal occupation of these houses whilst awaiting completion of bulk services installation.”¹⁸

What happened to housing for workers at Hernic Ferrechrome and Xstrata is directly discussed, from the mineworkers’ perspective in one of the focus groups.

“James” (not his real name) was one of the first people to move into the area, when he worked at Hernic Ferrechrome. Within a year 200 mineworkers settled there. The municipality refused to provide this informal settlement with electricity, because they said their records only had one person (James) living there. Eventually residents won the provision of electricity, and water is supplied to standpipes. But water, sewerage, refuse removal, and roads remain a problem. James comments:

“First: we do not have good roads. We have electricity; we have water; we would like the mine come here and help these people with these roads, so we can go to work. But also this water: we drink it because it is all we have. It can make you sick, see, it is brown from that tap. But we do drink it.” (PB3)

The focus group believes that the municipality is unwilling to provide infrastructure when the mine’s explorations might mean that the area will be removed at some time in the future. Xstrata is today sinking shafts in the direction of Mmakau: blasting shakes and cracks even the informal housing, and noise is a serious pollutant. (The mines claim they only blast at night, since they believe that would be less disruptive; but residents complain they feel the blasting throughout the day.)

Mmakau/ Mothulong near Brits (the location of focus group PB3) has been the subject of violent service delivery protests since 2013, most recently in November 2014; these led to 4 deaths. The press focused mostly on water delivery as the cause of the protests: however, we were told that a further complaint was that the road system in the settlement was completely impassible during heavy rains (as we found out in practice), which prevented children from attending schools, and at times prevented workers from getting to work.

18 from: Report of the Portfolio Committee on Human Settlements on the oversight visit to the North West province, dated 24 October 2012 (Parliamentary Monitoring Group); <http://www.pmg.org.za/files/doc/2013/comreports/130813pcsettlereport.htm> (accessed 5 July 2015)

Provision of housing for in-migrant miners: Living out allowances

The living-out allowance of the mining industry is around R1800 per month and R800 for construction company employees. With this amount of income they cannot afford suitable accommodation, food and transport. This results in the mushrooming of squatter camps which are havens for health risks, crime and environmental degradation.¹⁹

A number of recent studies point out that the mines' efforts to replace hostels with a "living out allowance" has proved a driving factor for the growth of informal settlements in the Platinum Belt. Benchmarks' The Policy Gap study, published in 2006, states:

"The platinum mining companies, like all corporations in the mining industry are moving away from migrant labour and mine hostels. The mines are, instead, offering their employees allowances to afford their own accommodation off-site. For the majority of black mine workers this has resulted in them moving into shacks in the informal settlements around the mines...

"... The mines responded to this by embarking on a programme of converting single-men's mine hostels into family accommodation. It is generally agreed in the literature that mine compounds and hostels were not even suitable for single men; it is questionable whether these structures could be suitable for families, even if converted.... less than 6% of total mine labour are resident in converted family units in hostels (Lewis, 2003:67).

"...living out allowances... are not sufficient for workers to move into proper township housing.... 31% of workers on the mines have taken advantage of the living out allowance (Lewis, 2003:67).

"Another strategy adopted by the mines is of assisting workers with obtaining bank loans for housing. The banks are reluctant to give people loans in areas of communal land holding... Free holding opportunities only exist outside of traditional areas, and therefore often far away from mining operations. This adds to the travel expenses of workers choosing this option. It is not surprising that less than 1% of mineworkers have opted for the bond repayment option (Lewis, 2003: 67)."²⁰

A later Benchmarks paper, published in 2013, adds:

"There is in fact reason to believe that the overwhelming majority of Lonmin's 28, 230 established employees (2012) stay in informal settlements or in township shacks. As for the additional 8,300 contract workers, for which accommodation Lonmin takes no responsibility, their residence in informal settlements is almost given by definition. According to a very well-placed source, Lonmin estimates that it provides acceptable accommodation for about 5 000 out of over 28 000 established employees. The estimate was conceded at a meeting with different stakeholders in November 2012."²¹

19 Benchmarks Foundation, Rustenburg community report 2011. P. 42 http://www.bench-marks.org.za/publications/rustenburg_community_report_2011.pdf (accessed 5 July 2015)

20 Op Cit., Benchmarks: The Policy Gap – Review of the corporate social responsibility programs of the platinum mining industry in the platinum producing region of the North West Province., p 100 – 101; http://www.bench-marks.org/downloads/070625_platinum_research_full.pdf

21 Bench Marks Foundation , Coping with Unsustainability, Policy Gap 6, Lonmin 2003 – 2012, October 2013, p. 26; www.bench-marks.org.za/press/lonmin_report_print.pdf



Picture: Focus Group participants at Mmakou

In-migrant mineworkers see this as a no-win situation. The out-living allowance has to cover rent for the mineworker, sometime to buy water (where there are no services), food and other necessities, and sometimes short-distance transport to the mine.

“Our own families where we are coming from, we are unable to build the proper houses there, even there: because of these salaries which we are getting here, which is finished when we pay for what we are living in here.

“We have homes and families, but we need houses here to live in. A mkhukhu here costs R1000, we cannot bring our families here. We get R1 800 for living out allowance.” (PB4)

In the group of women now working at Lonmin, most expected to rent one room accommodation in Wonderkop, costing R350 a month for a single room. This allows no possibility of bringing children (or other family members) to stay there.

Despite these difficulties, some mineworkers do bring their families to stay with them. One participant, who has worked for 16 years as a certified boilermaker and permanent employee at Xstrata, has brought his wife and children to stay with him in Mmakau. He was born in Pietersburg, where his mother still lives. Today he supports family members (his parents and siblings) outside Pretoria, including paying to build a “proper” house there. But this is not a good solution for his family.

Building adequate housing: RDP houses and company-built housing

Despite this desperate housing situation, efforts to build housing for mineworkers, by the mines and by government, have collapsed.

Focus groups note that companies do not provide houses for lower-paid workers.

“The mines promise to build houses, but even today the mines built only flats for those who can afford. The mines have built flats for employees – you can pay R6000 to rent a company flat. For us, are no houses built, nothing if you cannot pay R6000.” (PB4)

“I tell you they want to sell the houses to mineworkers. Lonmin has built about one thousand eight hundred houses. But workers have refused to buy them. They will not pay the money Lonmin is asking. Lonmin actually started quoting the workers saying that only 200 of those houses have been bought, because people have built houses back home.” (PB3)

Lonmin's sustainability report in 2014 gives this explanation for the problem:

“Many employees have opted not to invest their resources in formal housing and have chosen to live in informal housing. This has precipitated the emergence of a backroom informal economy, which brings with it a host of negative socioeconomic issues, not least of which is a rapidly growing community without basic services and infrastructure.”²²



Picture: Informal settlement, Bleskop

In contrast to Lonmin's claims that workers have “opted not to invest their resources in formal housing”, a report compiled in 2014 suggests rather that affordable formal housing does not exist in the area. Specifically, Lonmin's commitments to building housing for workers, and converting hostels into family dwellings had collapsed. Between 2007 and 2010 plans to build 4400 house for workers and convert 92 hostels had culminated in three (3) show houses being constructed and 5 hostel blocks converted. In 2010 Lonmin unilaterally repudiated the housing and hostel conversion obligations it had assumed in its SLP. Yet by 2012 preliminary reports showed no more houses built, but 108 hostel blocks were converted.²³

22 Lonmin, *Rebuilding Bridges, Sustainable Development Report 2014, Human Settlements*; <http://sd-report.lonmin.com/2014/reporting-according-to-our-material-focus-areas/1-employee-relations/human-settlements/> (accessed 5 July 2015)

23 Written Submissions of the Bapo Ba Mogale Community to the Marikana Commission of Inquiry. 3 November 2014, <http://www.marikanacomm.org.za/docs/201411-HoA-BapoBaMogale.pdf> (accessed 5 July 2015)

With the failure of mines to construct adequate houses for mineworkers, the pressure has been on government to provide housing.

The focus group at Mmakou points out that the government announced it would build 300 RDP houses in 2005; this has not been done yet. Meanwhile, there are two thousand mineworkers in the area who need affordable, decent houses; and the municipality has an existing list of 299 established residents for the RDP houses planned....

“Now, there is a problem, because the mines have once again shifted responsibility for houses to the government. Our government has embraced that responsibility, and they are going to fail. Because once again people will be fighting for houses. There were supposed to be 2000 houses, 2000 people who need houses; but they (government) are building only 292 houses.

