

Someone Else's Treasure Tanzania

Photo Essay by Allan Cedillo Lissner

SOMEONE ELSE'S TREASURE

Tanzania is blessed with an abundance of mineral resources. In gold alone, Tanzania is estimated to be sitting on top of a US\$39 billion treasure. When you factor in the large quantities of diamonds, copper, silver, gem stones, and other minerals – not to mention its wildlife, agricultural, and human resources – Tanzania should be a very wealthy country.

While Tanzania has developed into the third biggest gold producer in Africa, the country remains one of the poorest in the world. With a life expectancy of 51 years, 89.9% of the population lives on less than \$2 a day. Leading some critics to argue that not only are Tanzanians not benefiting from its abundance of mineral resources, but that the multinational mining industry has contributed to impoverishing the rural poor.

The following accounts of mass displacements, violent confrontations, lost livelihoods, exploited workers, and contaminated ecosystems raise serious questions about the mining industry in Tanzania and internationally. The focus here is on communities surrounding the Bulyanhulu and North Mara Gold Mines, both owned by the world's largest gold mining company Barrick Gold, and the Geita Gold Mine, owned by the third largest gold company, AngloGold Ashanti.

Canada, home to about sixty percent of the world's mining corporations, leads the way in the global mining industry. But some critics have labeled the mining industry as Canada's number one contribution to global injustice. As the industry continues to shape the world we all live in, it is the hardships endured by the men, women, and children like these that make our way of life possible.

Allan Cedillo Lissner is a freelance documentary photographer based in Toronto, Canada.

Born in Denmark to a Danish father and a Philippine-Canadian mother, Allan was raised in Ethiopia, Liberia, USA, Nepal, Lithuania, Denmark, Jordan, Bangladesh, and Canada.

Allan has completed degrees in Visual Studies, Philosophy, and Sociology from the University of Toronto, and in Drawing and Painting from the Ontario College of Art and Design.

As a dedicated visual activist, some of the organizations Allan has done work with include Ad-busters Magazine, Amnesty International, GlobalAware Independent Media, Oxfam Canada, Make Poverty History, Norwegian Church Aid Tanzania, the Sierra Club, the United Nations Development Program, and the United Nations Women's Association in Bangladesh.

