

Lack of mining jobs spurs protest in Kagiso

By [Chris Gili](#)

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On Monday, 7 August, Kagiso on the West Rand came to a standstill when hundreds of people took to the streets in protest over unemployment and illegal mining in the area. Their anger was directed at the Pan African Resources mining company and the Mogale City Local Municipality.



Hundreds of residents of Kagiso on the West Rand protested over unemployment and illegal mining at an old mine recently acquired by Pan African Resources. Source: Chris Gili/GroundUp

Protesters blocked roads with burning tyres from 3am. Learners missed school and many people could not go to work.

Police used stun grenades and rubber bullets to disperse the protesters.

Gauteng police spokesperson Mavela Masondo confirmed that two arrests were made for public violence, and the suspects appeared in court on Tuesday.

In August 2022, Kagiso residents also protested about illegal mining.

Activist Beauty Nyandeni said the community was promised jobs.

“They started operating the mine last year without finishing the consultation process. We were excluded. That’s when it became a problem for us. We are feeling robbed. And the worst part is that the company doesn’t want to speak to us ... They just interdicted us,” said Nyandeni.

Illegal mining also a concern

Community leader Karabo Yumba said illegal mining was also a concern.

“Mintails just ran away and left the mines unguarded, and this created space for the illegal miners,” said Yumba.

He said Pan African Resources had bought the Mintails mine and it had engaged with the community late last year, saying it would rehabilitate the land.

Yumba said they felt duped by Pan African Resources.

“They are continuing from where Mintails left off ... We live across from these mine dumps. When the wind blows, the dust affects our health; people here are sick. We want them to stop operations and come meet with us and hear our demands.”

“My grandfather worked in that mine, my father also worked there. We also want to benefit ... We want jobs too, and for this community to have a share,” said Yumba.



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More employment to come as project develops

But Hethen Hira, the head of investor relations for Pan African Resources, said the company had employed a high percentage of locals and where skills were not available, they sourced workers from elsewhere.

“There will be more people employed and this will be in stages as the project develops – we cannot employ everyone we require upfront.

“Construction will take place over 12 to 18 months. In that time we will spend around R2.5bn on buying equipment and construction and concurrent rehabilitation ... The life of the mine is some 20 years after construction, where there will be people employed,” said Hira.

Hira said the company would mine surface tailings deposits and fill the old mine workings with the waste material. This would prevent illegal mining activity.

“Pan African will rehabilitate the land and prevent further dust and water pollution. Returning the land to its original state will enable other economic uses, including agriculture and housing,” she said.

Hira said the mine would also include local small to medium businesses in its procurement plans.

Attempts to head off the protest

In an attempt to head off the protest, a virtual meeting was held on Sunday between Mogale City Local Municipality, Pan African Resources and community representatives. The municipality issued a statement saying a steering committee would be established to address the issues and find an “amicable solution”.

But on Monday, a statement issued by the “joint ward representatives of Mogale City” rejected the municipality’s statement as it was “not the full reflection of what was agreed”, and announced the shutdown would go ahead.

They demanded Mogale City Local Municipality and Pan African Resources declare and detail their commitments to the community, as agreed to at the meeting.

In a statement last week, Pan African Resources said it finalised the acquisition of the Mintails Project from the liquidator of Mintails Mining SA in September 2022.

“This followed a long period where the project area had been abandoned, and the plant and equipment from previous operators vandalised and stolen, resulting in significant crime, job losses and damage to the economy and environment. Communities were left in distress and pollution at unprecedented levels,” stated the company.



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'Extensive community consultations'

It said there had been “extensive community consultations during various stages of the project” as prescribed by the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE) as part of the permitting process.

It said it had “received immense support” from “who we feel are the legitimate stakeholders” in the community.

But a sod-turning ceremony on 25 July was disrupted by people who claimed they were not consulted, not offered employment opportunities, and that local businesses were excluded.

The company said it had noted that “the very same ward councillors and certain community members that were present in our community engagements ... were at the forefront of the protests and engaged with media claiming they were not consulted”.

The company said the community members and councillors were being “mobilised by individuals in the background who arrived with high-end vehicles with personalised number plates”, which they said was the equivalent of a ‘construction mafia’.

The company then identified “these individuals” and sought a court interdict.

“Protesting and disrupting activities to demand jobs and contracts up front and without following due process will not be entertained. All contracts and employment opportunities will be transparent and awarded on basis of merit,” the statement said.

The company attached a lengthy list of consultations it said it had held with the community.

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