“We have a waiting list of people whose subsidies have been approved, of about three hundred and something (people on the waiting list). Now that’s a problem to me. There’s a waiting list, sitting in an office, of three hundred and something of people whose subsidies have been approved, and they are building 292 houses - out of a total of two thousand people who need houses. They are creating a conflict. People will be standing up to say, we want to be on the waiting list, or we are on that waiting list, and we do not have houses.” (PB3)

And the complaint:

That Minister of Mining, Ramathlodi, last year promised to give the workers houses, but still today no houses. But they promised. The mines around here: Glencore, Acquarius, Marikana; the mines in this area, mostly Acquarius. (PB4)

The experiences and perspectives of this focus group underline that none of the stakeholders – mine employers, local government, traditional government, or national oversight – have addressed the problem of housing in this area, either for existing residents, or for in-migrant mineworkers or their families.

Schools and clinics

As well as the issues around housing and infrastructure, there are huge problems with other social services to these communities, including schools and medical facilities

In-migrants who might want to bring their families to stay with them find that the provincial Education Department prescribes seTswana as the first language in public primary schools. When non-seTswana children attend, teachers cannot teach them in their own languages. In large classes, with high pupil-teacher ratios, children who don’t speak seTswana are sidelined and silenced, which often disrupts learning for all pupils. A seTswana-speaking participant described the situation:

“If you listen to these kids, it is like Soweto – they use all languages. We need teachers who can respond to this, not try to impose seTswana on the class.” (PB1)

Health services also fall between the gap of mine company and local government provision. The mine companies are expected to provide health care for miners and families living in the area, but can refuse to care for other residents. Thus, the clinic in Wonderkop/ Nkaneng is provided by Lonmin; during the strikes, it would not care for strikers or their families, or men staying in the area looking for work at the mines. Local government clinics are under-resourced.

One report that investigated the health status of communities around Lonmin in Bojanala in 2005 found:

“... Malnutrition was prevalent in the communities and a number of children suffered from kwashiorkor – an easily prevented condition that occurs when there is insufficient protein in the diet. Kwashiorkor is more common in countries in a state of political unrest, or where there has been a drought or natural disaster.”²⁴

The nearest public hospitals are based in Brits and Rustenburg but people from poorer households cannot afford the high transport costs to reach these facilities. Ambulances at times do not go to some areas, citing impassible roads.

The role of traditional authorities in mine-adjacent communities

Discussions held in Bojanalo raised issues about the role of traditional authorities in mine-adjacent communities.

Firstly, as mentioned above, discussion groups expressed doubts about whether traditional authorities represent people who supposedly comprise their clan. Questions are raised as to whether these traditional authorities have the right to claim land and mineral rights that they have appropriated in the name of their clan base.

Second, participants see these local tribal authorities – who are neither elected nor representative – as linked to mine companies through self-interest and corrupt relationships.

Further, participants believe that those wielding power locally – in the mines, in local government, and in tribal authority – actively suppress community resistance. Discussions speak of violence against community activists: some 300 activists have been arrested, harassed, even shot at in Bojanalo over the past few years. Participants expressed fear that anyone who speaks out publically can be targeted. One man described an aborted attack by unknown armed men on his home.

Moreover, these traditional authorities wield power because of clan, and ethnic, background. Participants point out that this has repercussions in discrimination against members of other ethnic groups living in the area:

“The question of ethnicity. The platinum belt is found in Transvaal and Limpopo where you find seTswana speaking people and seSotho speaking

24 Faranaaz Parker Lonmin mining communities: A powder keg of inequality, 27 AUG 2012 <http://mg.co.za/article/2012-08-27-lonmin-mining-communities-a-powder-keg-of-inequality>

*Picture:
Informal
settlement,
Bleskop*



people. If you were to privatise land, if government were to say this land is owned by the people who claimed to have bought it, or the people who lived there, it may bring out that evil element of ethnicity, that the Tswanas would say, this is our mineral, we will employ you as we deem fit. And that has been a challenge that has not been addressed, which has been avoided, the ethnicity problem in the mining industry and the mining communities.” (PB1)

Several focus groups referred to ethnicity in on-going conflict over provision of houses, services and use of land. One participant noted that having (free) RDP houses provided to Tswana speakers when non-Tswana mineworkers are expected to buy houses is a recipe for disaster:

“We had some 40 RDP houses some 2 or 3 years back, we had ethnic clashes over who was to occupy those RDP houses. Those were serious. People died there. But personally I don’t think that challenge has been addressed, it is there, it is alive, as long as it has not been addressed it will emerge again, probably under worse conditions than we have been able to manage.

“There are communities – we talked about ownership – there are communities which say we don’t own, we are labour only. These are divided along ethnic lines. There are people who come from Taung, Vryburg, they are unable to settle in the Bafokeng area. There is a history there that is well known between the Barolong and the Bafokeng. It again takes us back to how we can consider and evaluate the policies - we don’t actually evaluate, we don’t look back at these issues and say, what have we done wrong, what have we done right.

“Especially because they are different, Tswanas, Xhosas and whatever. But when they are working together, they will just build one mine. People say, why are they not building houses for us, who work here; when they build them, for free, for unemployed people.” (PB3)

On a more positive note, participants also suggested if the mines and government paid adequate wages and provided sufficient resources to all who lived in the area, “local” and in-migrant alike, ethnic and tribal conflict would not become an issue for those living together in the mining communities.



Mineworkers and mineworker communities in the Labour Sending Areas

Table 3: Summary of the outcomes of focus group discussion about impact of mines in labour sending areas

	<i>Key points raised by groups</i>	<i>pages</i>
<i>Overall perspectives</i>	<i>“We run to find a job”: mine work as a way out of poverty</i>	48
<i>Undermined communities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> History of bantustans, removals etc leaves the labour sending areas in deep poverty and underdevelopment. Historically, the low amounts mineworkers can send as remittances reinforce this cycle of poverty 	50
<i>Burden of ill-health from mines</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ill miners are sent home; the family loses its main income; few workers get disability pay Lack of medical support in LSAs, especially for mine-related occupational diseases 	51
<i>Missing payouts: disability, death, retrenchment, benefits</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historically and today many beneficiaries have not recieved disability, pension, or death benefits Most people seeking redress for failed payouts have no success 	52 56
<i>The myth of tradition (gender and culture)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus groups reject the claim that migrant miners use relatively high wages to support girlfriends (or two polygamous families), as part of traditional culture; and this entrenches poverty. 	59



“We run to find a job”: mine work as a way out of poverty

“Let’s come to the question of why we are working on the mines. I will answer that quick quick quick. There are no jobs outside there – most of us, fifty to sixty percent of us here today have degrees, diplomas, but we don’t have jobs, there is no job for us. That is why we run to find a job, to anywhere where we can get job; there is no job where we come from. That is why we are working on the mine.” (PB 4)

All focus group discussions in this research acknowledge that men leave the labour sending areas to seek work on the mines because they cannot support their families working “at home”.

Picture: Indwe Focus Group



An overview of the economy of Mbizana and Ngquza Hill, two rural Eastern Cape communities known as labour sending areas, gives an idea of the level of poverty people face:

“To start with, less than 15% of adults were employed in 2011. That is low even for the former “homeland” regions, and far below the national average of 40%. When people had employment, their incomes were poor. Nationally, half of all employed people earned R3200 a month or less in 2011. In Mbizana and Ngquza Hill, two thirds of employed people earned less than R3200. In contrast, in Marikana, Freedom Park and Wonderkoppies in the platinum belt, only around 40% of employed people earned less than that amount a month – and well over half of all adults had a job.”²⁵

Facilitators doing this research noted that even in the poor and underdeveloped areas of rural Eastern Cape, mineworker families appear to the most isolated and under-resourced. Not one of the four places where we stayed (with organisers for the focus groups) had in-house water or sanitation; one had electricity; all were in villages reached by drives on dirt roads off the tarred roads (between towns).

Under these circumstances it is hardly surprising that men go to the mines to earn something.

Undermined communities: too little remittance, no other way to earn

These levels of poverty have been entrenched over years. Many studies have looked at how apartheid removals damaged the economies of the bantustans, dumping people without resources, overcrowding already poor land, far from paying work in towns.

Every person’s story that we heard in the Eastern Cape focus groups underscores the sense that historic migrant labour to the mines has “underdeveloped” the labour sending communities, rather than enriching them. Men went to the mines hoping to earn a better life for their families, to ensure their children’s future and their own old age. Instead, the pay they sent home was too little for more than bare survival (and sometimes not even that). They had nothing to invest in their home when they returned from months and years away. Remittances did not stimulate local economies. Young and able-bodied men who left to work in the mines came back injured, ill, or dead; or did not come back.

For the outcomes of this research, perhaps the most striking lesson from the focus group discussions in the Eastern Cape is that these narratives of damaged lives do not end in the 1990s, They continue into work on the platinum mines today.

