
Professor Sufian Hemed Bukurura
Centre for Civil Society
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Howard College Campus
Durban

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Strategic Meeting: The Context

Preliminary Observations

1. Mining is one among several historical exploitative strategies (others include: slavery, colonialism, biopiracy, *et al*)
2. All forms of suffering lead to struggle: suffering experienced by communities, through mining activities, definitely leads to hard, blood, long & bitter struggle (but not impossible to win, anti-slavery; anti-colonialism, anti-apartheid *et al*). The struggle (like previous ones cannot be fought alone)
3. Unity/Divisions will arise: Power struggle leads to divisions (need to look for common issues that unite & bring different factions together)

Four general points

1. Clarity on the problem of exploitation & suffering
 2. Clarity on the causes of suffering
 3. Sufficient knowledge of who are behind both the problem and causes of suffering
 4. Multi-dimensional contestable strategies
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Elaboration

1. Exploitation & Suffering (local, regional & global)
 - ❑ Natural resources are embedded in the land (nature) and their extraction is associated with wealth. Yet, the people from whose lands natural resources are extracted, remain poor and suffer in the process of extracting wealth (living as besieged communities) .
 - ❑ What happened to the principle of greatest happiness for the greatest number? What emerges is greatest happiness of the very few but suffering of the greatest many.
 - ❑ Suffering manifests itself in many ways including destruction and/or loss of livelihoods & destruction of nature (environment) from which most of humanity derive its daily subsistence.
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Exploitation & Suffering cont..

- ❑ Sad part of this suffering is that it seems to follow the old patterns (experienced under colonialism & apartheid, *et al*), local collaborators
 - ❑ Systemic patterns emerge all over mining takes place, SA, Malawi, Angola, Tanzania, DRC, Namibia, Zambia, Liberia, *et al* (ie what is taking place in one mine replicates in other mines across the continent & globally, therefore not exceptional).
 - ❑ Common problems deserve common approach and action
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2. Causes of Exploitation & Suffering

- ❑ Dominant (neo-liberal) economic system based on non stop global profit making is in many ways associated with global extravagant insatiable consumption (*affluenza*).
- ❑ This system encourages individualism, greed & competition & destroys community ethos (and associated common ownership), vividly captured by the Motsepe Question: who do you work for?
- ❑ Man-eat-man (man eat a lot while others not only starve but also not allowed to eat even what was available to them by nature, the Commons, eg water, air, food & fruits)

3. Who are involved in exploitation & consequently causing suffering (culprits)

- In different degrees, the following institutions & bodies were identified:
 1. Multinational Mining Corporations (direct culprits)
 2. State (as self proclaimed custodian) and main regulating body (GM departments of AngloPlat)
 3. Elected Representatives/Legislature (whose principle business it is to hold state accountable, see NDI Report 2007 Legislature & extractive industries)
 4. World financial institutions (eg World Bank, IMF, WTO) that pressurise governments into taking certain policy directions and give biased/distorted advice

Culprits cont..

5. Some traditional leaders (succumb to pressure and/or vulnerable to intimidation)
6. Police: taking sides by assisting or working for power-holders (and harass & brutalising legitimate complaints and community)
7. “Blind” consumerism of certain commodities globally (acquiescence with, feed into demands for certain goods and services) that are associated with destruction of livelihoods

4. Multi-dimensional strategic directions

Contentious aspect of the workshop

- Ranging from tough and radical to soft approaches with realistic/practical in between
- Many dimensions (but emphasis on two)
 - i) International and Regional Solidarity: because of the patterns of exploitation & suffering, the struggle (like other historical struggles) extends beyond directly affected communities & within national borders. Linking mining-associated suffering to broader social & regional and global justice struggles (eg keep oil in the soil, Another World is Possible *et al*),

Strategies cont...

ii) Domestic solidarity dimensions

- ❑ Political (links with others, eg labour movements)
 - ❑ Communal action (other issue based struggles)
 - ❑ Research & documentation of what is happening
 - ❑ Legal (in search for global legal support, eg legal aid, *et al*),
 - ❑ Identifying new and utilising existing links with progressive networks and institutions, eg ActionAid, NiZa, OSISA, NDI, et al
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Thanks for listening!

