

Silicosis fund to be established in April 2019

A trust, which will disburse funds for mine workers who contracted silicosis and tuberculosis, is to be established in April 2019, says the Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) on the revitalisation of distressed mining communities.



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“A trust will be established in April 2019 to disburse the funds,” said the IMC.

This follows the historic class action settlement reached on 3 May between mining companies and claimants’ attorneys. The class action involved current and former workers from the six mining companies (African Rainbow Minerals, Anglo American SA, AngloGold Ashanti, Gold Fields, Harmony and Sibanye-Stillwater) from 12 March 1965 to 3 May 2018, who were certified as having contracted silicosis, as well as those who contracted certain severe forms of tuberculosis.

Mineworkers and their dependents were represented by attorneys Richard Spoor Inc, Abrahams Kiewitz Inc and the Legal Resources Centre.

The settlement needs to be approved by the South Gauteng High Court, which could take several months.

On Tuesday, government said it will implement the required support to ensure ex-mineworkers receive their funds.

“The tracking and tracing of ex-mineworkers, who are to be compensated for having contracted lung diseases while

working for gold mines, gives effect to the successful implementation of the out-of-court silicosis class action suit. The R5bn out-of-court silicosis settlement will be presented to the court for acceptance,” said the IMC.

Four functioning One-Stop centres provide health services to mining communities and ensure that retirement benefits are easily accessible to ex-mineworkers.

In June, a [new website](#) and a [Facebook page](#) were launched to assist former mineworkers and their dependents who may be entitled to compensation.

The IMC, which is chaired by minister in the Presidency: planning, monitoring and evaluation (DPME) Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, expressed concern about unclaimed social protection benefits for ex-mineworkers in the Southern African region.

To date, there is:

- R45bn unclaimed for 4.2-million workers overall (pension/provident funds), R4bn unclaimed by miners (pension/provident funds);
- R1.2bn unclaimed compensation funds for miners; and
- R1.6bn unclaimed by former civil servants.

The IMC is mandated to achieve integrated and sustainable human settlements, improve the living and working conditions of mineworkers and health of mining communities, and advance the socio-economic development of mining towns.

Rural and township revitalisation fund

The IMC is also considering a rural and township revitalisation fund to grow small businesses in mining towns, which will be aligned to the Economic Stimulus and Recovery Plan.

Adopted by Cabinet, the stimulus package announced by President Cyril Ramaphosa in September is set to spark economic activity and boost the country’s growth.

The DPME will coordinate a consultative workshop in November to develop standards and a framework for the decommissioning of old mining assets.

National and provincial departments will be incorporating key indicators in their 2019/20 annual performance plans to strengthen the socio-economic development and improvement of mining towns and distressed mining communities.

“The IMC has an important direct role to play in community development work around the mines and improving the living conditions of mineworkers. All role players must work together to build a thriving and inclusive mining sector, which contributes to economic growth,” said Dlamini-Zuma.

Strengthening human settlements

Meanwhile, the Department of Human Settlements (DHS) has pledged to strengthen integrated human settlements and social infrastructure development in mining towns and labour-sending areas.

Detailed profiles and interventions were outlined, covering priority mining towns and labour-sending areas in the Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, North West and Northern Cape.

An update was provided on the development of the Housing and Living Conditions Standards for the Mining Industry, which will be shared with stakeholders for comment.

The DHS will establish a programme management office to improve the implementation and monitoring of integrated human settlements programmes.

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