A cumulative picture of a repeating cycle of poverty emerges from the testimony. Families send their sons and husbands and fathers to the platinum mines; but then they see the same patterns, and the same damage, repeating itself today.

25 Neva Makgetla, A perfect storm, TIPS, Jan 2015, pg. 31



“When I was working in the mines, they would give us R300, expecting us to come home and live with this, to buy cows. Only later we learned that only those who are able to strike can ask for more.” (Pekani Pitou: LSA2)

“I worked in two mines, in Nigal in 1965 then in Vlakfontien in 1972. Last at Milro Drillian at Deepkloof. I was on surface doing clerical jobs in all of these mines. I started at 23 cents a day; at month end R8.50 Over time it became R9.60. After six months I got a promotion to earn R12.60 a month.

“After a year I got a R2 increase. I was underpaid: that discrimination that whites were earning more than us, they came not knowing anything, we had to teach them. But they earned more.

“Only in the 1980s we started to receive R1000 or more a month, and tickets to go back to where we came from.

“Now these mines are closed, people are unemployed, people are sitting here in poverty. In this poverty as we are here we want the creation of jobs for our children. We need our children to get a proper education. The infrastructure in our area, we don’t have proper roads. People die on their way to the hospital.

“We need government to give us compensation for the damage that has been done by the mines.” (Sakele Ziba:- LSA2)

“I was working in Carletonville; and retrenched from there in 1994. I never received all my payments. I worked in Carletonville for 26 years, at Elandsfontein Mine until 1995 for 12 years. Then I worked in Rustenburg Impala Platinum. I was retrenched in 2012 because of old age. “ (James Letsela, LSA 1)

“I was a mineworker for several years at different mines. I began with Blyfontein in Randspoor. I started as a youth; I was married after I had already been working in the mines. We worked under difficult conditions, when we had to go home given a letter of dismissal without payment. I worked at Bleskop at Rustenburg, a new mine.”

“My father was a mineworker at Carletonville; my father worked there for years. I grew up knowing him as a mineworker, we did not see him at home except at Christmas. He came back in 1994 and passed away in 2006, having asthma and TB (coughing). His name was Mhlangeni Mabobola.” (Siyabulela, LSA1)

One elderly woman after another describes how this shaped her life:

“I greet you here on behalf of my husband William Hlatswayo. He was working for several mines; I do not know all of them. He started as a mineworker in 1969. I used to get R6 sent to me each month (remittance); when he finished the term he would come home with R12. The time when he had to come back during the mine violence with Inkatha, it was not nice, it was difficult for us. We had nothing to eat in the house. Before he came home because of the violence, he had been injured at work by a steel which penetrated his thigh. He spent some weeks in hospital; he came back with TB and slept four times in Lady Frere Hospital. When he came back he left all his clothes and had no papers, because he was fleeing the violence.” (Florence Hlatswayo: LSA1)

Picture: Labour sending area, outside Ncgobo, Eastern Cape

Spit out: the burden of ill-health comes back home

Miners are still sent home ill and broken, no longer able to work or earn money at the mines or at home). Many need physical care. Many come home to die.

All focus groups (both on the platinum belt and in the labour-sending areas) emphasise that the mines do not provide on-going medical treatment for workers sent back with ill health or disability to labour sending areas. In theory, local public clinics in the home areas pick up treatment. But public clinics in these areas are often distant and understaffed. They do not have medical expertise for occupational diseases; Often they do not get the miner's medical records, so cannot treat existing illness immediately. Commonly, a miner sent home ill who then gets worse is sent to a state-run referral hospital in the region, a long distance from the home.

The burden compounds when the ex-miner dies after being sent home with an occupational disease. While the mines are legally required to pay death benefits in these cases, the family must prove that the illness was an occupational disease, and the mine that employed the worker should pay benefits.

The regulations to prove a death comes from mine-acquired TB require a qualified medical practitioner or mortician to take the lungs from the body and send them to be tested in Pretoria. Even if grieving families are willing to go through this desecration of the body, they need to find a qualified practitioner in deep rural areas to "harvest" the organs. Not surprisingly this most often does not happen.

Moreover, the mine medical facilities do nothing for family, who are exposed to infectious diseases brought home from the mines (TB and HIV being the obvious cases here).

The stories from the Eastern Cape focus groups leave no doubt that mineworkers and families in the labour sending areas still today carry an unrelieved burden of ill-health and injury caused by the mines.

"I am here listening to the pains of the people here. I am bred and born here. Many people are of my age. They leave school and go to the mines to put food on the table. They come back damaged, unhealthy, in pain."
(Matsile Mpakane: LSA3)

"My husband was working in the mines. I married him in 1968, he was already a mineworker. He worked in Vaal Reefs almost all his life. He passed away in 1988. We had no food to put on the table. He would stay there the whole year and come back with that little money.

"What I can say is that my heart is in pain because my husband was damaged by the mines. He came back and spent a month with us, then went to hospital from breathing problems; he could not hear; then he passed away. He could not spend more than a month with us, after the mines.

"They called me into TEBA and gave me R2000 for the funeral." (Nomawetu Mbele: LSA3)

"I was working at Lonmin – that mine that killed so many – I came back here in 2012, after medical incapacitated after an injury at work. They said I could get pension from the mines pension fund, but I could not get it. I worked for 25 years in Lonmin. I was working there until one week before the strike, when I was sent home as medically unfit. I was a boilermaker. I am now deaf from this: I have paperwork for that injury, deaf caused by the mines." (Masunku Mabobola: LSA1)

"I was a mineworker in Western Platinum in Rustenburg; what makes me to be here is the unhealthy conditions – I am not well." (LSA 1: Lucky Motsebetsane; his brother was killed at the Marikana massacre)

**Missing: disability, death benefits.
retrenchment payouts, pensions**

“I hear the mines say it is OK, that they pay pensions and benefits for illness. This is a lie. They don’t want to tell a true reflection of what is happening.” (Pekeni Pitou: LSA2)



Picture: Participant speaking, Indwe focus group

With illness, injury and death of the mineworker, the income that the family (most commonly the extended family) depends upon, ceases. But promised benefits are too often pitifully small, or non-existent.

This refrain of failed payouts - pensions, disability, and death benefits - stands out in every story gathered from the Eastern Cape focus groups. Based on personal experiences, participants assert that the mechanisms put into place after the 1990s to pay out benefits must count as part of this failure. Both measures intended to bring redress to mineworkers exploited by apartheid migrant labour in the past, and those aimed to assist mineworkers at work today, have failed.

In June 2015 (after these focus groups were completed) the Minerals Resources Committee of the South African Parliament received a report on the failure of occupational disease payouts in the South African mines today. Dr Rodney Ehrlich, the head of Occupational Medicine at UCT, informed the committee that:

“... the current backlog for miners to be medically certified by the Medical Bureau of Occupational Diseases is 8,000 cases, due mainly to the fact that the body is highly understaffed.

“That’s nothing compared to the backlog in actual compensation payouts: 104,000 cases, Ehrlich told the committee.

“The compensation system for miners’ occupational disease remains mired in problems, Ehrlich reported. The mines have their own special system for disease compensation, called ODMWA (the Occupational Diseases in Mines and Works Act). ...

“When compensation for mineworkers is calculated, the wages they were earning are capped at R3,000 – even though the average wage on the mines is R4,500.

“The compensation scale has also radically lagged behind inflation. In fact, miners today are getting stiffed compared to yesterday’s payouts. With a case of first degree silicosis today, you get paid out seven months’ wages (if you’re lucky enough to successfully claim, be processed, etc). In 1973, Ehrlich said, miners in the same situation received two years’ compensation.”²⁶

This research project does not have capacity to fully explore the mechanisms that government now has in place to address these issues: pensions, disability pay, death pay and benefits, but also the Mineworkers Provident Fund and the Mines 1970s Unclaimed Benefits Preservation Provident Fund.

Yet it appears that, in many instances, responsibility for payouts have been outsourced (to the mine companies, to financial companies, and to organisations such as TEBA). The stories of mineworkers and their families portray this as an unfathomable morass. They do not know who takes responsibility for payouts, what they can do to access benefits, or what their rights are. They recount being sent from company to Department of Labour to Social Services to NGOs and then back to the company. This frustrating and endless trek is must be undertaken from deep rural homes with no access to communications, and no money to reach even offices nearby.