Contact: allan@lissner.net



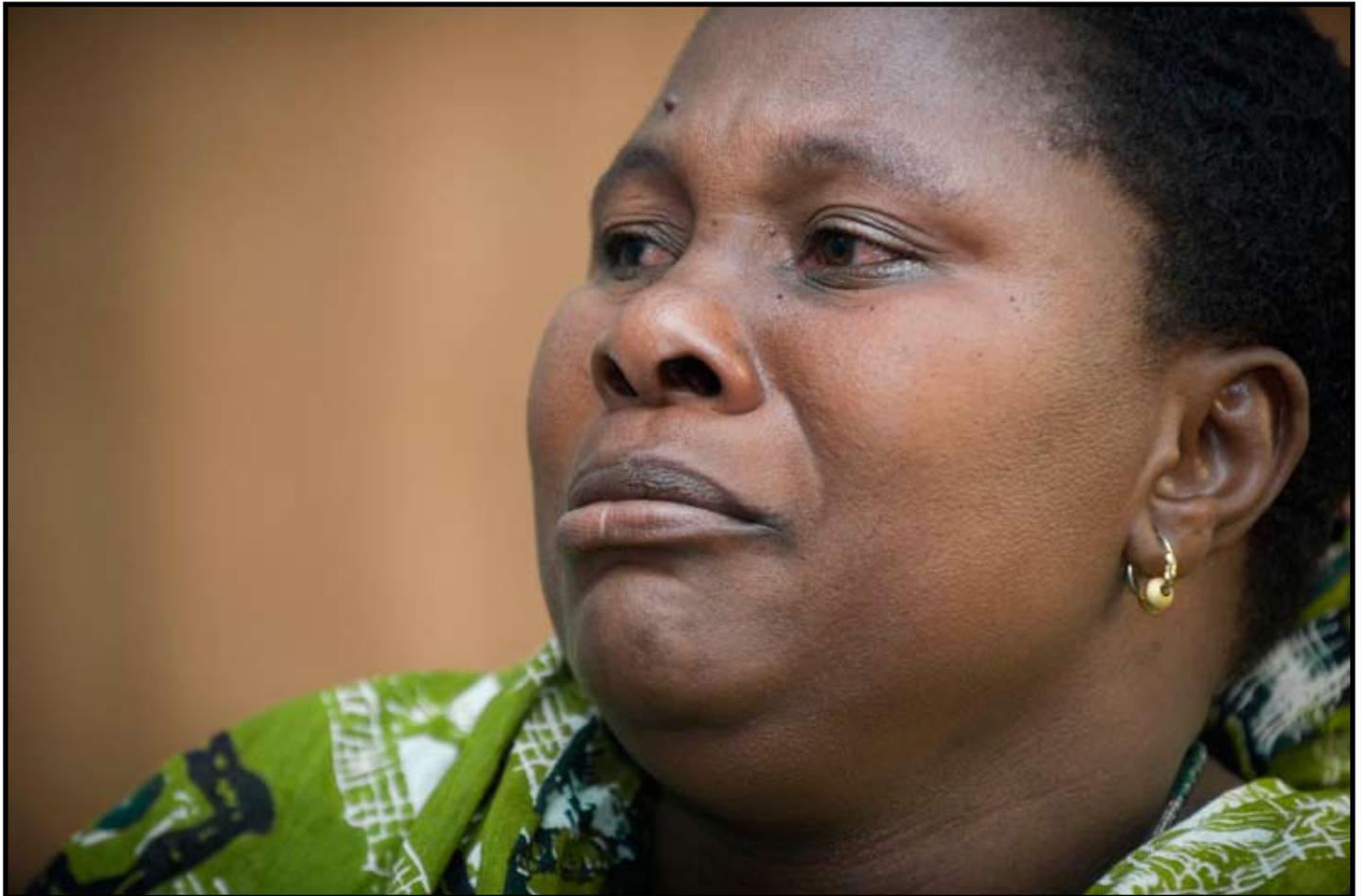
“Almost every mineral known to exist in the earth’s crust can be found in Tanzania, and some exist in large quantities”, said Tanzanian President **Jakaya Kikwete**, speaking at the Mining Idaba 2007 – the world’s largest gathering of the mining industry elite – “the benefits brought to the country within this short period of time are phenomenal ... We have improved the investment climate remarkably since the introduction of economic reforms in the mid 1980s. These reforms have transformed the national economic philosophy ... to a market-based economy ... under the guiding principle of ‘let government govern and private sector do business.’ Consequently, and continuously, we have been taking measures to improve on the business environment to make it easy for the private sector to prosper.”

But the people who live next to these mines tell a very different story:



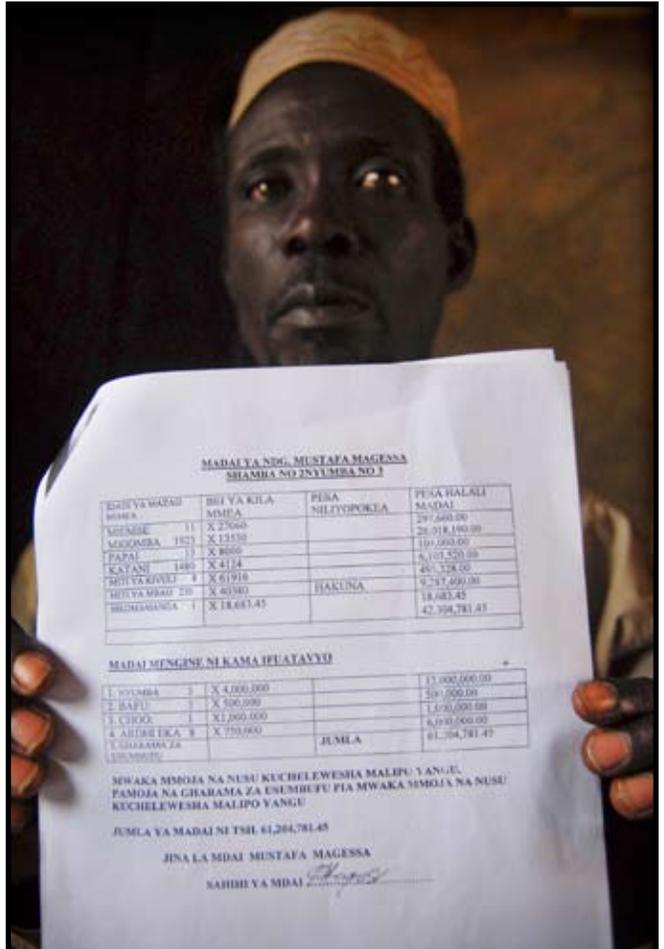
Sheila is one of 258 men, women, and children, from Mtakuja village who were displaced in late July 2007 to make way for an expansion of the Geita Gold Mine. In an interview with Christian Aid, Emmanuel Balitazali recalls “officers from the district came at three in the morning when we were all asleep. They had machine guns and a court order evicting us. We didn’t have a chance to pack; they put us in a vehicle and dumped us here.” Abdallah Abedi is quoted as saying; “we were moved here like people in a war-torn country, and now we are all tucked into a small place like prisoners who have committed the worst of crimes.” One week after this photo was taken the villagers were informed by the local government that they would be evicted all over again from their current campsite. No provisions have been made for them, however, and they have nowhere to go.

During the day most of the adults in the camp for the internally displaced people in Geita are away looking for work. **Mwajuma** stays behind to take care of some of the children. All 258 of the villagers were dumped in a one-room abandoned building in the middle of the night one year ago. The Christian Council of Tanzania and Norwegian Church Aid heard about their situation and have provided the group with the tents they now call home. In an interview with the Norwegian Church Aid, Faida Gerald says, "we have lost a lot of things including our sense of belonging, clothes and other household materials. What hurts most is that they buried even already harvested crops, which we would have sold to get some income to buy food and take care of our children." Their sense of loss is intensified by their feelings of betrayal by their own democratically elected government, as Faida contemplates; "I wonder what they have given to the government to subject us to all this."



Rukindo lives in the IDP camp in Geita along with the other 258 Mtakuja villagers who were displaced to make way for the Geita Gold Mine. This picture was taken shortly after a court hearing in Dar es Salaam in their case against the company. Rukindo and three others had travelled 1,300km to make their case. But they were never even given the chance to have an audience with the judge as the case was thrown out of the court after a suspicious meeting behind closed doors between their attorney, the judge, and the team of lawyers representing the company. In the unlikely event that they can afford to continue with the case they will have to start all over again. Almost immediately after receiving this bad news, they received even worse news as they were handed letter from the local government of Geita informing them that the inhabitants of the camp were about to be evicted from the area they had been occupying for the past year. Once again, the displaced have to start all over again and try to rebuild what little semblance of normalcy they had attained in the past year.

The government's Prevention of Corruption Bureau is investigating a corruption scandal involving the compensation for some 900 people who were displaced to make way for AngloGold Ashanti's Geita Gold Mine in Geita. **Mustafa** is one of the complainants; here he is showing documents that state that he was promised over 60million shillings (55,000CAD) in compensation which he has never received. AngloGold admits that 875 people have not received the compensation promised to them, but they claim to have given government officials the money needed to make the payments in 1999 and blame these officials "in their lust for money" for the disappearance of the funds.



