



Media statement by the Bench Marks Foundation

Marikana: Three years on and people are still shafted

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

As mining companies look at downsizing their operations and retrenching staff due to weak commodity prices, declining demand and a sliding rand, it is important that companies do not forget how fragile mining communities are, particularly those in the North West Province of South Africa, says the Bench Marks Foundation.

“Three years ago we witnessed a slaughter that we hope will never again be repeated,” says Executive Director for the Bench Marks Foundation, John Capel.

“To date, nothing has really come from the Marikana Commission of Inquiry’s investigations into the events that took place from Saturday 11 August to Thursday 16 August 2012, which led to 44 deaths, 70 persons injured and more than 250 people being arrested, besides fingers that have been pointed and various recommendations made.

“No one, beside those who lost their lives and their widows and orphans, have paid and are paying the price from that fateful day.

“There have been no noticeable upgrades to the material conditions surrounding the mines, which was one of the catalysts for the strike that year, and I doubt that this will happen now that these companies are looking at closure and retrenchments and are crying that profits are not as high as it used to be”.

Capel says that people in these communities are still battling to put their lives together.

“They are still hurting and still battling to survive. In addition, a compensation fund has not been established, which should have been done a long time ago.

It’s sad that the only way that these people feel they can get justice or compensation is through civil claims against the police”.

Says Capel: “The pain they are experiencing is extended to all mining communities. For too long the companies have been raking in profits and the miners and communities have been swept to the side, living on the crumbs. And now, they have impending unemployment added to the mix.

“Tensions are palpable. Companies must learn that they cannot treat people as mere commodities and they must realise that South Africa is still very fragile.

“We cannot cope with any further job losses. One job lost means 12 dependents suffer and indirectly many other jobs relying on mine workers’ wages are lost too.

“It’s at times like this that companies show their true colours. They talk about being socially responsible but when the push comes to the shove, how they handle the situation reveals everything.

“We must learn from Marikana. We must never forget. We need to remember that the events that occurred three years ago, was ultimately about a living wage and human dignity. We cannot let this happen again!”

The Bench Marks Foundation released a report, Policy Gap 6, on the situation in the North West Province in July 2012, days before the Marikana massacre. It later released another report called Policy Gap 7: “Lonmin, Coping with

Unsustainability” in October 2013 which looked at the company’s reporting of itself over a period of ten years in its Corporate Social Development Reports. The latter found broken promises, outright misleading statements, and ultimately showed reporting for what it is: pure corporate propaganda.

Bishop Seoka addressed workers during the strike and played a large role in ending the strike.

For more information on the Bench Marks Foundation, and to read their many reports, go to www.bench-marks.org.za.

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About Bench Marks Foundation:

Bench Marks Foundation is an independent non-governmental organisation mandated by churches to monitor the practices of multi-national corporations to

- ensure they respect human rights;
- protect the environment;
- ensure that profit-making is not done at the expense of other interest groups; and
- ensure that those most negatively impacted upon are heard, protected and accommodated within the business plans of the corporations.

The Foundation was launched by the Rt Rev Dr Jo Seoka who chairs the organisation and by member churches of the SACC in 2001.

Bench Marks Foundation Contact:
Mr John Capel, Executive Director 011 832 1743 or 082 870 8861 Email: jcapel@eject.co.za
Media contact:
Chantal Meugens 083 676 2294 Email: Chantal@quo-vadis.co.za