26 Ground-up, The Scandal of South Africa’s Sick Miners, http://groundup.org.za/article/scandal-south-africa-s-sick-miners_3017 (accessed July 2, 2015)

“So many organisations have promised to help us with benefits. We are going up and down, asked to go to Pretoria or Cape Town to look for benefits. At the end of the day some organisations give us food vouchers. One woman died in Pretoria after going there to seek benefits owed to her by the mines. The family asked the government to send her body back home – eventually, they sent it to Matatiele, about 45 km from her home; the family could not afford to collect it from Matatiele.” (Nomabantu Nalobola (Mirrium): LSA1)

“My husband Moses Simotlo worked in Stein One from 1979. In 1987 he became unhealthy; he was dismissed for ill health. He went back to work in 1993 at Tsepong mine. In Tsepong he was dismissed for ill health in 2009. Both times he was hospitalised, which was covered by the mine; and sent home. From Stein I never got any money. In Tsepong he was given a medical payout; he is still alive, at home, and still in an unhealthy condition.” (Catherine Tsomolane Matesetso, LSA1)

“My husband was a mineworker in Randfontein. He was retrenched. When we were married in 1969 he had already been a mineworker for years. He came from work in the mine with problems with his breathing, and passed away in 2010. I never got any benefits.” (Maphakiso Letsala: LSA1)

“I request that government must look at the pain we received, at the difficulties faced by our husbands.. Our husbands could not help us to raise children and build houses; our children have grown up eating dry food without vitamins. My husband was injured in Kinross, and never been paid for injury at work. He slept six months in hospital, and was never paid. He was retrenched – they said the money would follow him, but he never got it. He tried to pursue this until he died in 2006, from problems with breathing.” (Nomula Nkobosi: LSA2)

“We come with the pain of being robbed by the mines, this is the main issue we are facing. I started to work in 1960 while still young. During that time if you did not go to work you were arrested and jailed for not working.

“But when we go and make claims for work we did from the 1960s, they respond that they don’t count work before the 1960s – they can look at 1962 to check, but the records cannot tell them, they think you may have left for a year or three years.” (Pekeni Pitou: LSA1)

Often failure to access benefits is justified by the lack of records about the particular worker – both of work and medical health. These records are kept by the mines and mine-linked recruiting companies.

“I worked for three mines, for several years in each mine. We worked under difficult conditions. I support what others have said here.

“We were dismissed without any reasons. We were dismissed without being given UIF cards, only money for the days we had worked. We had no documents with which to put a claim. After this long time, I received papers saying I had worked in Belleville, but I had never worked there. I went to the Department of Labour to ask how to claim about the places where I had worked, but the nearest office is in Lady Grey, and I have no resources to follow-up there. I hope you can help in this.” (Moses Sizevela: LSA3)

“I am here on behalf of my husband Joel Sta Mvimbe. He worked in Welkom Mines and Vaal Reefs, and in Eloffsrand for 15 years, and in Deep Levels – I can’t give exact years. He never got worker benefits. He had only a UIF card; they said they gave him money for shares. Other benefits he did not receive. He passed away on 18 December 2014. The final time he came from the mines was in 1991. He was trying to follow-up on claiming benefits since then.” (Daphney Mvembe: LSA1)

“I started work in Brittanstein in 1976, and was retrenched in 1997. I could not get benefits, including Provident Fund benefits, until today, despite promises.” (Richard Letsela, LSA2)

“I started in 1979 in Melrick (?) in 1961; then went to Western Deep Level – developed ill health and was in Rand Mine hospital for a year. They took me back to work underground, but said I must do “light duty”. Then the retrenchment came; they asked me to reduce my salary. I asked to be put in line for retrenchment package, but they did not give it to me. I was retrenched without package or disability payment in 1993.

“I had a question about when I would get my benefits. They said when I reached 50 years; but when I reached 50 I went back to collect my pension, and was told then that I was not recorded in the computer. I am still looking for my money and still in an unhealthy condition from working in the mines.” (Mzimkhuru Sisilaka: LSA2)

TEBA - The Employment Bureau of Africa – has claimed it is well placed to help trace ex-miners and families owed benefits. TEBA was formed 112 years ago (named originally WENELA) to manage recruiting men from distant rural areas across the sub-continent to work in South Africa’s mines. TEBA arranged contracts, travel, and remittances. In 2005 TEBA changed hands, with the new majority owner a consortium led by former National Union of Mineworkers’ president James Motlatsi. The aim is to transform and expand its established role of recruitment, and to offer financial facilities to workers, including payout of benefits and pensions to ex-miners.

TEBA argues that it can trace beneficiaries through its existing records of migrant labour. However, its records are not digitised. Moreover, it expects payment (from government or the mines) to help trace these beneficiaries. From the stories told by focus group participants, TEBA's record of success is not high.

“My husband passed away in 2010. He worked at different mines for several years; the last one at Lorraine Mine in 1994. He was retrenched and denied benefits. I tried to follow up with the Provident Fund to get the benefits – I went to TEBA in Matatiele; they said the money was still there. I did open a bank account, and brought them a statement and an affidavit in 2014. They asked me to open an account at Capitec; they told me that in the computer the money is there, but I never received any money. I am still waiting for the outcome from TEBA.” (Nomabantu Nalobola: LSA1)

“My husband was working in the mines. I married him in 1968, he was already a mineworker. He worked in Vaal Reefs almost all his life. He passed away in 1988. We had no food to put on the table. They would stay there the whole year and come back with that little money.

“What I can say is that my heart is in pain because my husband was damaged by the mines. He came back and spent a month with us, then went to hospital from asthma; he could not hear; then he passed away. He could not spend more than a month with us, after the mines.

“They called me into TEBA and gave me R2000 for the funeral. They promised they would

help with the education of my children, and that I should send my son to be a mineworker – but none of those promises happened.” (Nomawetu Mbele: LSA2)

“I started to work in the mines in 1958 at Mandrif. I spent six months there, only receiving six pounds pay for the six months. I went to work at Engerson(?); again for six months (this was the joining time); I received now five pounds (R10) to go home with.

“Then I worked at Derkfontien at Springs in 1961. I had 19 tickets as a worker there; then went back to work in the mine in Virginia. ...

“I was retrenched from Virginia; they paid me out R8000. I left putting a claim of long service in Virginia, in Harmony. I went back via TEBA. They did not know if Harmony was working, so I took a train straight to Harmony, to find that the mine was not yet open. There was no work. I had no money to go back. I was advised by another worker where to go to claim for long service; I did explain I was retrenched in 1995. When I went to the offices there were three women there. I was given a pay slip by those three ladies. They gave me a long service amount of R4050; but they took R3000 to put into a TEBA cash card, and gave me R1050 to take with me. They said that I would have to come and collect the other money.” (Bufo Hlayio: LSA2)

Seeking redress for failed payouts

The issue of failed payouts of benefits for mineworkers from across Southern Africa was highlighted at a conference held in Johannesburg in February 2014. The conference noted that as much as R5 billion was held in unclaimed benefits for ex-mineworkers. Of this, unpaid amounts included R3 billion owed by the Mineworkers Provident Fund, R200 million by the Mines 1970s Fund, R101 million by the Sentinel Mining Industry Retirement Fund, and R1.2 billion by the Fidentia-linked living Hands Umbrella Trust. It was estimated that some 200 000 mineworkers and their beneficiaries have outstanding unpaid claims, and that some one million awards require analysis.²⁷

27 [Martin Creamer, 60 000 ex-mineworkers come forward to claim R5 bn unpaid benefits, Creamer Media's Mining Weekly, 14 July 2014](http://www.miningweekly.com/article/60-000-ex-mineworkers-come-forward-to-claim-r5bn-unpaid-benefits-2014-07-14) <http://www.miningweekly.com/article/60-000-ex-mineworkers-come-forward-to-claim-r5bn-unpaid-benefits-2014-07-14> (accessed 5 July 2015)



“My husband is Nkheti Moses Mapasa. When I married him in 1955 he was already a mineworker.

“My husband was a mineworker for different mines – this is his dom pass which has stamps with dates of mine work. The husband passed away in 1994 from asthma and TB from minework.

“I have never been able to get any benefits; the companies claim they have no record of his working for them (although the dompas stamps show dates and places of employment).”

(Nomanomela Florence Mapasa: LSA1)

picture: Mrs Mapasa holds her deceased husband’s dompass, with records of the mines where he worked from the early 1950s. Yet mine companies say that they cannot find records of his employment and have not paid out any benefits. Photo from focus group at Mangalong village outside Matatielle

After the conference, various institutions increased efforts to identify beneficiaries. As of February 2015, the 1970's Fund said it had traced about 10 000 people, and paid out R30 million of the R660 million it holds in outstanding payouts.²⁸ (This suggests that an average of R3000 was paid to each beneficiary.)

