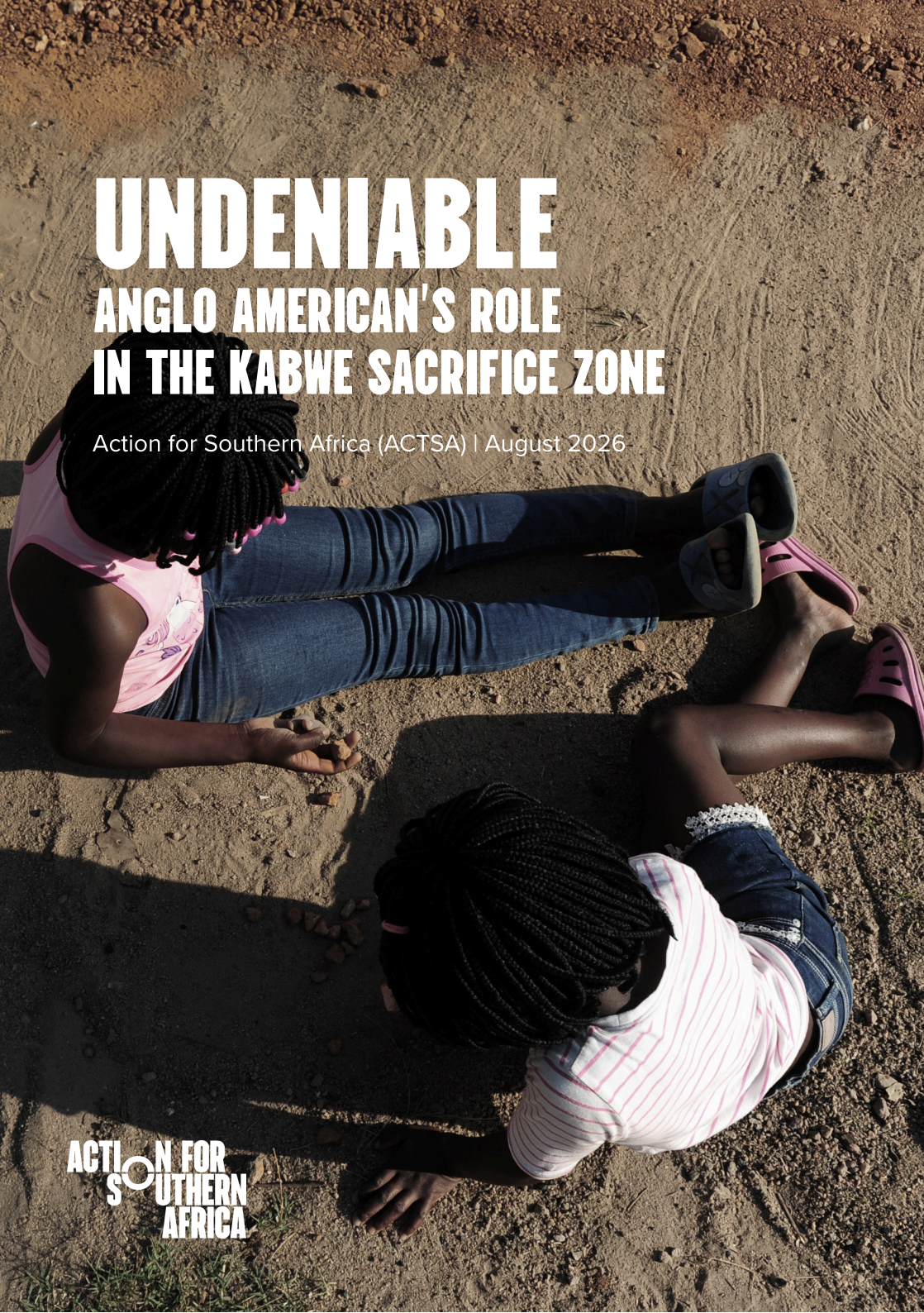


UNDENIABLE

ANGLO AMERICAN'S ROLE IN THE KABWE SACRIFICE ZONE

Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA) | August 2026

ACTION FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report was researched and produced for Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA) by Duncan Money. Documents presented in this report were sourced in 2026 from the Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines (ZCCM) archive in Ndola.

