



groundWork

Environmental justice action

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**Ms. Sbongile Bambisa
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Date: 13/April/2018

Dear Madams

**RE: COMMENTS FROM GROUNDWORK ON THE DRAFT
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT AND THE DRAFT
ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME FOR THE PROPOSED
UMSIMBITHI EMAKHAZENI MINING PROJECT.**

1. Employment opportunities:

- With reference to p15 of your DEIAR, “**the project could employ up to approximately 500 people, with the intention that the majority of labour be sourced from the ELM and the surrounding areas, depending on skills requirements and local availability.**”
- Your project implies that that it will benefit the local community, but we are concerned that this will not be the case. This concern rises from the fact that your document does not contain any plan to ensure that the local people will be employed and will benefit from your project. We believe a proper

Trustees: Thuli Makama, Joy Kistnasamy, Farid Esack, Patrick Kulati, Sandile Ndawonde, Richard Lyster, Jon White.



plan should be developed, one that bears in mind, the skills of the local community. Doing this will show that this is just not one of those coal projects making empty promises with the aim of getting support from the local community. You need to develop a skill assessment plan, a skill development plan and implementation plan in order to ensure that the local community is going to be employable in your project. This is one of the misleading promises to the poor to get their buy-in and often leave them frustrated.

2. Cross boundary pollution:

- ELM is situated near the High Priority Area of the Highveld, declared by the Department of Environmental Affairs. The current problem in the Priority Area is the increasing high level of pollution from coal industries. Your project is going to mine thermal coal which is highly toxic as it contains heavy metal and toxic substances. This will, undoubtedly, pollute the environment, including; water source, create toxic dust and the health of the surrounding people. Our concern is that, since pollution has no boundary and can travel far, your pollution will eventually contribute to the already existing pollution problem in the priority area, because of its proximity to your location. The fact that three of your projects will be underground coal mining, which can travel miles away and affect people when blasting. How do you intend on dealing with that? It is also not clear in your document whether or not you have allocated funds to compensate any potential loss or damage to houses caused as a result of your blasting. Our experience with working with communities has shown us that operations like yours often lead to people's homes cracking and collapsing as a result of the blasting.



3. Acid Mine Drainage and water issues:

- It also our concern that both your open cast and underground operations will cause acid mine drainage which will affect underground water quality in the area.
- You have mentioned in your document that you will use water from boreholes. However, your document does not mentioned the type of water source the local community is using and if there is any potential impact on their water source, in a form of pollution and water scarcity. We understand that it is common for your types of coal projects to use large amount of water when washing coal.

Another problem is, you mentioned the acid mine drainage, but we need a clear mitigating plan, even if it means building a water treatment plant to deal with AMD. Investigating water supply options is not enough as they will source some of their water from the ELM.

- Is there any research done to investigate if there is sufficient water available for both your project and local community, considering the life span of your project?

NB: This needs to be addressed it is of utmost importance due to water scarcity faced by our country.

4. Pollution on the agricultural produce:

- The area is mainly zoned agricultural, greenfield, how will high levels of dust affect the current crop yield.



- How are you going to supplement the loss of production and food as this forms part of staple diets, mainly maize, potatoes and beans found around the area.
- The loss of land capability in agricultural process, what are the plans to address that.

5. Failure to disclose surrounding settlement:

- Households are not mentioned, do you have any specific resettlement plans that will address the needs of the current households, bear in mind that most of the community members are subsistence farmers. How will you compensate people for their loss of livelihood?
Will you buy them land which will be fully owned by the occupants without any further possibility of being resettled again?

6. Land under land claim:

- We are aware that the proposed mining area is part of a land claim. We would like to know who are the claimants? And we want to know if this proposed mine will threaten their rights to this land? (We can talk about alternative land use if the claimants decide on how they want to use land)

7. Air pollution control:

The mine's operation will contribute to increased levels of P.M 2.5 and 10. How do you intend to manage the air quality levels and insure that the air remains in good quality and that the health of people is not threatened by pollution. Do you intend on conducting a study to understand the health of nearby households and commit



to annual monitoring? We believe that this monitoring and research process should be at your expense, as well as the correcting of any health or air quality wrongs created by your operations.

8. Pollution from your vehicle contributing to climate change and dust pollution:

- The number of vehicles in the operations will contribute to climate change. Do you have any specific plans to deal with that?
- The mine has both the railway and N4 next to it:
 - Do you intend on ensuring that there are no road closures during blasting, as this will affect how people work around the area?
 - Are you going to pay for the damaged caused by blasting in all the adjacent infrastructure, including households in the vicinity of your operations?
 - Your document needs to point out alternative land use and how it addresses the need of the people and the sustainable jobs it provides.
- **Incomplete EIA:**
 - In your document you have indicated that, "As the proposed eMakhzeni Project is still in the planning phase, many of the parameters required for the modelling were unavailable." This illustrates that the EIA is lacking and incomplete. This raises a big concern and needs to be addressed as it is of utmost importance.

Kindly ensure that these comments are addressed adequately and keep us updated on the progress of this matter.



We also requested that you send us the final EIA document for us to comment.

We want to thank you.

Yours faithfully

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