As of July 2014, TEBA stated that 60 000 people had contacted them to lay claims; mostly from Limpopo, KwaZulu Natal, Northwest provinces of South Africa, and from Botswana, Mozambique and Swaziland. Of these 60 000, however, TEBA had submitted only 400 completed claims to the 1970s Fund, and 500 to the Mineworkers Provident Fund – and they had no knowledge if those had indeed been paid out.²⁹ In a subsequent statement in February 2015, TEBA announced some 130 000 people had laid claims; but did not say how many of these had been completed.

A legal case demanding benefits for some 1000 mineworkers is before the Western Cape courts, to be heard in July 2015.

None of the participants in our focus groups appear to have been aware of these attempts to identify beneficiaries.

One issue that we did not pursue in focus groups, but came up during informal discussions with people in the Eastern Cape, addressed the assumption that it was the responsibility of the trade unions (particularly NUM) to ensure ex-workers and beneficiaries received benefits. This has not happened (and one conversation suggested this may be one of the reasons mineworkers today believe NUM has failed them) . An explanation for this apparent failure may be that union structures are built upon representing workers at the workplace; but once miners have left their jobs, union representatives have no contact with them; the union has neither structures nor resources to follow up on payouts in distant rural areas.

28 Ibid

29 Martin Creamer, Engineering News, 130 000 ex-mineworkers claiming unpaid benefits, Jan 2015 <http://www.engineeringnews.co.za/article/130-000-ex-mineworkers-claiming-unpaid-benefits-teba-2015-01-06>

Picture: Mangolong, between Matateile and Mt. Frere





Picture: Carrying water, outside Ncgobo, Eastern Cape

Do traditional culture and gender relations drive migrant labour?

There are certainly alternative explanations for the continuation of migrant labour to the mines. One of the oft-repeated explanations for the persistence of migrant labour in South Africa points to traditional patriarchal culture as the underlying cause for men leaving wives and families to live and work on the mines. While this research project did not have the scope to explore this in depth, the issue did come up on various occasions, and was briefly explored.

The usual argument here is that in line with traditional and patriarchal culture, mineworkers indeed prefer to maintain a wife “at home” in the labour sending areas, and then to move in with a second woman (portrayed as a girlfriend or ‘nyatsi’, or perhaps a polygamous second wife) at the mine. People who put forward this argument often go on to suggest that the costs of maintaining two households is a major factor in mineworkers’ demands for higher wages.

A classic statement of this position comes in a paper written for the HRSC in 2013:

“...the migrant labour system led to the development of ‘second families’ in which migrant workers establish local households with second wives or girlfriends in the shanties around the mines.

This has been encouraged by the abolition of the single-sex hostels and paid-for by ‘living-out allowances’ – a cash allowance to ‘live out’, that is to exit the migrant hostel system. Families become a drain on employee salaries and frequently force migrant miners into the unsustainable agreements with loan sharks which use garnishee orders on miner salaries, a feature well highlighted in the strike action, especially at the platinum mines where indebtedness was considered an element of the salary discontent (COSATU Media Monitor, 2012).

This socio-economic condition of mine workers supporting a second family on or near the mine while at the same time needing to visit his rural home has become so expensive that it has led to demands for higher wages.”³⁰

However, when this suggested explanation was put to focus groups in both the platinum belt and the Eastern Cape, mineworkers rejected it with anger:

“That research that says we are spending money on our girlfriends, that is not true. This is an insult to us and our families. We love our wives, we would like to see them coming and staying with them, the amount of money we are earning does not allow for that. With the amount of money we are earning, who would like to bring their loved ones to live under these conditions, where there is no water, no electricity, no schooling facilities for the children?” (PB4)

The second event that speaks to the role of gender relations in traditional culture occurred during research in the Eastern Cape. Facilitators noted that in all focus groups in the Eastern Cape, women sat on one side of the room, and men on the other. Facilitators took a conscious decision not to attempt to alter this arrangement for the duration of the focus group. However, facilitators did ask both women and men to comment on what was said, so that there was cross-discussion between the separated gender groups. This led to two points of interest:

A number of participants (both men and women) described getting married after the man was already working in the mines. For most of their lives as families, the husband did not live at home with the wife and children, until the man retired or was retrenched or sent home ill or disabled.

In her concluding comment to one discussion, an elderly woman remarked:

“It is very important for us to sit here and talk about this, as men and women together. We have never heard these men tell us how hard it was for them in the mines. They did not tell us this, because if we knew about it, we would not have allowed them to go to work on the mines.” (LSA2)

30 Op Cit, Tendai Gwatidzo and Miracle Benhura 2013 Mining Sector Wages in South Africa

Picture: Women participants, Indwe



4. Participants propose interventions:

Table 3: Summary of the focus group discussion on proposals for way forward

	<i>Key points raised by groups</i>	<i>pages</i>
<p>Administration measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve workplace conditions; health and safety provision • Improve living conditions in mine-adjacent communities • Improve quality jobs and work access for local residents at mines • Oversight monitoring and enforcement of existing regulations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical facilities provided by mines need government oversight; to be responsive to workers need not company needs • Companies must take full responsibility for injuries and occupational illnesses, in prevention, treatment and disability pay. • End forced relocation without negotiation with residents; provide adequate alternative residence for those dislocated. • Establish clear land rights • Give responsibility for infrastructure to a single accountable authority • Ensure Job creation, improved working conditions, and better pay for locals and in-migrants; end discrimination in hiring • Improve oversight, monitoring and enforcement of existing regulations, including health and safety; benefits, pensions, payouts; employment & recruitment practice; contracting and sub-contracting; discrimination/stereotyping More regular health checks at mines • Repair widespread and systematic failure in payouts for retrenchment, disability, pensions, death benefits 	62
<p>Representation and communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represent mineworkers and communities in decisions • Ensure communication that is effective and respectful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local govt should be involved in decisions on mineral rights and expansion • Traditional authorities are not representative of locals or mineworkers • Gender issues need discussion and resolution based on interests of communities • Communication must be improved between workers and government authorities, and mine companies 	63
<p>Financial investment and development to build a sustainable mine labour force</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher pay for mineworkers • Investment in mine-adjacent communities • Investment in economic development of LSAs • Lump sum payouts as compensation and reparation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those profit from mining must contribute to improving living conditions, basic infrastructure, economic development and job development programmes in the labour sending areas. • -Economic development in the LSAs should foster farming, mining, industry where appropriate • Higher pay for mineworkers, to enable workers to improve living conditions, meet family needs, deal with community poverty; and ultimately break out of the cycle of migrant labour and poverty around minework today. 	64

Administration

Improve workplace conditions

All focus group discussions were clear that the platinum mines must improve workplace conditions. There remain fundamental injustices in health and safety provision, in discrimination (race, ethnicity and gender), in hiring and promotion, and in lack of career pathing.

Ex-workers in the labour sending areas argued that the mines discarded older workers when they were no longer capable of hard labour, rather than looking for ways to use their knowledge and experience of mining to train younger entrants to the work.

Improve health and safety provision

Mine companies need to take full responsibility for injuries and occupational illnesses to their workforce, in terms of prevention and treatment as well as disability pay. To do this:

- Current regulations need to be effectively implemented on all levels.
- Medical facilities with specialists in mine-related illnesses and injuries should be available, both at the mines themselves, but also to people in the labour sending areas.

At present, medical staff are employed by the mines; they need independence from mine companies in order to make decisions about mineworkers' health that are in the best interest of the workers rather than meeting company preferences. This needs government oversight.

Improve conditions in mine-adjacent communities to meet the needs of residents and workers

All focus groups agreed that living conditions in areas near the mines must be dramatically improved; that the population explosion in the areas have led to a proliferation of informal and illegal settlements, without infrastructure or services. Building stable and viable communities around the mines is an immediate need, both for in-migrants and for local residents.

This includes providing infrastructure and social services to mining communities; schools, public clinics, water, sewerage, electricity, roads.

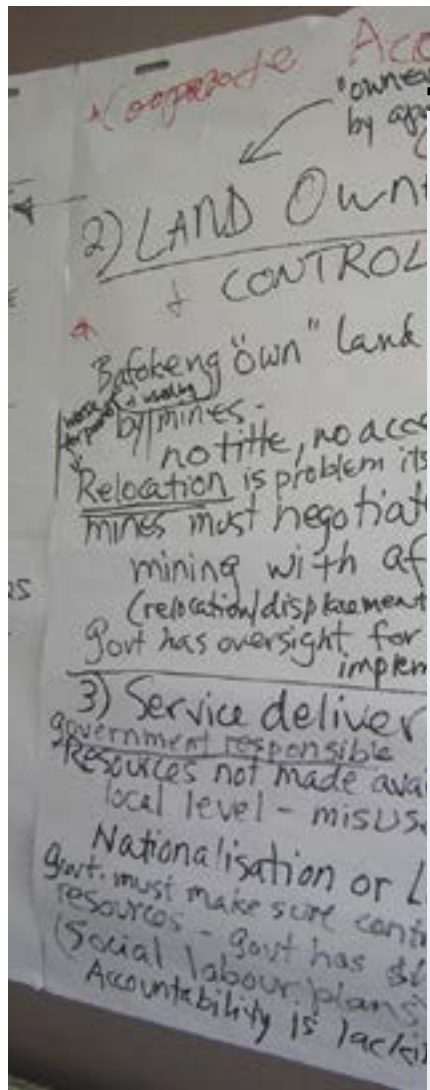
To do this, government needs to determine the responsibilities of different actors (the mine companies, the traditional authorities, and different levels of government-national, provincial and local); in terms of land and mineral rights, infrastructure and service provision, and for developing housing stock.