Duncan Money is a historian and researcher with over a decade's experience. He holds a PhD in history from the University of Oxford and primarily writes about the mining industry and Southern Africa. He provides research and consultancy services and has led projects for mining companies, development banks, risk analysis firms, research institutes, trade unions and museums.

Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA) is a UK-based charity which works in solidarity with Southern African civil society and activists to advance human rights and to replace the legacies of colonialism, racism and apartheid with justice and peace. It was established in 1994 as the successor organisation to the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM).

Cover photo and inside page: Leon Sadiki.

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INTRODUCTION

Kabwe is a former mining town in central Zambia and one of the most contaminated places on Earth. For nearly 90 years, lead and zinc were extracted from the mine that the town was built around with little regard for the health of the people who lived and worked there. Today, over 100,000 people live with the legacy of that extraction. Levels of lead in the soil are far above internationally recognised safety limits, reaching 60,000 milligrams of lead per kilogram. This is 300 times higher than the level defined by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as a hazard for residents. A generation of children are growing up with permanent damage to their brains and bodies from mining that happened long before they were born.

The mine in Kabwe was known as Broken Hill Mine and it was controlled and operated for most of its history by the Anglo American Corporation, one of the world's largest mining companies. For decades, the mine dumped thousands of tonnes of lead and other toxic metals into the environment around the town every year, with severe and enduring consequences. The mine was taken over by the Zambian government in 1974 and closed down in 1994 without any proper remediation.

Anglo American plc remains one of the world's largest mining companies, with a revenue of US$18.546 billion in 2025[1].

[1] Preliminary Results 2025. Anglo American plc. Retrieved 20 February 2026.

Anglo has denied in court and in public statements that it ever owned or operated the Broken Hill, or Kabwe, mine. Class-action proceedings against Anglo American South Africa (AASA) were brought in 2020 in the Johannesburg High Court on behalf of an estimated 140,000 women and children. The company says publicly that they "invested in the Kabwe mine and provided technical advice at times until 1974," and that was the full extent of their involvement.[2]

This report, based on new evidence, seeks to demonstrate that this is not the limit of Anglo American's involvement. As this report shows, the entire board of directors at Broken Hill all worked for Anglo American in senior roles. The people who controlled Anglo American were quite literally the same people who controlled Broken Hill. Anglo operated the mine and repeatedly prolonged operations to keep it open.

> ***The people who controlled Anglo American were quite literally the same people who controlled Broken Hill.***

Documents from the mining industry archives in Zambia show how the mine operated as a direct subsidiary of Anglo American. Anglo never intended these documents to become public and so they provide insights into the company's operations and thinking at the time.

[2] Anglo American, 'Our Position on the Kabwe Legal Claim'. Accessed 23 June 2026. www.angloamerican.com/media/our-position-on-kabwe

These documents include company reports, memos, letters and telegrams detailing everything from day-to-day operations at Broken Hill's mine and smelters to who was appointed to the company board. All these are housed today in an archive in Ndola, Zambia, and can be accessed there, while the archive of the parent company Anglo American remains strictly closed.[3] These documents became public because Zambia's government nationalised mines owned by Anglo in 1974 and the companies' internal documents in the country were included too.

Mining has economically transformed some parts of Southern Africa, but it has often come with a terrible cost. People living in Kabwe today are the ones paying that cost.

Anglo today has the resources and the duty to clean up the mine site and prevent toxic contamination from harming future generations. Anglo has a moral responsibility to resolve the public health disaster in Kabwe.

Demand for critical minerals is rising rapidly and there is a significant danger that the events of the recent past will be repeated around the world. The energy transition and rising military investment means that much larger quantities of metals will be extracted in the near future, with all the risks of greater damage to the environment and human health.

[3] Documents in this report were sourced from the Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines (ZCCM) archive in Ndola, Zambia.


Photo: Leon Sadiki

WHAT HAPPENED AT KABWE?

