

In response to Stephan Hofstatter's article 'Limpopo's Platinum rush', published in The Weekender 8-9 November 2008, The Bench Marks Foundation welcomes the findings.

Hofstatter's article echoes our findings in Policy Gap 2, a study on Platinum, Gold, Uranium and Coal mining in South Africa, which was realised in June this year. The Policy Gap 2 revealed that the South African government is keen on creating a black middle class at any cost. This is seen as the cornerstone of realising the ANC's vision of a national democratic society.

There is a constant stream of cases exposed in the media where senior ANC officials - in political office, the civil service and private sector - benefit from 'affirmative procurement'.

Policy Gap 2 revealed that Gabriel Mokgoko, Chairperson of the Conservation Sub - Committee of the North West Parks and Tourism Board (NWPTB) amongst many other government officials and senior political figures, seems to have many conflicting interests. Mokgoko serves on the North West Tourism and is also on the board of a mining company and is a close family associate of Patrice Motsepe, the CEO of African Rainbow Minerals.

The same report also refers to the activities of Charles Ndabeni, former CEO of North West Parks and Tourism seems to have had conflicting mining and conservation interests while occupying this post in that province. It is disturbing that many government officials, particularly in mining provinces, seem to be using their privileged positions and access to information to enrich themselves instead of serving the people.

It is clear that the corporates have their eyes firmly set on conservation and heritage and conservation areas and a breakthrough in the North West Province would give them a platform into similar areas in other provinces, including Limpopo. This is a matter of grave concern.

Communities need to be given a direct stake in the benefits of mining, and move away from the enrichment of a few individuals. Policy Gap 2, suggests that to truly reap the rewards of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) in the extractive/mining industry, mining companies need to develop a more inclusive approach to BEE.

Communities are crying out for a share through BEE structures but are sidelined by the 'juniors' phenomenon which has opened up opportunities to only a handful of BEE qualifiers; thereby sidelining communities whose gain is through a few well structured Corporate Social Responsibility programmes by some companies.

John Capel, Chief Executive Officer, Bench Marks Foundation.