Oversight, monitoring and enforcement of existing regulations

Focus groups felt that there needs to be oversight, monitoring and enforcement on a range of existing government measures intended to improve workers lives. These include:

- Health and safety
- Benefits, pensions, and payouts;
- Employment and recruitment practice
- Contracting and sub-contracting
- Discrimination/stereotyping etc





Key demands of focus group PB1:

End forced relocation without negotiation with residents; and provide adequate alternative residence for those dislocated.

Establish clear land rights and give responsibility for infrastructure and settlement to a single accountable authority, preferably locally-based.

Ensure local oversight and control of decisions about communities living in Bojanala that cannot be overturned by a national ministry that has no responsibility to local population's needs.

Build stable communities of both relocated locals and in-migrants. Improve communication - between officials, government at all levels, mines themselves, and communities. This was seen as a critical requirement.

End discrimination against locals in hiring and ensure more transparent and accountable hiring practices in general.

This group also emphasized that the interests of all workers at the mines (both in- migrant and local) are aligned to the interests of the people who live around the mines. Interests in common demand that there must be job creation on the mines, and careers that develop with those jobs. Pay and working conditions must enable people to live well; and living conditions must enable all workers to live a full life while doing that work.

Representation and communication

Mineworkers need to be represented in decisions affecting their lives and work – in workplace; in mine-surrounding areas; in labour-sending areas.

COMMUNICATE! -between officials, government at all levels, mines themselves, and communities. (PB1 resolutions)

“Government needs to see how we live and work” (PB4 resolutions)

We need to have government representatives come and hear us directly, to stand in front of us to hear us. (Denil Thlaya Sisane: LSA3)

Mine companies and government need to develop processes that ensure consultation with workers and workers' communities at all levels, and find effective ways so that workers (and worker communities/ families) have input into decisions about their lives. (PB2 resolutions)



Picture: Participants, Bleskop focus group

Investment and development in building a sustainable labour force for the mines

Higher wages for mineworkers is a solution

All focus groups agreed that higher pay for mineworkers would enable workers to address living conditions, family needs, underdevelopment of “home areas”, etc) : higher wages would improve conditions embedded in unchanged structures and allow escape from perpetuation of migrant labour.

PB Group 1 said:

“The group agrees that the mines should pay ‘decent wages’ to all employees – this would provide the most benefit for the local communities. Higher wages would:

- eliminate the main sources of conflict in the mine-affected communities, including women working as sex workers because miners could then support homes and families;
- build local economies and communities in the mine belt (it was noted that during the strike the informal traders in local communities – a mainstay of local residents’ income – were left destitute);
- enable migrants to make a choice about whether to develop viable work in historically labour-sending areas (and thus not take jobs in mines from locals); or move to live near the mines with their families (thus building effective communities).”

PB Group 2 said:

“We see better wages and working conditions as the key answer to the damage of that is done to our lives by the mines today. The companies must pay wages that meet our husbands’ demand for R12 500. This would be a major step towards allowing a “normal” situation in the lives of miners and miners’ families. Our current situation (as widows and family members offered work at Lonmin) which has left us no choice but to work as migrants far from our loved ones, must not be seen as ‘norma.’”

PB Group 4 said:

“Tell government to go underground to see the conditions we work in, how can we work underground. We use that energy, that hard work everyday – hard, risky, unhealthy – as there is fire – there is not enough money (paid to us) to make that worthwhile, to work in the mine.”

“When people are getting down there, they are highly any exposed to danger at any time. Sometimes they develop different types of diseases, like TB and so on, due to the conditions. That is the thing they are saying. So specifically, the problem is with the conditions that they are working in, that is no good for them. So that they should be remunerated accordingly for the hard work done.”

And also from PB Group 4:

“We have this demand, 12.5 (wages of R12 500-ed). (laughter) It is better. When you start at the mine, go to get 12.5, it is better.”

“You see that hospital, they build a hospital for us: when we go there, it is free for us. But it is better when we go to that hospital that we are getting paid 10 or 12.5. When you go to hospital you go to die, when you are only getting 8 000 or 6 000 or 4000: seriously our children will suffer.”

From LSA2:

“We want pay that covers us for the value of the work we do, and the risks we take: for risk, for danger, for damage.”

Invest in economic development in the labour sending areas

Focus groups in the Eastern Cape were adamant that all actors who have benefitted from the mines need to contribute to improving living conditions, basic infrastructure, and economic development and job development programmes in the labour sending areas.

There is a need to plough back by those countries who have taken the wealth that we have produced, the fruits of the years of our forefathers doing work for the compromise pay, of getting peanuts. (PB4)

Economic development measures proposed by participants include:

- *developing basic economic infrastructure* in the labour sending areas
“Government has to develop infrastructure where we live, as it is a basic need for development.” (Denil Thlaya Sizane: LSA3)
- *developing farming capacity* (where this was a feasible option – some areas around Ngcobo and Umtata were cited as good agricultural land, and there are some agricultural development projects in that area);
“Farming is taking place here – government should give us implements to support us to farm maize and other crops, to build a future for our children.” (Milton Delas: LSA3)
- *develop mining where the resources permit* (there is an unused coal mine near Indwe that ex-mineworkers are working to reopen, which they believe can be made a viable enterprise).



A participant from the Eastern Cape commented:

“I am not saying that the mine companies must not come here. But first we must sit down and see how they can come up with safety. Then second, to come up with a better salary. People who work there are risking their lives; they need to be paid to benefit for their children. The miners must be able to put aside money for compensation for the future generations.

“At the same time, we look at what our present government is doing, looking at these youngsters. If the mine can be here: take all those people who have experience to teach those who have theories and paperwork

who come to work in the mines. They need to call those with experience, as conditions underground are not the same as in theory. They also need to give the proper salary to these people for their knowledge and experience.

“We know there is a lot of economic potential around here. On the other side by Taafa there is coal, they can open a coal mine there. In these areas we can be miners ourselves, and help show the youth; then we can leave them with a better life. We do have certificates, the documents that show we have experience.” (LSA2)

The group of women now working at Marikana (PB2) also held that the mining companies “owe” the historic labour sending areas some form of restitution that would enable those areas to build their own sources of employment (and thus end embedded migrant labour patterns).

This group of women were the only focus group who recognised that mine management do provide “social responsibility” programmes. They cited for instance where mining companies had built a classroom for a school in an Eastern Cape rural community. They felt, however, that existing company “social responsibility” measures are wholly inadequate; these programmes do not begin to resolve the lack of resources, services, and local economic opportunity that these communities face; nor do they significantly redress the wealth the companies have taken from their labour.

Discussions noted that job creation should cover all economically active members of the community. People over the age of 30 or 35 in these areas equally need jobs and income; present government programmes target the youth, and leave out other workers.

Moreover, several groups stated that economic development and job creation programmes should draw upon the skills and experience of older mineworkers. At present, these workers to all intents “disgarded” by the mining sector when they are sent home, in retirement or disability. This is a waste of human resources.

“We want government to recognise and to make use of – and pay for – our experience in this work; we should be able to teach our knowledge of this work to others, and be properly paid for that.” (LSA2)

Participants called for health facilities in the labour sending areas to include specialist treatment for mine-related injury and occupational disease, and regular check-ups on the health of ex-mineworkers.

“We must also call upon the people with wealth – whether government or mine companies – to make sure we have proper medical resources, hospitals that deal specifically with the diseases created by the mines. (Enoch: LSA2)

We talk about hospitals to be built here, centres to be built here (in the Eastern Cape). We can see there are some hospitals and clinics, but these cannot today deal with the specific problems we face. (Matsile Mpakane LSA3)

Picture: participants, Indwe



Pay out a lump sum payout to ex-mineworkers/families/communities, as compensation and reparation for decades of insufficient income/ underdevelopment of LSAs

We need compensation, payment; we did bring this economic wealth to this country; they are working with the wealth we brought to this country. There must be a monthly payment to us while we are sitting here: compensation for the damage we have suffered to our health, and a monthly pension.

