

# the Journalist

CONTEXT MATTERS

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Monday 11 August 2014

**ATTENTION**

AYANDA SHEZI

DEPARTMENT OF MINERAL RESOURCES

SA GOVERNMENT

Hello,

Re: Feature Article for The Journalist

I am the Editor of an online media resource called The Journalist ( [www.thejournalist.org.za](http://www.thejournalist.org.za) ). To mark the second anniversary of the Marikana tragedy in August 2012 we are running in-depth interviews with Benchmarks Senior Researcher, David van Wyk, and Benchmarks Monitor Chris Molebatsi.

They raise several issues that require response from Government. The deadline for this piece is close of business Tuesday August 12<sup>th</sup>. Here follows the main points being made by Van Wyk and Molebatsi:

1. Workers wounded in the conflict subsequently lost their jobs and/or were not adequately compensated. Mr Molebatsi says since the tragedy there have been several suicides. What is government's response
2. Both men claim there has been no counselling for workers' children who experienced the violence and that orphans have not been taken care of. Please comment on the situation of the orphans and traumatised children
3. Schools and facilities in the area are very congested because of the rapid growth in the local population in recent years. What can be done to relieve the congestion on community facilities in general?
4. They say nothing or very little has been done for the bereaved of the Marikana tragedy. The women at the Farlam Commission have said they live in fancy hotels and eat grand food while back home their children are starving. Is government concerned about this situation and if so what can be done?

5. Facilities are under great strain as more and more migrant workers bring their families to Marikana. The Clinic cannot cope with demands and nothing is being done to supplement the existing health care facilities. Pollution and respiratory problems are serious issues. Another health problem is the illness because of the treated sewage water used underground. Is government putting pressure on mining companies to clean up their act or helping them to address these problems
6. Mr Molebatsi says that as a Monitor and Researcher he has spoken with bereaved women who are prepared to come and work on the mines. Van Wyk claims mining conditions are not conducive to the inclusion of women in the workforce. Why is pressure not exerted on companies to ensure a safe working environment for women underground
7. After the Platinum strike and the increases, how do the wages of ordinary workers in South African mines now compare with those on mines elsewhere in the world
8. Despite a strike that lasted almost half a year there was hardly any increase in the platinum price (compared with the sharp rise in response to Eskom blackouts in 2008). Van Wyk says this points to a glut or stockpiling. Comment please
9. Van Wyk says that while nationalisation might not be an option, Benchmarks has looked at a "centralised buying agency" that could alleviate some of the problems. Please comment
10. Zimbabwe and SA control almost 90% of the world's Platinum. Van Wyk says this means our government could use this muscle to regulate the industry, dictate prices (this has been done before historically), slow down production and minimise social impact. Please comment
11. Both men say the conflict is far from over and that there is a real threat of future violence because of the overall destabilising effect of mining operations on the community. Says Molebatsi: "We say there needs to be change but nobody cares to listen. There are people who have the power to make changes but there are those who benefit from the death of people. It is very painful. We are talking about families.. women and children." Please comment

I will be in touch on Tuesday.

Sincerely,

Sylvia Vollenhoven

Editor

The Journalist

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