

Community members and organisations explain why they don't want titanium mining in Xolobeni

What kind of development? A contribution from the Wild Coast to the debate on the NDP

As a contribution to the debate about the National Development Plan (NDP), we want to make public a submission (see here) to the Government of the Eastern Cape on the issue of development in the Mbizana municipality.

The submission was presented and handed over to Honourable Ms Noxolo Kiviet by iKomkhulu Mgungundlovu Tribal Authority (Coastal Section 24) with the assistance of Mr Mzamo Dlamini from the Amadiba Crisis Committee at a mass meeting 12 July 2013. Similar proposals for development also came from the inland tribal authority of Amadiba (Section 21) in a written submission that was read out loud.

The meeting was organised by the Eastern Cape Provincial Government as a part of the Outreach Programme of the Premier of the Eastern Cape Government. Honourable Ms Noxolo Kiviet was present together with other dignitaries from the province and neighbouring municipalities. What happened during the meeting has not been reported in media - or it has not been accurately or truthfully reported - despite press statements (see here - PDF) and despite the drama that played itself out during the day. Perhaps many journalists did not understand it, or what was said.

For more than 8 years now, the Australian mining company MRC and its SA subsidiary TEM recurrently have been applying for open cast mining of titanium along a 21 km long and 1.5-2 km wide strip on the beaches of the Wild Coast. The strip stretches from the Mzamba river in the north (starting 2 km from the Wild Coast Sun hotel and casino), down to the Mtentu river in the south. Precisely along that stretch, the new 80 meter wide N2 highway toll road from Durban to East London is to be moved from its inland location, according to SANRAL.

In her reply to the communities that ended the meeting, Honourable Ms Noxolo Kiviet defended the N2 project as it is. She refrained from mentioning the mining issue. She argued that the Eastern Cape government will move ahead and develop the areas where people want development and job opportunities, as the people in this area don't seem to know what they want.

However, what the people want is clear from the submission to the EC government. It contains a range of suggestions for development in our area, discussed at community meetings before The Premier's visit. It also explains why the corporate and government plans are rejected.

The meeting was attended by about 500 people. It lasted for many hours. The whole event was filmed. The presentation that accompanied the handing over of the submission from Mgungundlovu is below translated from isiMpondo. A few clarifications within square brackets have been added.

Mzamo Dlamini, Nonhle Mbuthuma and Sinegugu Zukulu (members of the Amadiba Crisis Committee)

Submission to the Eastern Cape government:

The needs of the Mgungundlovu people and requests to government for development

1. First we would like to mention the problem of electricity: There is no electricity in this area. We would like to request the government to supply us with electricity as it does to all other places. We also need electricity.

2. Second, we would like to mention the issue of access roads: (a) Our area does not have roads that connect our villages. We would like these roads go all the way to the coast and to the rest of the villages, i.e. not end at schools.

(b) We would like to request that all the old and long roads that link the coast to town are tarred. When it rains we cannot go to town. If the rain finds you while in town, this means sleeping away from home. The roads are impossible to use once they are wet. For example the road from Bulala to Mtentu and the T121 from Bizana that passes through Mbhongweni and goes down to the coast. Or the road that runs from Bizana to Makhwantini and from Bizana passing Gumzana. These roads are all very old T-roads. They are the main roads leading to the coast.

(c) The R61 road is very dangerous. It is too narrow. We want pavements for pedestrians as well as speed humps. The R61 is killing many people and school children every year, especially children from the schools near the road such as Plangeni J.S.S., Ebenezer J.S.S, and Marina J.S.S. This year alone, twenty [20] lives have been lost in accidents on this road. (d) We request street lights in the area of Lurholweni [village close to the Wild Coast Sun hotel and casino]. This place is known for its high crime rate. This is the place where people were killed and parts taken off their bodies for muti few years ago. During the time of the muti killing the government supplied floods lights to increase visibility at night. Now the lights are gone and crime rate is high again. There are lots of muggings and people's possessions are taken by tsotsies or thugs.

3. We would like government to build foot bridges across big rivers used by school kids when going to school. We have big rivers which are difficult or impossible to cross when it rains or after heavy rains. School children have to cross these rivers daily. They cannot go to school when water is very high in the rivers. Few years back, a grade 12 student from Baleni died while trying to cross flooded Mnyameni River. She was going to write her matric examination. The rivers in question are Mzamba, Mphahlana and Mnyameni.

4. Water - We fetch water where animals drink. We share with them the same rivers. In the area of Lurholweni even this is difficult. The streams from which the residents get

their water often dry up, especially in winter. This leaves them no option but to buy water from KZN in order to survive. We appeal for help from our government to solve this matter.

5(a) High Schools - We request building of more class rooms in the following high schools: Mdatya SSS, Baleni SSS and Vulindlela Com Tech. The latest proposal by the department of education to take grades 8 and 9 to high school means that more classes must be built. The number of learners will increase a lot in High Schools. The government must build more class rooms in the High Schools to accommodate all kids from junior schools.