The city of Kabwe owes its origins to a large deposit of lead and zinc in the ground underneath it. The metals that are today poisoning the city also gave life to it over a century ago. This deposit was first identified by prospectors in 1902 and was quickly developed as a mine by a new company registered in London in 1904, the Rhodesia Broken Hill Development Company.

People already living in the area had little say in the development of the mine. Zambia was then a British colony named Northern Rhodesia and Africans were excluded from political power and regarded as nothing more than a disposable source of unskilled labour.

> ***The mine's future looked uncertain. All this changed in 1925 when the South African mining conglomerate Anglo American expanded in Zambia and took over.***

The mine, however, was not an successful venture at first and closed down repeatedly during its first twenty years of operations. The minerals were complex to process, transportation was expensive and there were repeated shortages of labour as local people sought to avoid dangerous and difficult mine work.[4] The mine closed and re-opened repeatedly during this period and its future looked uncertain.

All this changed in 1925 when the South African mining conglomerate Anglo American expanded in Zambia and took over Broken Hill Mine. Anglo steadily integrated the mine into their wider corporate structure and in 1937 were appointed as managers to the mine, making the Rhodesia Broken Hill Development Company a subsidiary company of Anglo American. This situation continued until the 1970s.

The mine's own history of operations explains that after Anglo American were appointed as consulting engineers they comprehensively re-organised and expanded operations over the next 30 years.[5] Anglo built a new smelter, an underground mine, a new hydroelectric plant to power it all and expanded the town to accommodate a larger workforce. The company also recruited new experienced technical staff from other lead and zinc mines around the world.

[4] Buzandi Mufinda, 'A History of Mining in Broken Hill (Kabwe), 1902-1929)', (MA thesis, University of the Free State, 2015), 23-35.
[5] The Zambian Broken Hill Development Co., Commission of Inquiry, Item 3: A Description of Operations. ZCCM T18.6A.

Broken Hill Mine became a large industrial operation where almost 3,000 people were employed in mining, engineering and processing. The town of Kabwe expanded too.

Much of this town was a company town where the mining company owned the houses and infrastructure. In building this town, Anglo American made a decision that had terrible lasting consequences: housing for the mine's African workforce was built right next to the mine. What was called the 'Mine African Township' was only a quarter mile from the open pits and the mine dumps.



Source: Rhodesia Broken Hill Development Company Limited, Annual Report, 1956.

Broken Hill was more than a mine. The lead and zinc ore extracted underground went through several stages of processing before the metal was something that could be used by industry. A technical article written by the mine's manager in 1970 inadvertently documents the severe environmental and health hazards that this processing involved during a single year of the mine's operations.[6]

Significantly, the article identifies "unaccounted losses" amounting to 8.6% of all the lead fed into the Imperial Smelting Furnace during 1970. This meant that around 3,400 tonnes of lead was 'lost' during the year, much as fumes and dust that went directly into the air and soil from the furnace alone. These were not the only 'losses'. The acid plant, built in 1926, had direct emissions of sulphur dioxide into the local atmosphere, a gas which is toxic to humans and responsible for acid rain.

Metals leached into the soil and the groundwater in other ways too. During that year, 66,536 tonnes of material from the leach plant were deposited in dumps around Kabwe and this included over 3,300 tonnes of lead as well as arsenic and cyanide. This material was deposited as a fine, wet residue that was easily blown across Kabwe by the wind when it dried.[7]

The otherwise detailed article makes no reference to emissions control performance or monitoring of worker health.

[6] B. Barlin, 'Metallurgical Practice at the Broken Hill Division of Nchanga Consolidated Copper Mines Limited', Geologie en Minjbouw, 51, 3 (1972): 423-448.
[7] Ibid.

1970 was not a one-off, unusually polluting year either. Reports for previous and subsequent years show the same trend. In 1974, the last year Anglo ran the mine, 8.5% of lead sent to the furnace was 'lost' during processing and thousands of tonnes of lead were deposited in dumps around Kabwe.[8]

8.5%

the percentage of lead sent to the furnace that was 'lost' during processing in 1974, the last year Anglo ran the mine

The health effects of lead exposure are wide-ranging, particularly on children and women of child-bearing age. Lead is a potent neurotoxin that disrupts the development of the brain and nervous system. Effects of exposure for children include reduced intelligence, delays in language and learning, and an increased risk of attention disorders and behavioural difficulties. These problems often persist into adulthood, diminishing opportunities for education and employment. There are also physical effects: abdominal pain, vomiting, muscle weakness, growth problems such as stunting, and anaemia are all associated and the risk and severity rise with increasing exposure.