Fabil used to work at Barrick's Bulyanhulu Gold mine until 26 October 2007, when Barrick fired 1,374 of its workers en mass. Official accounts, as reported by Reuters, stated that the workers were fired for going on an illegal strike. But according to Fabil and George Mandia, the then Chairman of the workers Union at the Bulyanhulu mine, they were not on strike when they were fired. They claim that there had been ongoing negotiations between management and the union for several months as the workers were concerned about the unfair treatment of sick and injured workers, racial discrimination between Tanzanian and expatriate workers, and unrealistic production and safety targets, among other things. On the 25th of October, the day before being fired, they argue that they had all worked their regular shifts; they did not walk off the job in protest as Barrick reported. After the regular work hours, with the permission of the management, the union had organized a meeting inside the mine site for the workers to discuss these ongoing negotiations. The meeting was disrupted when 68 armed riot police officers moved in causing a panic among the fleeing workers. "There is no humanity in the way they have treated us!" Fabil insists, "they make us promises while we are of use to them. But then, if we become sick, or old, or start to complain about our rights, then they just spit us out like a chewing gum that has lost its flavour."



Alex with his wife **Christine** and their son **Spencer**. Working in the mine twelve hours a day, seven days a week, for ten weeks before getting a one week break – for 1,926 shillings (1.75CAD) an hour – took a severe toll on Alex's body. Alex had been receiving medical treatment for several months for his ailments; he was lying in his hospital bed, unaware of what was happening back at the mine, when he received his termination letter. According to a letter from his doctor at the Bulyanhulu Medical Centre, Alex was suffering from “painful defecation, lower abdominal pain, passing blood stained stools, [and] mass protrusion per-rectum”. His treatment was never completed and he continues to suffer from many physical problems. He is unable to work; he barely even has the strength to carry his son Spencer. The family has been surviving on the money Alex had saved up while working at the mine. But these savings will not last much longer and they do not yet know what they will do when it does run out.



Deus had worked in the Bulyanhulu mine as a supervisor for five years when he was in an accident in 2006 where a big rock fell on him. His coworkers pulled him away in time to save his life before more rocks came falling down. Barrick's Bulyanhulu Gold Mine boasts “one of the most up-to-date and well-equipped and staffed medical clinics in Tanzania ... being operated not only for the benefit of employees and their families, but also to provide assistance to the immediately surrounding communities.” Despite these declarations, Deus had to wait for a total of 18 hours before receiving treatment in Dar es Salaam a thousand kilometers away. His arm eventually had to be amputated, but he vividly remembers the doctor telling him that if he had received treatment earlier it would have been a very simple procedure to save his arm which any trained doctor would have been able to perform. Barrick eventually agreed to give him 10million shillings (9,000CAD) in compensation, far less than the 600million shillings (550,000CAD) Deus had estimated he should receive based on international standards. Barrick made several promises to him, including that he would get a plastic prosthetic arm which they flew him to South Africa for. But when he tried on the arm he found that it was only 3% functional and that they wanted to charge him 16million shillings (15,000CAD), which he could not afford.

The **Mwita family** lives in Nyamongo next to Barrick's North Mara gold mine. The waste rock on the edge of the mining pit can be seen just behind their huts here. Ongoing conflict between the mine and local communities have created a climate of fear for those who live nearby. Since the mine opened in 2002, the Mwita family say that they live in a state of constant anxiety because they have been repeatedly harassed and intimidated by the mine's private security forces and by government police. There have been several deadly confrontations in the area and every time there are problems at the mine, the Mwita family say their compound is the first place the police come looking. During police operations the family scatters in fear to hide in the bush, "like fugitives," for weeks at a time waiting for the situation to calm down. They used to farm and raise livestock, "but now there are no pastures because the mine has almost taken the whole land ... we have no sources of income and we are living only through God's wishes. ... We had never experienced poverty before the mine came here." They say they would like to be relocated, but the application process has been complicated, and they feel the amount of compensation they have been offered is "candy."



