



**Press Statement  
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No Embargo**

**Office of Chair of Chairs intervenes in the wake of a safety hazard at Slovoville Primary School**

After years of living in anguish, Slovoville Primary School learners and teachers alike will feel relieved after an intervention to force the closing of a dam that placed their lives at risk. It started as a small trench used for mining activity by Harmony Gold; and eventually developed into a massive dam, causing major health and safety problems for the school. The classrooms and teachers' staff rooms in proximity to the dam are damaged. The walls and floors of the classrooms are soaked in the moist from the dam, slowly destroying the integrity of the buildings.

The water has also submerged the football field which forced the school to abandon it. There was also a stench arising from the dam making the living conditions even more unbearable.

In October, the Chair of Chairs, Cllr. Lloyd Phillips led members of the Section 79 Committees to an oversight visit to the school following complaints by the local community about the imminent danger that the dam has posed to the school.

The school was officially opened in 2014 by Premier Panyaza Lesufi in his former role as the MEC of Education. Since its opening, the pupils and learners have lived in anguish because of the dam and other issues related to mining such as dust emerging from mining activities.

Last year the Gauteng Provincial Education Department reported that it is contemplating relocating learners amid attempts to find a solution.

However, Cllr. Phillips said all measures should be explored to save the school instead of completely leaving it in ruins.

“This is one of the poorest areas in the city with few resources. This school is integral to the community. When we received this information, we decided to intervene immediately and write to the relevant role players.”

“We are pleased that the mining company in question is already taking action to correct the situation. Our role is to ensure that those who neglect their responsibility are accountable.

“This is a humanitarian issue, the pupils’ lives are at risk; we could not fold our arms and let this school continue to dilapidate on our watch,” said Phillips.

Harmony Gold reported that 70 percent of the water associated with the flooding at Slovoville Primary was drained. The company has also committed to closing the trenches to ensure the safety of pupils upon return to the new schooling year.

“We will conduct another oversight to ensure that all commitments made by the mining company are carried out as agreed upon,” Cllr. Phillips promised.

The Office of the Chairs of Chairs has been working alongside the Office of the City’s Ombudsman to tackle issues caused by the legacy of mining across Joburg. These issues have major health implications on immediate communities, crime, and grime in areas in proximity to open mining shafts.

Principal to these issues includes illegal mining which ordinarily occurs after the big-name mining companies have closed operations and relocated leaving the opportunity for scavenging of precious metals. Since March 2023, several engagements have been held with the various stakeholders in an endeavor to derive lasting solutions. Both offices have been working towards organizing a mining Indaba to mobilize stakeholders under one umbrella to develop a blue paper to address issues arising from illegal mining.

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