Crucially, there is no safe threshold of lead exposure. Even the lowest measurable exposures can harm a child's development.

The way that the town was built around the mine and the way lead was extracted guaranteed that Kabwe's residents had a massive and long-term exposure to lead poisoning.

[8] Monthly Metallurgical Report, Broken Hill Division, June 1974. ZCCM 3.1.2B.

WHO ARE AngloAmerican ?

Anglo American is a multinational mining company with its roots in South Africa. The company was founded in South Africa in 1917 by Ernest Oppenheimer originally to develop gold mines in Johannesburg, but its size and scope rapidly expanded.[9] Anglo soon spread throughout Southern Africa and became the largest company in the region with interests spanning coal, copper, diamonds, gold, lead and zinc.

Anglo was the largest company in Zambia in the colonial period and during Zambia's first decade of independence. The company first acquired interests in the territory in the 1920s and incorporated a subsidiary company Rhodesian Anglo American in 1928 to manage these interests. Although the company was established in London, it was closely integrated with Anglo American in South Africa. The chairman of Rhodesian Anglo American was Ernest Oppenheimer, who was also the chairman of Anglo American, and when he died in 1957 his son Harry Oppenheimer became chairman.

Rhodesian Anglo American was renamed Zambian Anglo American after Zambia became independent in 1964, and by then the company had relocated to the capital Lusaka. The structure of this company was a little unusual though. Zambian Anglo American was a mining company but did not own any mines. Instead, it acted as a holding company that held stakes in other companies, and these companies operated the mines.

[9] Duncan Innes, Anglo American and the Rise of Modern South Africa (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1984), 91-93

> ***The result was a deliberately complicated ownership structure that allowed Anglo to exercise control over companies without owning a majority stake in them***

This was an integral part of Anglo's wider corporate strategy. Anglo held stakes in many different mining and investment companies, and these companies all held stakes in each other. For example, two investment companies Anglo controlled in the 1960s were Charter Consolidated and Johannesburg Consolidated Investment and both these companies had shares in Anglo's mines in Zambia. The mines in Zambia also had shares in each other.

The result was a deliberately complicated ownership structure that allowed Anglo to exercise control over companies without owning a majority stake in these companies. Zambian Anglo American's own reports show that the company only had a minority stake in most of their mines in Zambia.[10] The exact interest of Anglo American in these mines was complicated and was not made publicly available.[11]

One historian referred to this system of organisation as a "solar system" with subsidiary companies orbiting around Anglo American.[12] Anglo itself referred to it as a 'group' system.

[10] Zambian Anglo American, 39th Annual Report (1968), 17.
[11] Simon Cunningham, 'Nationalization and the Zambian Copper Mining Industry', (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1985), 69.
[12] Innes, Anglo American, 136.

It was a clever system. The use of small direct stakes and complex cross-shareholding allowed Anglo to maintain control over individual mines without needing to provide the finance to buy a majority stake.

At the same time, control over the board of directors and appointment of managers – all of whom were from within the Anglo group – enabled Anglo to keep things under centralised control. No-one at the time was in any doubt about who was really in charge and Anglo were clear about it. At Anglo American's annual general meetings, Ernest Oppenheimer would refer to workers at mines in Zambia as "our employees" and the companies as part of the group.[13]

This was the situation in the mid-twentieth century at the pinnacle of Anglo's influence in Southern Africa. Since then, the company's geographical focus and strategy has changed decisively and since the 1990s it has steadily shifted investments out of the region.

In 1999, Anglo's head office moved from Johannesburg to London and, at the time of writing, it is preparing to move again to Vancouver following a planned merger with Canadian company Teck Resources. Anglo has now sold most of its remaining mines in Southern Africa, leaving it with only a handful of operations in the region. This move away from Southern Africa comes amid widespread calls for accountability for its environmental and human rights impacts.