This is a water hole that was built by Barrick Gold near their North Mara Gold mine on behalf of the local communities. The edge of the mine pit can be seen in the upper left-hand corner. But the water appears milky and dirty and the plants around the water hole are dying. The mine's General Manager, Kevin Moxham, has argued that the ongoing violent conflicts with locals is to blame; "we spend a lot of time and resources to deal with crime incidents instead of funding development projects. This also reduces the cake that could have gone into improving the livelihood of the North Mara community, Tarime district and Mara region in general."

Mabibhi is a resident of Nyakabale, a small farming community of about 2,000 people living near the Geita Gold mine. He suffers from severe skin problems which first started appearing about three years ago. Residents have compiled a list of 36 unusual deaths since the mine began operations in 2000 which they link to the chemicals from the mine. "The first unusual deaths," according to resident Stefano Lufungulo, "occurred shortly after the Geita mine began operating ... a family of four died after eating a dying rabbit they had caught near the tailings dam. Since then, a number of women have had miscarriages." Mabibhi is 75 years old and has lived a full life so he says that it does not matter what happens to him – what he is really worried about is what will happen to his grandchildren.



Research compiled by Manfred Bitala in his masters dissertation, which has recently been approved by the University of Dar es Salaam, has concluded that "Nyakabale Village and the immediate environment are severely polluted by heavy metals from gold mining activities of Geita Gold Mines" posing high risks to "human health, livestock and other terrestrial and aquatic life and potentially to Lake Victoria Basin at large." Bitala calculates that the heavy metals concentration in the soil in Nyakabale is up to 6,000 times above acceptable levels set by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Similarly the concentration in plants is 9,000 times above the acceptable level.



Mabibhi's granddaughter drinking the same water which residents believe has been contaminated. Residents report that the water now tastes bitter and smells foul. The water has also been changing colour; at times it is milky white and sometimes the water is red. AngloGold claims that they carry out "regular monitoring around the village" and their results do not coincide with the conclusions of Bitala's study. They point out that any problems may in fact be stemming from the old mine in the same location operated by Germany in colonial times. Human rights lawyer Tundu Lissu argues that "the description of the deaths and other health problems reported by the villagers of Nyakabale are consistent with the symptoms associated with cyanide poisoning."

