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Raising the Community Voice
in the extractive sector



News Flash

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CRD PRESS STATEMENT ON SUSPENSION OF MINING OPERATIONS AT REDWING MINE.

Today CRD discovered that the Ministry of Mines wrote a letter suspending Betterbrands mining operations at Redwing Mine. The suspension subsequently halted mining activities of Redwing mine workers that were taking place in Tsapauta area where a major mining accident occurred on 4 January 2024. According to Betterbrands Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report, the company secured a 25-year lease from Redwing Mine to conduct surface mining targeting reef outcrops and underground mining utilizing existing shafts and tunnels. Redwing Mine went under Judiciary management in 2019 and Betterbrands secured the mining lease through corporate rescue arrangement in 2020. CRD uncovered that the suspension letter put blame on the ground subsidence accident on poor mining model operating at Redwing Mine. The letter pointed out poor access controls that were in violation of mining management and safety regulations (S.1. 109 of 1990) part 1 on management and responsibilities in Mines, Section 9(1) (g) and that mining method was not adhering to mining standards such as maintaining pillars between shafts. It also added that mining shafts were not properly equipped and supported to prevent collapse. On top of that the letter indicated that there were no updated surface and underground plans as per requirements of section 78 of S1 109 of 1990 which must demarcate all used/disused shafts, boundaries, infrastructure and contours and that plans must comply with section 79 of SI 109 of 1990. Furthermore, the letter also bemoaned the illegal and uncontrolled access to old workings and that these areas were not safeguarded.

The reasons mentioned by Ministry of Mines in the letter are not new and recent government statement that it was going to conduct a thorough investigation cannot be taken seriously. CRD led a growing citizen voice in warning government against the proposed project in 2021. CRD went on to highlight the dangers of

conducting surface mining activities on top of disused shafts and tunnels at Redwing at the Betterbrands EIA stakeholder consultation meeting. CRD position is captured in the annexure of Betterbrands EIA report. Prior to the warning, Environmental Management Agency (EMA) had stopped Prime Royal Africa from conducting similar operations highlighting the negative implications of open pit mining on environmental sustainability and ground stability at Redwing among other issues.

<https://kubatana.net/2021/01/08/press-statement-by-mutare-civil-society-organisations-on-the-proposed-surface-mining-and-milling-project-at-redwing-mine-concession-in-penhalonga-mutare/>

<https://crdzim.org.zw/Civil%20Society%20in%20Manicaland%20Statement%20on%20Continued%20death%20of%20Mine%20workers%20At%20Redwing%20Mine.pdf>

Alarmed by increased loss of lives at Redwing, CRD lead civil society coalition issued another statement in January 2023 demanding government to end the disastrous mining activity. In its statement CRD and partners highlighted the same reasons mentioned in the suspension letter that government is promising the nation today that it will conduct a thorough investigation. Government succumbed to growing citizen concern and closed Betterbrands mining operations in January 2023. However another green light to resume the deadly operations was given to Betterbrands by government in March 2023. Pressured by political elites to open the Mine, EMA drew the following conditions similar to reasons raised by the Ministry of Mines in its suspension letter to Redwing.

- ✓ Purchasing 8 gas monitors pre requisite for entry into workings
- ✓ Strengthen access control with immediate effect by enclosing mining areas clocking in and out system to ensure accountability
- ✓ Compliance with mine management and safety regulations (109 of 1990 and S1 72 of 1989)
- ✓ Put effective waste management systems, dust suppression measures, standard ablution facilities
- ✓ Comply with your EIA
- ✓ Ensure progressive rehabilitation as well as closing legacy pits. submit monthly rehabilitation progress report to EMA
- ✓ Mine working distance to infrastructure should be as per SI 72 of 1989
- ✓ Ensure adequate PPE such as helmets, safety shoes,
- ✓ Protection of working shaft gate
- ✓ Do not allow vendors in the mining area

- ✓ Put appropriate steps towards building good community relations with the local community

To a greater extend, none of these conditions have been met by Betterbrands hence the number of fatal mining incidences have increased at Redwing mine. Needless to mention that the company had made commitment to adhere to various statutory instruments on waste disposal, air pollution assessment and periodic water tests to be conducted due to proximity of mining operations to Mutare river. They also made commitment to oblige by the Hazardous Substance Act, Public health Act, Gold Trade Act, and Labour Act among other statutory laws in their EIA plan approved by government.

Today, CRD is concerned that the letter does not address issues of environmental health and safety in an environment where CRD has seen a surge in the establishment of illegal hammer mills and cyanidation tanks from 129 hammer mills and 6 cyanidation tanks in October 2021 to 774 illegal hammer mills and 28 cyanidation tanks by 31 December 2023. These gold processing plants have been established along farms, streams, residential areas, schools and forestry estates in Penhalonga and surrounding communities exposing citizens to worst forms of chemical contamination, noise pollution, hazardous waste dumping that have rendered water from the affected rivers unusable. At the same time the Ministry of Mines seem not to be concerned about the porous mining activities at Redwing Mine where 5kgs of gold or more is being lost to illegal gold milling plants that are also fueling tax evasion.

Government has suspended Betterbrands mining activities for the 3rd time now on the same reasons but had not taken necessary measures before to end unsafe and porous mining activities. CRD is disheartened to realise that Supreme Court ruling of 2022 removed Redwing mine from corporate rescue effectively terminating corporate rescue mining agreements at Redwing. But ever since the court ruling, Redwing Mine has remained under house arrest from political elites. These political elites are protecting Betterbrands mining activities at Redwing Mine at the expense of human life and sustainability of Zimbabwe's economy.

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To promote human rights through
civic participation for sustainable
community engagement.