[13] Ernest Oppenheimer, 'The Advancement of Africans in Industry', Optima III, 3 (1953): 1-3.


Leon Sadiki

HISTORICAL OWNERSHIP OF KABWE

No-one contests that Kabwe is a severely polluted town where residents have chronic health problems and children face long-term social challenges caused by exposure to lead. Instead, Anglo American contests that this has anything to do with them.

The company has made its position clear and claims that it:

> *was involved in the Kabwe mine via an indirect minority shareholding (of ±10%) in the company that operated the mine: Zambia Broken Hill Development Company Limited... [Anglo American] provided certain technical services to the mine, but at no stage owned or operated the mine.[14]*

Anglo did much more than this though. Broken Hill was not an independent company in which Anglo held a small stake. It was an integral part of a wider company. Examining how the mine operated reveals this.

[14] Anglo American, 'Our Position on the Kabwe Legal Claim'. Accessed 23 June 2026. www.angloamerican.com/media/our-position-on-kabwe

The most obvious way to show that Broken Hill was under the control of Anglo American is to look at the governing body of the company, the board of directors:

Role	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970
Chairman	H.F. Oppenheimer	H.F. Oppenheimer	H.F. Oppenheimer	H.F. Oppenheimer	H.F. Oppenheimer	H.F. Oppenheimer	H.F. Oppenheimer	H.F. Oppenheimer
Deputy Chairmen	Keith Acutt	Keith Acutt	Keith Acutt	Keith Acutt	Keith Acutt	Keith Acutt	Keith Acutt	Keith Acutt
	P.H.A. Brownrigg	P.H.A. Brownrigg	G.W.H. Relly	G.W.H. Relly	G.W.H. Relly	G.W.H. Relly	M.B. Hofmeyr	M.B. Hofmeyr
Directors	C.P.S. Allen	D.O Beckingham	D.O Beckingham	D.O Beckingham	D.O Beckingham	D.O Beckingham	D.O Beckingham	D.O Beckingham
	D.O Beckingham	W. Marshall Clark	P.H.A. Brownrigg	P.H.A. Brownrigg	P.H.A. Brownrigg	P.H.A. Brownrigg	D.A. Etheredge	D.A. Etheredge
	W. Marshall Clark	G.W.H. Relly	H.M. Forrest	H.M. Forrest	H.M. Forrest	M.B. Hofmeyr	G.W.H. Relly	G.W.H. Relly
	H. H. Taylor	H. H. Taylor	H. H. Taylor	H. H. Taylor	H. H. Taylor	H. H. Taylor	M.W. Stephenson	M.W. Stephenson
	W.D. Wilson	W.D. Wilson	W.D. Wilson	W.D. Wilson	W.D. Wilson	W.D. Wilson	W.D. Wilson	W.D. Wilson
Alternate Directors	I.M. Cowan	I.M. Cowan	I.M. Cowan	I.M. Cowan	M.B. Hofmeyr	P.J.R. Leyden	P.J.R. Leyden	P.J.R. Leyden
	E.R. Denman	E.R. Denman	M.B. Hofmeyr	M.B. Hofmeyr	N.K. Kinkead-Weekes	K.T. Malinki	K.T. Malinki	K.T. Malinki
	H.M. Forrest	H.M. Forrest	M.W. Rushton	M.W. Rushton	P.J.R. Leyden	M.S. McCrum	M.S. McCrum	M.S. McCrum
	N.K. Kinkead-Weekes	N.K. Kinkead-Weekes	N.K. Kinkead-Weekes	N.K. Kinkead-Weekes	K.T. Malinki	O.T. Phillips	O.T. Phillips	O.T. Phillips
	R.B. Loder	R.B. Loder		M.S. McCrum	M.S. McCrum	D.A.R. Phiri	D.A.R. Phiri	D.A.R. Phiri
	D.G. Nicholson	D.G. Nicholson		O.T. Phillips	O.T. Phillips	M.W. Stephenson	M.W. Stephenson	M.W. Stephenson
	J.M.F. Phillimore	J.M.F. Phillimore		D.A.R. Phiri	D.A.R. Phiri			

Source: Zambia Broken Hill Development Company Limited, Annual Reports, 1963-70

Every member of the board of directors of the Zambia Broken Hill Development Company in the 1960s worked for Anglo American. This would be an extraordinary coincidence if this was really an independent company. Anglo claim that they only held "an indirect minority shareholding" in the mine but – due to the complex system of ownership described above – the company was nevertheless able to appoint every single director, and these were the people who controlled the Zambia Broken Hill Development Company.