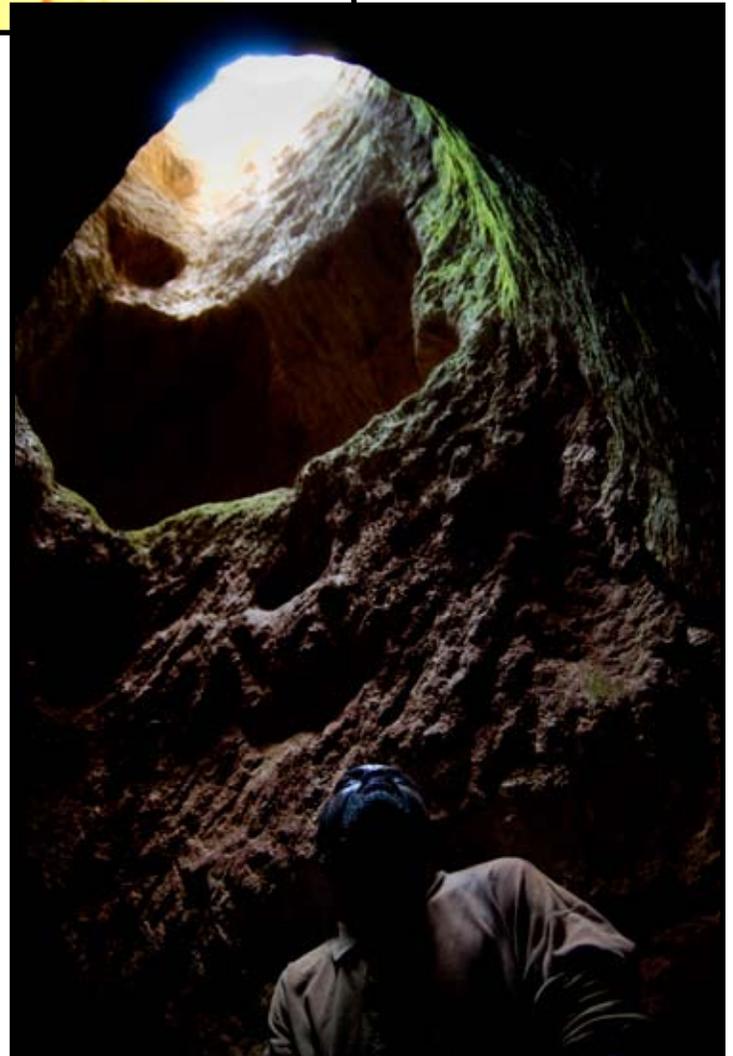


The home of the **Luhanga family** in Kahama. The Luhanga's were among the thousands of families who had been forcefully evicted in August 1996 to make way for Sutton Resources' Bulyanhulu Gold Mine, which was bought three years later by Barrick Gold. According to Barrick's own report, *Social Development Plan for the Bulyanhulu Gold Mine*, it is estimated that there were anywhere between 30,000 and 400,000 people living in the area before the evictions. The company claims that the people living there were nomadic trespassers. But the communities argue that some of the villages in the area had existed long before colonial days.



Deogratis is the traditional witch-doctor, or medicine man, of the community. He was among the thousands of people who were evicted to make way for the Bulynhulu Gold Mine. He remembers being forced from their home by heavily armed paramilitary forces only one day after the Minister of Minerals and Energy had issued an order giving the Bulynhulu residents one month to vacate the area. Deogratis and his family had nowhere to go so for two months after being forced from their home they were living in the bush. During this time his wife became ill. But with their home destroyed, and without access to his medicines, the healer could do nothing as he watched his wife die.

Twelve years later, allegations continue that during the evictions in August 1996 fifty-two artisanal miners were **buried alive** in their pits by company bulldozers. The issue has developed into a bitter international dispute. While Barrick maintains that “the way people left this site was in a peaceful, systematic fashion”, reports in the Tanzanian press at the time reported mass confusion, looting, robbery and bloodshed as people fled from police in riot gear. Numerous witnesses have testified in sworn statements that people were being beaten up by the police and were ignored when they told officers that there were still people inside some of the mineshafts as the bulldozers were filling in the pits. The legality of the companies’ claim to the site has also been disputed. While on the one hand Barrick claims that the people there were “illegal ... trespassers”, they acknowledge in project documents that during a visit to the site by then President Ali Hassan Mwinyi in February 1993, “artisanal miners requested the right to resume artisanal mining in Bulyanhulu, which permission was granted by the President.” According to the Lawyers Environmental Action Team (LEAT), the company had taken possession over the Bulyanhulu area in 1996 even though “the license issued to it was over a completely different area in a completely different district in a completely different region!”



In response to the companies' and the government's denials **Melania**, a Kahama resident, has been collecting these photos of people who claim to have witnessed the killings or lost loved ones during the evictions. "... *This one was there when it happened ... this one lost her son ... this one went back afterwards to try and dig out his friends ... this one lost her home and her grandchildren ...*" A number of organizations have been calling for an independent inquiry to resolve the issue including Amnesty International, the Council of Canadians, Mining Watch Canada, the New Democratic Party, Friends of the Earth, and Rights and Democracy. But when an international NGO fact-finding mission attempted to visit Bulyanhulu to investigate the allegations they were barred from entering the area by an armed roadblock, they reported that they were intimidated by the police and were given the impression that they were "under surveillance and could possibly be apprehended."

