

14 YEARS AFTER MARIKANA MASSACRE

COMMUNITIES STILL CARRY THE BURDEN OF MINING



Marikana commemorative gathering at the koppie, 16 August 2026. Photo supplied to HERD-NPC.

IN REMEMBRANCE

HERD-NPC remembers the 34 mineworkers killed on 16 August 2012 and honours all workers, families and communities affected by the Marikana tragedy.

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Fourteen Years Later: Healing Remains Incomplete

Fourteen years after the Marikana massacre, the healing process remains far from complete. Communities in and around mining areas continue to face environmental degradation, inadequate housing, unresolved grievances and the social and economic consequences of mining activities.

The fundamental question remains: to what extent should communities be sacrificed while the benefits of mining continue to flow disproportionately to others? Mining companies and government must confront the reality that many host communities remain poor, while unresolved concerns continue to accumulate. When legitimate grievances are not addressed in the manner communities expect, frustration grows, trust deteriorates and tensions intensify. Eventually, unresolved issues can reach a breaking point, while communities are often blamed for the consequences and businesses continue as usual.

Housing and the Legacy of Mining Settlements

One of the most significant challenges remains housing for mine workers. Contractors and permanent employees continue to live in informal settlements because there is insufficient housing available for workers in many mining areas. The historical commitment to convert hostels into family units demonstrated the scale of this problem. In the past, a single hostel room could accommodate more than ten employees. After conversion to family units, perhaps only one employee could remain in that space. This raises an important question: where did the other workers go?

THE QUESTION HERD-NPC IS ASKING

Can mining be called sustainable if workers and host communities continue to live with inadequate housing, unsafe environments and unresolved social pressures?

The growth of informal settlements around mining communities cannot be separated from this history. Housing must therefore be treated as an essential part of responsible mining and not as an issue that can be left for communities and municipalities to resolve.

The Children and Future Generations We Are Leaving Behind

In everything we face, we must remember that there are innocent children and future generations living within these communities. We must ask ourselves: How does the environment we create around them affect their mental health, emotional wellbeing, development and growth?

Children should not have to grow up surrounded by environmental risks, unsafe infrastructure, poverty, informal settlements and the constant perception that they live in a high-risk area. Yet everywhere in Wonderkop, the area is painted as a high-risk zone.

We must ask ourselves what this means for children who are growing up here. What does it do to their sense of safety and belonging? What message are we sending to a generation that has inherited problems they did not create?

Fourteen years ago, workers raised concerns about wages that they believed were insufficient, dangerous working conditions and inadequate living conditions. Their concerns were not adequately addressed before the situation escalated into a strike and ultimately resulted in bloodshed.

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH. WE ARE ALSO HUMAN.

The tragedy of Marikana should have taught us that communities and workers cannot simply be expected to endure hardship until their grievances reach a crisis point. Listening must happen before people are pushed to desperation. Prevention, meaningful engagement and accountability must come before tragedy.

Brits Tailings Dam Incident - 13 August 2026: A Wake-Up Call

The recent Samancor Dikwena Mine tailings dam failure in Brits, Madibeng Municipality, in the North West Province, should serve as a wake-up call to all mining companies operating tailings storage facilities. It must be treated as a serious learning opportunity and a reminder that mining-related disasters can occur when safety standards, monitoring systems and preventative measures are not properly implemented and enforced.



Image supplied to HERD-NPC showing an area affected by a reported tailings-related incident in the North West Province, August 2026.
HERD-NPC | Wonderkop, Marikana | info@herdnpc.org | www.herdnpc.org

When such incidents occur, it is often communities, workers and the environment that bear the greatest consequences, while the mining sector continues to benefit from mineral extraction.

HERD-NPC in Wonderkop, Marikana, calls for the strict enforcement of tailings dam regulations and internationally recognised safety standards. Mining companies must ensure that tailings facilities are regularly inspected, properly maintained and continuously monitored. Risks must be identified and addressed before they develop into emergencies.

Rehabilitation and Remediation Cannot Be Delayed

Rehabilitation and remediation following spillages, overflows and pipeline leaks must be treated as an urgent environmental responsibility. These matters should never be postponed or allowed to become normalised. Mining companies must be held accountable for preventing contamination and restoring areas affected by mining-related incidents.



Images supplied to HERD-NPC documenting the visible aftermath of a reported tailings-related incident, August 2026.

Communities Must Be Prepared and Informed

Environmental awareness campaigns should be conducted regularly in mining communities so that residents understand the potential risks associated with tailings facilities and know what action to take during an emergency.

Emergency preparedness plans should also include regular mock drills involving communities, mining



companies, local authorities and emergency services. These exercises can determine whether communication systems work effectively, whether evacuation procedures are practical and whether communities are adequately prepared to respond to a disaster.

Tailings dam overflows should never be dismissed as a normal occurrence. An overflow can indicate that a facility is approaching or exceeding its intended capacity. Changing conditions can increase pressure on a structure and potentially compromise its integrity. Early warning signs must therefore be taken seriously, investigated immediately and acted upon before they escalate into a disaster.