> ***The board members were not ordinary employees of Anglo American either... This was the elite of the company***

The board members were not ordinary employees of Anglo American either. The chairman of the board was Harry Oppenheimer, who was also the chairman of Anglo American for 25 years and the son of the company's founder Ernest Oppenheimer. The deputy chairman Keith Acutt had joined Anglo in 1928 and was the deputy chairman of Anglo American too. He was also godfather to Harry Oppenheimer's daughter. Murray Hofmeyr, Doug Beckingham and Gavin Relly were also on the board of directors of Anglo American. Relly eventually succeeded Harry Oppenheimer as company chairman. William Wilson – a director of Broken Hill for almost a decade – had worked for Anglo since 1946 and had succeeded Harry Oppenheimer as managing director when Oppenheimer became company chairman.[15] This was the elite of the company.

[15] Michael Cardo, Harry Oppenheimer: Diamonds, Gold and Dynasty (Jonathan Ball: Johannesburg, 2023), 48, 102, 165, 179, 287, 309.

This was a normal part of Anglo's business strategy. As explained above, individual mines and companies were controlled by an interlocking network of shareholding and directors which meant that even if Anglo's direct shareholding was small they still controlled the mine. Anglo referred to these mines as part of the company "Group".

Anglo American were open about this at the time and proud of their operations at Broken Hill. An information leaflet given to new expatriate mine employees in Zambia in 1970 explained that "The Anglo American Corporation was founded in 1917 by Sir Ernest Oppenheimer" and "in Zambia it manages mines employing 27,000 people." The leaflet includes a list of the "main operating companies of the group in Zambia" and it includes Broken Hill Mine.[16]

The fact that the mine was controlled by Anglo and run as part of a wider company is very obvious when we examine how the mine was run.

Take the company accounts, for example. These contain a list of creditors and debtors for the mine. These are divided into two revealing categories: the first category contains mines owned by Anglo American and the Anglo American Corporation of South Africa as Broken Hill's parent company. The second category contains all other creditors and debtors.[17]

[16] Life in Zambia with AAC, ZCCM 17.4.8B.
[17] Rhodesia Broken Hill Dev Co Ltd Year End Schedules as at 31 December 1964, ZCCM 2.9.1B.

The way that senior employees joined Broken Hill Mine shows this too. Managers, department heads and senior technical employees were appointed from other companies owned by Anglo, and almost never from other companies. Internal company documents called the appointment of new staff at Broken Hill "inter-company transfers," precisely because they were not joining a new company.[18] Similarly, people joining Broken Hill in more senior positions from other Anglo mines were described as being "promoted".[19]

The same applied to Anglo's other companies in Zambia People were promoted or transferred from Zambia to Anglo's head office in Johannesburg. Documents from the time state this clearly: "Mr Leyden, former manager of Anglo American Corporation (Central Africa), has been transferred to AAC's offices in Johannesburg to take up a senior appointment."[20]



focus on PEOPLE

LEYDEN TO TAKE UP TOP POST IN ANGLO

ZAMBIA mining industry has lost two valuable and likeable persons — Mr Peter Leyden and his wife Annette — said Mr Tawdeuz Moskwa, general manager of Broken Hill division, at the couple's farewell party.

