

Dear Gold  
Mines

**APARTHEID  
IS OVER.**

**“Even though they knew, the mining company never protected me from silicosis, and everyday I suffer because of it.”**

The conduct of the gold mining industry has left hundreds of thousands of people sick or dead from silicosis and tuberculosis (TB). It has entrenched cycles of inequality and poverty for many women and has left entire communities destitute.

**EXPLOITED. DAMAGED. DISCARDED.**

#### **WHAT IS SILICOSIS?**

Silicosis is a lung disease caused by inhaling silica dust in gold mines. As the disease progresses, symptoms include severe chest pain, fever, fatigue, weight loss, and heart disease. With time, the disease is disabling and potentially fatal. There is no cure and it is irreversible.

#### **HOW DO YOU GET IT?**

Silica dust particles are thrown into the air from mining activities like drilling, blasting and moving of rocks. With poor dust control measures – like inadequate ventilation and limited respiratory equipment – mineworkers have a high risk of inhaling the silica.

#### **WHAT ABOUT TB?**

Miners are also at high risk of contracting TB. South Africa already has one of the highest rates of TB in the world—yet the TB rate among miners is 10 times higher. Silicosis and TB affect the same parts of the lung. If you have one, you are much more likely to get the other.

**# SILICOSIS**



**SONKE  
GENDER  
JUSTICE**

HIV/AIDS • GENDER EQUALITY • HUMAN RIGHTS

**TAC**  
TREATMENT ACTION CAMPAIGN

## WHO IS AFFECTED?

The dustiest work on South African mines has historically been done by black migrant workers. The mines generated huge profits by keeping wages very low for them. The mines were able to do this through segregation and apartheid laws.

## IS THERE COMPENSATION?

The current system allows mineworkers with silicosis or TB to apply for compensation. But it is grossly insufficient. The compensation levels are extremely low and 99% of mineworkers have no knowledge of the system anyway. Profit is put before people's lives.

# COUGH UP THE MONEY!

This is a violation of the gold miners rights. To ensure all miners get proper compensation, a landmark case is being fought in the courts. From 12<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> October, a hearing is taking place in the South Gauteng High Court to determine if the case can proceed as a “class action”—this means rather than fighting for each miner individually, the case will fight for everyone who is eligible in one go. If the court agrees the “class action” can proceed, a major and historic victory will have been won. The next steps would then either be settlement negotiations or further court proceedings to determine, amongst other things, how much compensation is to be paid.

This case is the only chance to get compensation for most people affected by TB and silicosis in the mines. At stake is justice for hundreds of thousands of miners and their families.

# JUSTICE FOR OUR MINERS!

**@TAC @SONKETOGETHER #SILICOSIS**