Nomula Nkobosi

We talk about compensation in regards to all of these – pension, death benefits, medical disability benefits. We must look at employment plans as well. Your child of 36 years no longer can be counted as a youth, and government programs to help the youth will not take him. So we need compensation. (William Dununa: LSA3)

What I would like to see is: compensation for ex-mine workers: a lump sum to repair our lives. (Denil Thlaya Sizane: LSA3)

Government must hear us!

In conclusion, all of the focus groups called, emphatically, for the voices of workers and worker communities to be heard.

Closing comments:

“We are very happy that this research is being done, a platform of communication, of breaking the silence – it is a different strategy than just putting our demands.” (PB4)

“We do not say you have wasted our time by calling us to this workshop. You have opened our eyes: we now have to say people must know that all the mineworkers need to have their voices heard.” (LSA2)

“What I am hearing today, is disgusting, unacceptable, unbearable. I was born and bred in this community....

“I am stand here on behalf of the whole group, listening to the pains of the people here. I am bred and born here. We hear these terrible stories. We see people coming and going to the mines, coming back. We need our government to listen to try their best to help this community.

“The people have spoken.” (LSA3)





Picture: Focus group 1, in Rustenburg

Study methodology and practice

A. background

The Khulumani Platinum Miners' Speak research forms part of a broader research project by TIPS, that looks at current and changing socio-economic conditions around South Africa's platinum mines, in the period following the Marikana Massacre and the long and violent 2014 platinum miners' strike. In the course of this project, distrust and fear generated by the explosive tensions in the mining sector made it difficult for researchers to contact and interview mineworkers. Yet, the views of the mineworkers and their communities were held to be a critical element in the study.

Therefore, researchers from Khulumani Support Group were brought in to conduct focus group discussions with members of this target population. Khulumani Support group is a civil society organisation with a broad membership base including people both working in the platinum mines and groups in the labour sending areas. Khulumani's prior work included workshops with widows of those killed at Marikana in August 2012, and extensive meetings and projects with ex-mineworkers and mineworker families in the Eastern Cape.

Khulumani researchers organised series of seven focus groups, four in the platinum belt, and three amongst labour-sending communities in the Eastern Cape. The approach was to target groups taken from differing identified segments within the broad category of mine workers and communities whose lives were shaped by the new platinum mines. The intent was to compile a range of narratives exploring experiences and perceptions of workers and workers' communities today; and to collate participants' perspectives, hopes and visions, and their own proposals for government policy and intervention.

B. Study Methodology and Practice

Existing research in this area

There has been fairly extensive research and analysis on structures and conditions facing South African mineworkers under apartheid. This informed changes in labour law and regulatory mechanisms introduced after 1994. Yet there has been surprisingly little research on the impact on lived experience of these post-apartheid changes over the last twenty years.

After the 2012 Marikana massacre, and the subsequent Platinum Belt strikes, several studies have begun to look into these questions. These included targeted theses on particular aspects of mineworkers's lives, as well studies within the TIPS project that generated the research reported on here. These studies have played a critical role in shaping the focus group discussions (see appendix A).

In the process of designing focus group discussions and reflecting on their outcomes, we also identified a wealth of contemporary sources which speak to, and commonly reinforce, the narrative participants tell. These tend to be news reports (especially around service delivery protests, which are rife in the areas around the platinum mines); NGO reports and advocacy, and occasionally reports by the mines themselves; several are inputs by lawyers where matters have gone to court. Most of these records have only entered the public view since the Marikana massacre.

In compiling this final report, we include this material as background and support to statements made in the focus groups.

Focus groups within a highly segmented and under-researched population:

Early in the process, it was recognised that perhaps the greatest roadblock to the research would likely come from the highly varied nature of the target population, with divisions entrenched through language, gender, home area, affiliation (political and trade union), amongst other factors; with little means to judge how representative a segment might be of the whole. In depth responses from sample segments of the target population might not necessarily apply to other sub-groups located across one or more of these divides.

The approach used here has been to conduct in depth qualitative research using focus groups chosen to reflect clearly defined segments. From this, we hoped to identify similarities and differences in responses to key questions; which would in turn provide a broad map of the terrain. In collating the discussions, we try to identify similar statements that mineworkers and mine-affected communities make across the board; this iteration from different segments provides validation that the statements reflect actual experience and belief.

This iteration, in turn, allows construction of a meta-narrative with a fair degree of confidence.

Participatory Action Research methodology:

Focus group discussions were based upon pioneering Participatory Action Research techniques used by Khulumani in workshopping with community support groups in traumatised communities.

KSG's Participatory Action Research method is based on approaches developed by Paulo Freire (Education for Liberation). Freire's methodologies build upon the assumption that participants themselves hold the deepest reservoir of experience, information and knowledge about their own lives and ideas; research into this can best happen through participatory and collective processes in a place which participants accept as safe and supportive for speaking out. The process makes use of creative exploration by participants of their experiences and perceptions (including using art-making and theatre techniques as well as collective discussion), and uses intensive discussion between participants in the group to build a collective awareness and explore and understand their own circumstances.

This methodology requires facilitators to construct a plan that describes areas of information to be explored with each group; then to direct discussion to ensure responses cover these areas. (Description of focus groups and plans used for the KSG Platinum project discussions are attached as appendix A)

All group work was conducted in language of choice of group and/or participants, using audio and/or video recording to ensure consistency and accuracy of reporting (through translation and transcription) if a group agreed to digital recording. Where digital recording could not be used, facilitators kept extensive notes on discussion (as close to verbatim as possible).

Follow-up and feedback: The researchers planned to have "feedback" meetings with focus groups when the research nears completion. As funds are not available within the research budget for this, we expect to ensure feedback occurs through two

on-going processes: first, by identifying a local group leader to whom we can send written reports, who can give feedback to group on research conclusions, and who will collate and forward significant responses to research outcomes; and second, through follow-up meetings in the course of ongoing Khulumani organisational work.

Financial Dairies/Questionnaires: The research project also designed financial dairies/questionnaires for participants to fill out, in order to provide a survey of income and expenditure in the daily lives of mineworkers and mineworker communities. These were given to the groups in the Platinum Belt; results from three of the four groups are summarized in Appendix A. (The fourth group did not have time to complete the dairies during the focus group session, and has agreed to return them to facilitators; this is still outstanding.) As the summarized results indicate, this process was only partially successful. Some workers seemed uncomfortable revealing low income and financial difficulties; several commented (in the group discussions) that they were “ashamed” of earning so little; and were unwilling to compare their wages with others. Others with lower literacy may have found the form itself difficult to complete.

For the Eastern Cape groups, we revised the financial diary/questionnaires to fit the differing circumstances; however, we decided not ask participants to complete them. Most of the participants were not literate or even fluent in English, and could only have filled in the forms with assistance (the assistance would have to be given by a person literate in English but fluent in Xhosa; we did not have personnel on the project to do this). Moreover, the focus discussions (which did cover the issues in the questionnaires) indicated that most participants did not have a reliable cash income – the two sources of income for families that were commonly described were cash sent home from the family member on the mines, and pensions and benefits (mostly social welfare grants; the persistent failure to receive benefits from mining companies constitutes one of the outcomes of the research). Given erratic and sparse income, most participants spent money as it came in, without tracking expenditure. Thus, it seemed unlikely that we would get reliable results on the financial dairies covering estimated cash income and expenditure.

Issues encountered in research process

a. Addressing, and countering hostility, distrust, and embedded assumptions by the target population about research intentions and outcomes

The research began in the platinum belt, in an area riven by a long and violent strike in 2014, and frequent community-based service delivery protests which erupted into violence – as well as the conflicts at Lonmin that resulted in the Marikana killings several years previous. Unavoidably, mineworkers – our target population – harboured doubts and at times had previous difficult experiences with people attempting to find out their opinions and positions. Researchers and reporters were believed to be potential spies for the opposition. Activists on different sides of the strike and conflict had been attacked and even killed.

An Interim Report on the focus group near Bleskop (PB4) describes in some detail the problems encountered during this research:

“The focus group asked us to spell out what the research was for, our organisational links, our links to government, unions, and political parties; who we would report to (use of information gathered); and intended outcomes. We provided lengthy explanations of Khulumani as an NGO, the purpose of the research: that it was ultimately funded by government, that the intention was to gather an understanding of workers’ views, concerns,

problems and experiences as mineworkers on the platinum belt, ultimately to inform policy decisions. After asking us to wait outside while they decided whether to go forward, we were told that participants had immense distrust of anything linked to government, but were willing to participate in the focus group in the hopes that their voices would indeed be heard. “

We were also told that several other workers had asked senior members of their union if they should attend; they were told not to do so. However, the person who told us this was himself a shop-steward in that union; and helped organise participation in the focus group.