Melania's two eldest sons, **Jonathan** and **Ernest** were among the fifty-two miners who were allegedly buried alive during the evictions. The family owned the pit that they were working in at the time, so Malenia lost her livelihood as well as her two children in August 1996. In a report published by religious groups in Tanzania, it is estimated that "the concentration of gold mining in the hands of large multinational companies at the expense of small-scale artisan miners has put 400,000 people out of work." Adding to her already considerable loss, police have since taken away all Melania's photos of Jonathan and Ernest. The photos she holds up here are of her youngest son Mushobozi.





Barrick argues that “the Bulyanhulu project is a model of how the private sector can do its part to contribute positively to the fabric of Tanzania.” **Gudila**, who lost her son Joseph during the evictions, argues that despite the company’s many promises their presence has brought nothing but misery to those living nearby. “We have nothing, just look around at this place, and see what we have to put up with.” One of the more recent and appalling incidents involves a court case where three of Barrick’s employees – Annicet Edward Ndege, Job Murama, and Shija Madata – are currently on trial accused of masterminding the rape of an eleven year old schoolgirl by one of the company’s German Sheppard guard dogs. The accused, as described in local newspaper *The Citizen*, are said to have picked up the girl where she was selling bread and took her to the Nyanzaga Mineral Exploration Centre on March 21, 2008, where they “undressed and forced her to be defiled by a dog for about one hour.”



Buchard, resident of Kahama:

“I want you to tell people in Canada:

We know Canada;

We know the history of Canada;

We know the Canadian people are good people;

We know they believe in human rights.

But what this Canadian company is doing here is just terrible. We were happy before. We lived normal lives by Tanzanian standards. But now people here are really suffering. It is very difficult to make a living and feed our children here. A lot of us have lost our homes, loved ones, and livelihoods without receiving any compensation. There should have been an independent investigation into the killings a long time ago. But at this point, all we want is for the company to just sit down at the table with us so we can discuss where we can go from here. But they never listen to us, and they are lying to people in Canada.”

Further Reading

“A Golden Opportunity? How Tanzania is Failing to Benefit from Gold Mining.”
<http://www.religionsforpeace.org/resources/reports/tanzania-mining-report>

“A Golden Example of Globalization”
<http://www.zmag.org/znet/viewArticle/10743>

“Activists and Pupils March Against Abuse of Schoolgirl”
<http://allafrica.com/stories/200804230650.html>

Amnesty International Toronto Business and Human Rights Group
<http://www.aito.ca/st/business/>

AngloGold Ashanti
<http://www.anglogold.com>

Barrick Gold
<http://www.barrick.com>

“Barrick’s Bulyanhulu Mine Ops Stalled by Strike”
<http://www.reuters.com/article/companyNewsAndPR/idUSN3010020071030?pageNumber=1&virtualBrandChannel=0>

“Barrick Gold Sacks Hundreds”
<http://www.thisday.co.tz/News/2957.html>

CAO Bulyanhulu Report
<http://www.cao-ombudsman.org/html-english/documents/bulyfinal.Englishpdf.pdf>

Friends of the Earth international mining campaign
<http://www.foei.org/en/campaigns/mining/index.html/index.html>

“Gold Miners Evict Tanzanian Families”
<http://english.nca.no/article/articleview/7242/>

Lawyers Environmental Action Team
<http://www.lead.or.tz/>

Mines and Communities
<http://www.minesandcommunities.org>

MiningWatch Canada
<http://www.miningwatch.ca>

No Dirty Gold
<http://www.nodirtygold.org/>

ProtestBarrick
<http://www.protestbarrick.net>

Speech by Kikwete, President of Tanzania, at the *Investing in African Mining Indaba XII*, Cape Town, South Africa - Feb. 6, 2007
http://www.tanzania.go.tz/hotuba1/hotuba/070206_Speech_by_HE_at_Inbada_-_Final.htm

“Tanzanian Gold Mine Pollution Causing Deaths”
http://www.afrol.com/html/News2001/tan005_env_goldmine.htm