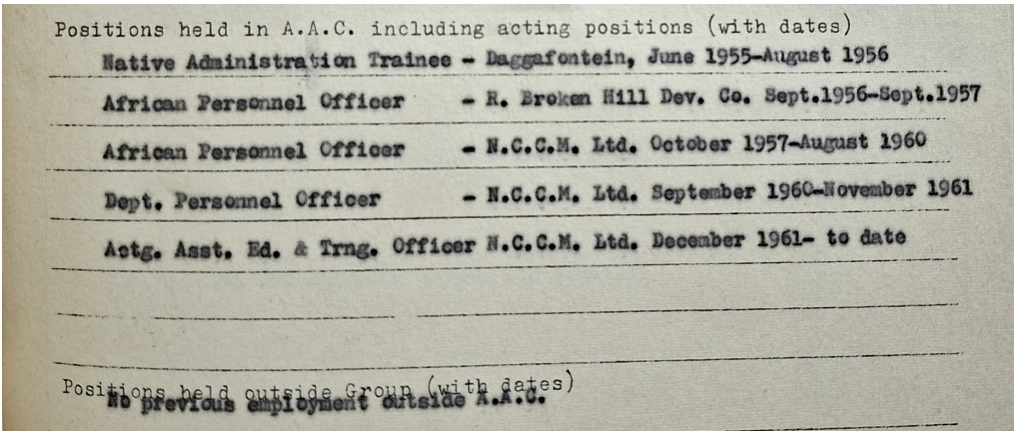
It was all smiles at Leydens' farewell party. (l-r) are: Mr Leyden, Mrs Leyden, Mr Moskwa, Mrs Eileen Shutt, wife of Dr David Shutt, manager at Broken Hill, and Mrs

Source: 'Leyden takes up top post in Anglo', Mining Mirror, 27 November 1973

[18] Minutes of the Anglo American Corporation of South Africa Personnel Sub-Panel, 10 May 1962. ZCCM 19.4.1B.
[19] 'Promotion for Lindsay', Mining Mirror, 16 October 1973.
[20] 'Leyden takes up top post in Anglo', Mining Mirror, 27 November 1973.

How this worked is that vacancies for senior staff and managers at Broken Hill Mine were advertised internally within Anglo and decisions on whether to transfer people were made by an internal company panel. This panel also tried to fill vacancies at Anglo's head office in Johannesburg.[21] The new mine manager at Broken Hill appointed shortly after Zambia's independence, for example, was transferred from a copper mine owned by Anglo American.[22]

Documents from this panel show that applicants for jobs at Broken Hill had their work experience divided into two categories: "Positions held in Anglo American Corporation" and "Positions held outside the Group". The first category listed applicants' work experience at mines owned by Anglo in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Zambia because it was all one company.



Positions held in A.A.C. including acting positions (with dates)

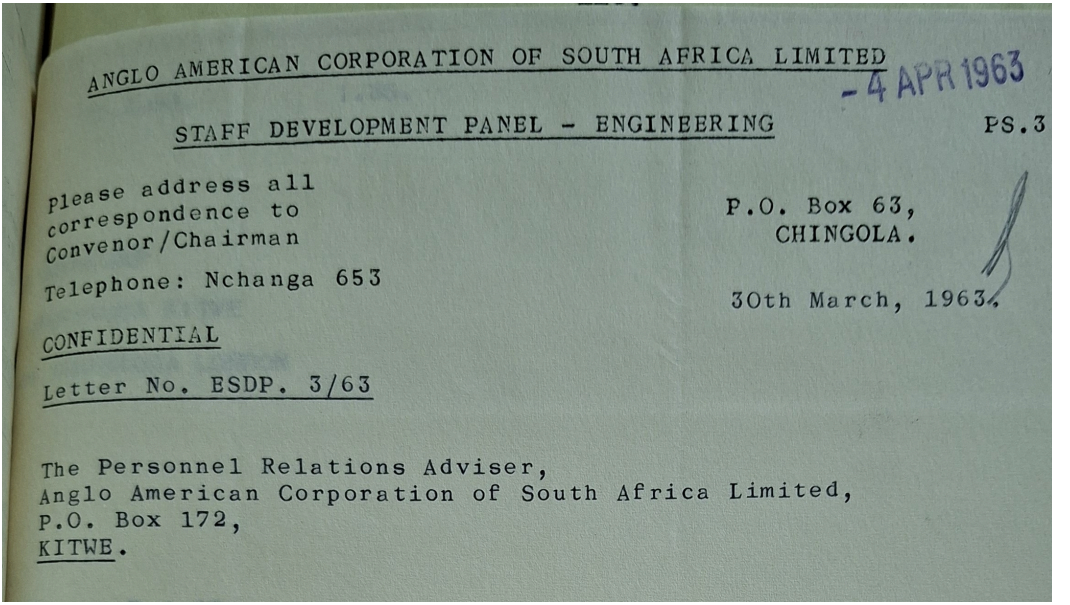
Native Administration Trainee	- Daggafontein, June 1955-August 1956
African Personnel Officer	- R. Broken Hill Dev. Co. Sept.1956-Sept.1957
African Personnel Officer	- N.C.C.M. Ltd. October 1957-August 1960
Dept. Personnel Officer	- N.C.C.M. Ltd. September 1960-November 1961
Actg. Asst. Ed. & Trng. Officer	N.C.C.M. Ltd. December 1961- to date