(b) FET College - We would like to have a Further Education and Training (FET) College built here at Mgungundlovu, in the area of Mdatya. This will help a lot with students from this place finishing matric. (c) Pre-schools: We ask government to build pre-schools where our little kids can learn as is the case in other places. We want them built in all the five villages of Umgungundlovu.

6. Tele communication: We have a problem of very poor cell phone signal in our areas which makes it impossible to use our cell phones. It is very important that we are able to communicate whenever needs arise and we request for government assistance in this matter.

7. Clinics - We have no clinics at Mgungundlovu. We walk more than 10 kilometres to get to the closest clinic. It is very unfair, especially for the sick and weak, and for old people. We would like clinics built in all villages.

8. Tourism - We request from the government for assistance to build lodges at Mzamba, Mnyameni and Mtentu so that our area can be developed by tourism. We want training to be organised in how to run and manage such lodges, as well as the education and training of tour guides, catering staff, and so on.

9. Agriculture - We request for support to our agriculture, with seeds and with tools for the tilling of our gardens; tractors to increase production and make work easier, and more.

10. Youth and recreation - We also want the government to build sport centres: football grounds and places where youth can spend time. In this way they will be busy and there will be less crime.

11. Community halls -- We request for community halls to be built in all the villages where we hold our meetings. Currently we hold meetings under trees, or when it is cold or rainy we ask space from nearby schools. In this way school sessions are interrupted.

12. Housing -- We do need RDP houses, just like these that are built in other areas. 13. We would like boats launching site at the Mzamba river and the government to support small scale fishing business. 14. In our sea there are no shark nets like there are on the

Kwa Zulu Natal side. This puts swimmers here at big risk of shark attacks. We would like to be assisted with installation of shark nets in our beaches.

These are some of our proposals for development. We have also some problems facing the Umgungundlovu communities. We want The Premier and the whole government to assist us in solving the following issues.

Proposed Xolobeni titanium mining

Different groups of people in our community went to Richards Bay where this kind of mining [open cast titanium mining] is being done already. The following is what they witnessed:

1. Cracking and falling of residential houses without any compensation offered by the mining company or the government.
2. Abnormal diseases brought on human beings, some of them killing many people. Most common are chest diseases caused by dirty and dusty air.
3. Grazing fields devastated and finished off for good.
4. The contamination of water resources and air by poisonous pollution and dust coming from the mine.
5. Fruit trees that have stopped bearing fruits. Too much dust comes from the mine. The mine probably interferes with the pollination through dust pollution and through other chemical effects.
6. All in all, there is unbearable dust pollution coming from the mine. The amount of dust falling onto the human settlement is unbearable. All houses are covered in dust and the households cannot hang laundry outside.
7. Promises were never fulfilled once the mining licence was issued.
8. These people in Richards Bay would like the mine to be closed, but it is difficult now. No one listens to them.
9. When people complain to the government about the problems caused by the mine, nothing happens. If they protest or go to the mine to voice their grievances, the government sends police and the plaintiffs are locked into jail.

And here are the problems that we in the Umgungundlovu communities have experienced since the mining talks started here. The problems have been brought to us by those trying to bring mining to Xolobeni.

These people no longer respect the Komkhulu [where the community meetings of all the five Amadiba villages are held]. They do not attend the Komkhulu meetings. They hold their secret meetings over night.

Some people are being bribed to support the mining application. Attempts to get people who are against mining arrested is a common occurrence. This debate divides communities and families. There are no more cohesion and no stability in the community. It has become abundantly clear to all that this proposed mining is causing infighting in this community. There is an organisation called XOLCO (Xolobeni Empowerment Company), which claims to represent the people. No one knows how this organisation was formed and when. It was not formed at Komkhulu or in consultation with the tribal authority of this area. Locals did not participate.

The mining company says [in the previous application, defeated in 2010] that they will not move anybody. This means that people will move away themselves and at their own cost when they can no longer stand the dust. On the issue of graves, the mining company says [in the present prospecting application for the Kwanyana block - one of the five mining prospect areas along the 21 km long strip] that they had discovered three graves. We know that there are hundreds of graves in this area [Kwanyana], some of which are more than sixty years old. This qualifies them for being protected by law (The Heritage Act). We do not want our forefathers graves exhumed. It is clear that once we agree for mining to occur, we will experience similar problems as are the communities in Richards Bay. We grow food, we breed and have animals and our water comes from rivers and streams. They talk of rehabilitation after mining, but scientific studies suggest this would be almost impossible to do here. We will have problems for ever.

If you look at the [previous] application, there is no real financial benefit for the community affected. A licence is given to an outsider company at a price of R2000 [the application fee]. We will live with the problems caused and the dust for the rest of our lives. Why is our government selling us so cheaply? This kind of development is not good for us. We did not ask for it. It is just imposed and forced upon us. All these years we voted for the ANC. But when we complain about all these problems, it is as if we are a people without a party. We raised these concerns with Minister Buyelwa Sonjica. She said that she understood. She promised to come back to us to discuss solutions that will help us. To this day she has never come back. The Mbizana municipality does not want to come and listen closely to our problems. The only time we see them is when they accompany ministers, as is the case today. We voted them into office during all these years, but we are being abused and they don't care about us.

