

## **Atlas Copco, Sandvik should do more to address human rights risks in South Africa's platinum industry - report**

**Local communities around South Africa's platinum mines have been facing human rights violations for many years, and many state the situation is deteriorating. Swedish companies Sandvik and Atlas Copco sell equipment used in the country's platinum industry and should, according to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, analyse human rights risks and act for change. However, there are few indications that the companies are trying to affect the situation, according to a Swedwatch report launched today at the Alternative Mining Indaba in Cape Town.**

According to the UN Guiding Principles on business and human rights (UNGPs) companies may be linked to adverse impacts on human rights even if these are caused or contributed to by their business partners, including customers. This places high demands on companies like Swedish Atlas Copco and Sandvik, who sell equipment to South Africa's platinum industry. Through the customer-provider relationship, the companies have a responsibility to try to counteract the adverse consequences of mining that affect local communities in the country. But there are few signs of action, even though the companies claim to adhere to the UNGPs.

"Atlas Copco and Sandvik have been selling equipment to South Africa's platinum industry for years. Still none of them can show that they are trying to influence their customers to take responsibility for the problems in the sector", says Olof Björnsson, Swedwatch researcher and report author.

The report builds on extensive field research in South Africa's platinum belt, an area where a majority of residents are living in poverty. Several of those interviewed during research stated that people have been evicted from their land and many suffer from health problems due to air pollution and water issues associated with mining activities. Several interviews included statements that people have been forced to pay fees or provide sexual favours in exchange for work.

The report follows up on a study conducted by Swedwatch in 2013 and shows that the human rights situation for mining communities shows little sign of improvement. But despite continued problems, Sandvik says it is not engaged in dialogue with their customers in the area. Atlas Copco states that their customers have passed the company's evaluations, including reviews of human rights risks.

"People in the mining areas are doubly vulnerable, and the problems that follow in the wake of operations are well known. If neither Atlas Copco or Sandvik are trying to improve the situation by putting pressure on their customers, then they are failing to conform to the guidelines on corporate responsibility regarding human rights that they claim to abide by", says Louise Lindfors, Secretary General at Afrikagrupperna.

The report recommends Atlas Copco, Sandvik and other companies providing mining equipment to the South African platinum mining sector to use their leverage to encourage customers to address adverse human rights impacts. In cases where leverage needs to be increased, this can be done for example by forging partnerships with other suppliers to the mining companies or other relevant parties that may influence the situation.

The report *Carrying the cost – Human rights impacts in communities affected by platinum mining in South Africa, and the responsibilities of companies providing mining equipment* was made in collaboration with the Church of Sweden and Afrikagrupperna. Field research was conducted in cooperation with Bench Marks Foundation.

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