While agreeing to go ahead with the focus group, participants asked that we did not take video, as they were concerned about being identified and possibly targeted; but they agreed we could use the voice recorder on the video to record the discussion for purposes of compiling the report. This was done. At the end of the group, they said they would like to have a group photo, although two people said they did not want their faces shown. We also said during the introductory discussion that if they preferred we would not put into reports names and ID numbers, so that they could remain anonymous if they wished. (Moreover, in this report, where a quote comes from a participant who asked not to be identified, we indicate only the focus group where the statement was made, and not the individual.)

They emphasised that they had little or no trust in government or in political processes, and that they knew of cases where people were misquoted and misrepresented to advance different purposes.

Facilitators responded that our intention was to put on record their perspectives, and to look at what they saw as workable solutions to the problems they encountered. We are committed to showing participants the outcomes of the research, and correcting any errors they may identify.

This left however one major gap which we made a decision not to pursue: we did not follow up discussion or comments on workers' perceptions of and affiliations to rival unions. It was felt this might reopen issues of distrust.

b. Available written material often gives unchallenged acceptance to mine company and government assertions about what is happening to workers

Much of the available writing on this area (academic, government and mine-sponsored research) does not appear to address issues facing mine-workers and mine-affected communities today, nor does it attempt to explore lived experience and perceptions of these groups. Often, mineworkers find that when they deny broad claims made in such research, their comments are ignored, or dismissed as ignorance, preconception or untruth.

c. Logistic problems in completing planned research:

The facilitation planning did not fully appreciate the logistic problems rife in mine-worker communities, both in platinum belt and Eastern Cape). Exceedingly bad roads in bad weather led to time constraints on workshops, and in one case failure to complete a planned focus group. (The fourth research group in the Eastern Cape, organised for a village outside of Ngcobo, was cancelled due to impassible roads. Next time researchers in this area should consider hiring a four wheel drive vehicle). In the Eastern Cape, only one location had access to electricity (and that was not in the building used for the meeting), so that we were unable to video focus groups. The three locations for focus



Picture: family members at home in village outside Ncgobo, Eastern Cape, May 2015

groups in the labour sending areas were all in deep rural area; not one had running water; all used pit latrines; and all were accessible only by dirt roads.

d. Discussing gender:

Originally we planned to do separate focus groups comprising only women in both components of the study (in the platinum belt and in the Eastern Cape).

In the platinum belt, two of the groups were men workers only, and one was made up of women workers only. The third, representing communities adjacent to and affected by the mines, was mixed gender.

For reasons of time and logistics, we were unable to carry out the plan of a separate workshop looking at women's experiences in the labour sending area. However, it was striking that all of the LSA groups, men and women seated themselves in strict gender divisions. For the most part, men participants spoke after and with men, and women spoke after and with women. As facilitators we tried to ensure that both sectors within the group were able to address the issues raised. At the end of these groups, participants noted that it was the first time that men and women in this community had discussed the impact of migrant labour and mining on their lives; and that this was of great advantage to identifying and addressing the problems.

e. focus groups as advocates for workers and mining communities

This research process clearly aligns researchers with participants. Our intention is to report on participants' needs and perceptions and experiences. We have deliberately not tried to "balance" these perspectives by seeking comment from others outside the target population, who might well reflect different intent and conclusions. Outcomes reflected here speak, as clearly as possible, the truth of the people who participated in the focus groups: that has its own integrity.

"By the end of the meeting, participants agreed that the group discussion had indeed been valuable for them; that they hope to continue contact and will be available for follow-up in future." (PB4 Interim Report)

C. Composition and content of focus groups

This study reports on discussions involving 101 participants comprising mineworkers, ex-mineworkers, their families and affected communities, whose lives have been shaped by South Africa's platinum mines. The discussions were held between November 2014 and June 2015, within seven focus groups, four in the Platinum Belt, and three in the Eastern Cape (labour sending area).

Part I: Platinum belt groups - 4 focus groups held from November 2014 to February 2015

Platinum Belt Group 1 (PB1): Rustenburg; MACUA offices, 28 November 2014; 11 participants

Participants' shared characteristics ("segment description"): all born and brought up in "mine-affected communities" in Bojanala; all now resident with family members in Bojanala; five are now employed, or have been employed, at the platinum mines.

Given time constraints, and because less than half this group's participants are currently employed in the mines, as well as their concern that "local" Bojanala residents were consistently side-lined from work on the mines, we did not seek detailed responses on issues of worker-management or worker-supervisor relations.

Platinum Belt Group 2 (PB2): MooiMooi, location in a hotel owned by Lonmin used to house trainees, 29 November 2014; 17 participants, all widows of Marikana massacre now working at Lonmin

Participants' shared characteristics ("segment description"): all participants in this group are women; they are family members of those killed in the Marikana Massacre, who have been employed by Lonmin following the closure of the Marikana Commission of Enquiry. All had been residents in "labour sending areas" with husbands who were migrants to the platinum mines, generally perceived as the classic "oscillating migrant

Picture: Informal settlement for mineworkers, Bleskop, near Marikana



labour” pattern. The areas they came from were: mostly Eastern Cape (rural), 4 from Lesotho, 1 Venda, 1 Swaziland.

Employing family members of the deceased has become common practice by Lonmin and other mines, as support offered to those whose bread-earners have been killed while working at the mine (we are informed this practice has been used for workers killed in accidents and from murder; offering this to the massacre families follows that established pattern). This case seems unusual primarily in that jobs were offered equally or even primarily to women family members (two of the families sent men to take up jobs, but they were not part of this focus group).

Platinum Belt Group 3 (PB3): Mmakou (near Brits); 5 men who worked at Xstrata, 14 December 2014

Participants’ shared characteristics (“segment description”): 5 men; three from the planned group of contract workers who had employed at Xstrata Elands mine as it expanded operations; one who is a shopsteward at the Elands mine after working for 16 years in the Brits area, first at Herculite Ferrochrome, then at with Xstrata; and one resident of Mmakau (mine affected community) who has not been able to find employment on the mines. Of these five, three came originally from Venda (and saw that as “home”), while one was born in Taung, but had been brought up in Mmakau, and one was from the Brits area.

This focus group was originally planned to consist of short-term contract workers from Venda previously employed by sub-contractors to work at Xstrata mine near Brits, focussing on specific issues around the impact of labour brokering; perceptions of recruitment process and the effect of this on employment; relations of sub-contracted workers to management and supervisory structures; perceptions of on-going discrimination, particularly racism/ethnicity experienced. These workers elected to continue to live on the platinum belt at the termination of their contracts, in the expectation of further work in the mines.

Platinum Belt Group 4 (PB4): 14 working miners, an apostolic church in Bleskop informal settlement; Sunday 1 Feb 2015

Participants’ shared characteristics (“segment description”): This focus group consisted of 14 mineworkers organised through a contact who is an RDO at Lonmin’s Karee mine; the men (all of group are male) are currently employed at Glencore, Bleskop, Acquarius and Lonmin mines (all surrounding Marikana), as semi-skilled and skilled workers on underground shifts. Some participants came to the focus group from the (Sunday) church service; several came after completing their early morning shift.

Part II: Eastern Cape (LSA) groups: 3 groups held from 26- 4 June, 2015

Labour Sending Area Group 1 (LSA1): Mangolong village about 20 km outside Matateile; venue church hall; later continued with group 2 due to time constraints; 1 June 2015; 14 participants

Labour Sending Area Group 2 (LSA2): Mangolong village about 20 km outside Matateile; later continued with group 2 due to time constraints; 2 June 2015; combined group 18 participants

Segment description: People located between Mt Frere and Matateile whose lives

were structured and impacted by migrant labour to the mines, and especially the platinum mines. LSA Groups 1 and 2 aimed to include men who worked as migrant labour to the mines (or had worked as migrant labour), on the one hand; but also women and family members whose lives were structured around migrant labour, but who continued to reside in the labour sending areas.

Labour Sending Area Group 3 (LSA3): Indwe: 36 participants as members of Khulumani branch in Indwe. 3 June 2015

Segment description: When we requested the Khulumani branch organisers to select 12 people for the focus group who would be “people whose lives were significantly affected by migrant labour to the mines, especially platinum mines”, members decided that all branch members were potential target participants; it would be unfair to take only a limited number for this research. It was therefore agreed that all of those who fit the target description would participate in the group discussion. The group consisted of about half men and half women.

Picture: road to village outside Ncgobo, Eastern Cape, May 2015



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a report on research conducted by Khulumani Support Group with mineworkers and mineworker families, in the Platinum Belt and Eastern Cape, between December 2014 and June 2015