We don't know how we are supposed to show once and for all that mining is not required here. Our tribal authority and The Kings Council are aware of our problems. They do support that we stand up for our rights. We even appealed to Human Rights Commission to intervene in the situation. They conducted their investigation. They found that we do not agree with this project and that it is not wanted here. We hoped for a break, but these people [the mining applicants] did not stop provoking us. It looks like they want us to fight each other and to have all the divisions perpetuated. Human rights belong to the people, not to the government. The government doesn't seem to understand that. If we do

not want something, we must be listened to. The government has a responsibility to unite us instead of trying to use their influence to cause more divisions.

The N2 Toll Road

For the following reasons, it is improper to discuss construction of the N2 through this area:

Our local roads are impossible. They are never attended to. We have very old roads which, if we would have our say, would be tarred. We would like these roads made before we can discuss the road that is passing through. The following roads must be tarred: The road from Bizana, passing through Gumzana to Bhekela and Xolobeni. Also: the Makhwantini road and Baleni road and the road from Kwa Bualal to Mtentu. The R61 must have pavements and speed humps. Too many people are killed on this road. It looks like we will just assist SANRAL to fulfil its needs, whatever they are. We will be left with our bad and dangerous roads.

The community of Lurholweni [located at the Wild Coast Sun] had their land taken away by force, for the casino and the hotel to be built. They lodged a claim under the Land Restitution Act. This claim has not been resolved by government. Still, they now are expected to give away more land away, before their original land claim is resolved, for SANRAL to build the N2. This cannot be fair and they do not want to give government land again while their old land is still under claim.

We know that it was not the government's idea to build the N2 from the start. It was an unsolicited bid from the big construction companies to the government to build a pay-road or toll road and collect money for 30 years. The government was asked to build bridges. Why is our government selling us to these big corporates, for them to enrich themselves by collecting money from us? We do not want that. Even if the government says it will not toll it, we don't want this road. In the Gauteng province pretty roads were built. No payments were to be made by public traffic but now they are tolled. The expensive toll gates were made later. We do not want anything like that here.

Kwazulu Natal is very rich in terms of economy but they did not allow a tollgate at Isiphingo. All political parties, including businesses, did not want their people to have to pay expensive fee to use a road. But our leaders here are selling us. SANRAL is told that people here are very poor and that they must have this road. How are poor people expected to pay every day for road use? This is not fair at all and we do not agree.

A very clear aim of this big road along the coast is to bring mining here. It is not built to address our needs. Why is it planned to go along the coast where there is less population? Why will it not go through the area where there are many people? The N2 must be built inland instead. We do not need it here.

Development: We are told that this road is bringing development to us. We need to know what kind development this is. Why is this development not discussed with us so that we

may see if this is the kind of development we want? We do not know who owns this development and whose interests it will be serving. It is our right to discuss and decide on what kind of development that is brought here.

Clearly, human rights have not been considered. We know that there will be relocation of homesteads, graves, forest plantations, grazing lands and cultivation lands. There has been no discussion on these and how people will be compensated for these losses. Our traditional leaders have no idea about which homesteads and the number of homesteads that are to be relocated. There has not been any identification of what specific villagers who are to be moved by this road.

SANRAL meetings were held in schools [and at the Wild Coast Sun], not at any tribal or traditional authority. They were held without inviting tribal or traditional leaders. In these meetings people were told that SANRAL will choose among five possible routes and come back to inform the public once a final decision had been made on route selection. No such meeting has taken place. This means that we don't know who will be moved and what the process is.

The land claim of the Lurholweni people against Wild Coast Sun Casino

We face big problems with regard to this land claim. Other claims in other places are resolved and settled. People are compensated, but this claim against Wild Coast Sun is difficult. We have on many occasions asked for the intervention and assistance of the government but nothing happens. It is not clear to us as community why this issue is not resolved and why it takes so long to be resolved.

The sad part is the fact that old people who are claimants will die before they are compensated and their land brought back to them. We appeal to the government to please help us to speed up this process.

The Camping Park at Mtamvuna

This place was built by government to create jobs and opportunities to the community of Mgungundlovu. The problem is that this was not finished. It is not operational. Now there are no jobs for the community. The unfinished lodges are standing there useless. Public money has been used. The government must take responsibility to help make this project work.

Yours,

Xolani Ntuli, Secretary of the Mgungundlovu Tribal Authority (Section 24 [coastal] of the Amadiba area) at iKomkhulu laseMgungundlovu (Xolobeni) - The Great Place of Mgungundlovu.

Amadiba Coastal Community Development Association Trust (The ACCODA Trust).
Amadiba Crisis Committee (ACC).

Abasuswa baseLurholweni - The land claimants of Lurholweni.

For more information: Mr Mzamo Dlamini (ACC) 0721940949 on the mining issue; Mr Sinegugu Zukulu (ACC) 0832311985 on the N2 issue and Ray Shusha (Abasuswa baseLurholweni) 0798651481 on the land claim issue.