

# Mining Phakisa is fundamentally flawed

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Phakisa, from the Sesotho word meaning "hurry up" has been touted by government as the silver bullet that would "fast track the implementation of solutions on critical development issues".

Few would argue against the need for urgent solutions to the myriad of historical and contemporarily self-inflicted developmental challenges.

In a meeting held between the Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME), Mining Affected Communities United in Action (MACUA) and ActionAid South Africa (AASA) recently, to consider how communities could participate in the Phakisa project, the DPME reiterated that the process was aimed at bringing together an *"alliance of the willing"* to focus on the *"implementation"* of *"confident projects"*, that were *"constructive, pragmatic and viable"*.

To their credit, the Phakisa planning team admitted that they were faced with a tough challenge, in that, besides the historical antagonisms between the key stakeholders, the process was also challenged by the intractable policy differences held by the key stakeholders.

They were however at pains to emphasise that the Phakisa process was not about policy but about processes and implementation.

It was at this point that the MACUA leadership once again confirmed the absurdity, of a sector of powerful players, who ignore the insights and inputs of communities at the peril of inclusive and sustainable solutions.

Matthews Hlabane, a MACUA leader from Mpumalanga, immediately pointed out to the DPME team that despite the rhetorical claims that mining affected communities are stakeholders, "they are a stakeholder without a stake, they are not stakeholders, they are victims".

This crucial difference in emphasis, sits at the heart of the brewing discontent among mining affected communities and as Meshack Mbangula, National Coordinator for MACUA pointed out, "communities are angry, are ready to explode and government ignores communities at the cost of greater social conflict."

MACUA leaders questioned the intentions of Phakisa and pointed out that mining affected communities have only experienced the worst effects of mining and that this unholy haste to "hurry up" - phakisa, without broader and proper consultation could only really mean that the current unholy alliance of government, business and labour, would seek to expedite the continued exclusion, pollution and environmental destruction that mining has come to symbolise.

Instead, they argued that, considering the bloody, destructive and contentious nature of mining in South Africa it would be wise to instead engage in Operation Bhekisisa – look closely.

What the industry needed was a considered, mature and inclusive discussion on what the real issues are that face South Africa, and through such deliberations to reach lasting and sustainable solutions.

The One Million Climate jobs campaign, which shows that it would be possible to create one million jobs, while greening our environment and rehabilitating the worst excesses of mining environmental destruction, was highlighted as a case in point.

It was pointed out to the DPME, that MACUA, as part of the One Million Climate Jobs Campaign, delivered over 100 000 signatures to the DPME calling on them to include the campaign in its planning. The campaign has yet to receive a response from the department.

It is ironic then that the DPME, while acknowledging that the key stakeholders in the sector are not only antagonistic but deeply entrenched in their own positions, that the DPME itself seem unwilling to move beyond its scripted path to engage in real conversations about possible solutions.

But to be fair, the Planning Commission of Phakisa are merely the functionaries who are trying to navigate a path that could bring together an “alliance of the willing” and in their own words, “break the paralysis” facing the sector.

Given the nature of the engagements with Operation Phakisa to date, it would be fair to say that governments (Department of Mineral Resources`) own intransigence and its continued refusal to acknowledge, let alone meet with mining affected communities, remains the biggest obstacle to inclusive solutions to the industry.

The failure to build inclusive platforms and inclusive solutions is what allows business to hold the country to ransom and allows business leaders to issue demands that if they are “not satisfied with the way the Phakisa goes then we will withdraw our delegation after 4 days”. Thus signalling to the Phakisa team and to the rest of society, that you will do it our way, or we take the highway.

Government and Business have to understand that any quick fix, fast tracked solutions, are ultimately doomed to fail and that the only “viable, constructive and pragmatic” way forward, is an inclusive one.

Bring on Operation Bhekisisa.

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