Positions held outside Group (with dates)

No previous employment outside A.A.C.

Source: Personnel Sub-Panel, Anglo American Corporation of South Africa, 19 February 1962. ZCCM 19.4.1B.

[21] Notes on a Staff Development Panel Meeting, 14 October 1966. ZCCM 19.4.1B.
[22] 'Two AAC Appointments', Nchanga Weekly, 28 May 1965.



ANGLO AMERICAN CORPORATION OF SOUTH AFRICA LIMITED

- 4 APR 1963

STAFF DEVELOPMENT PANEL - ENGINEERING PS.3

Please address all correspondence to Convenor/Chairman

Telephone: Nchanga 653

P.O. Box 63, CHINGOLA.

30th March, 1963.

CONFIDENTIAL

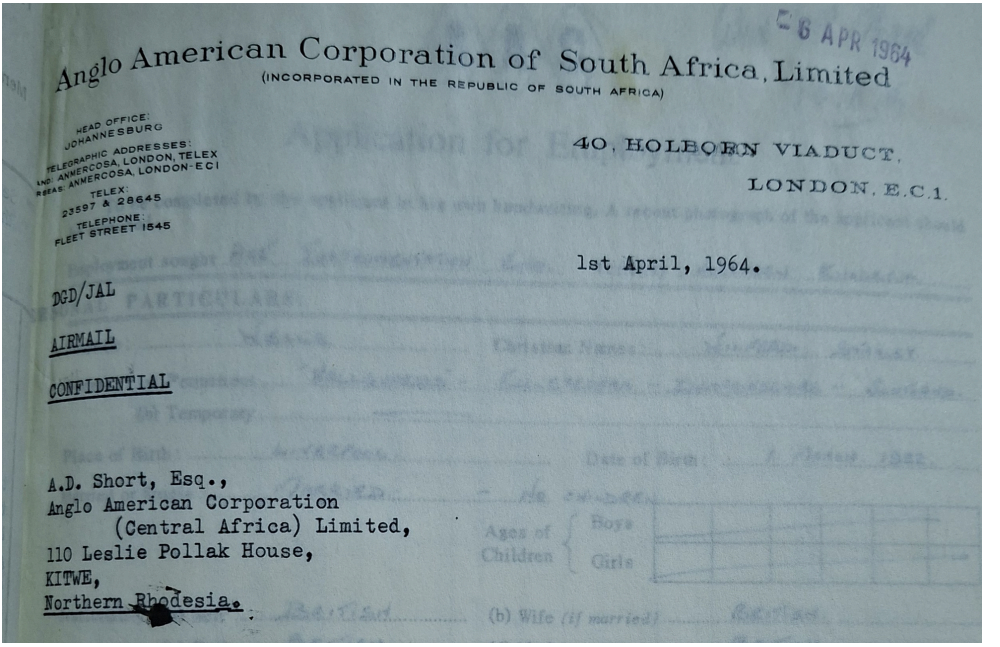
Letter No. ESDP. 3/63

The Personnel Relations Adviser,
Anglo American Corporation of South Africa Limited,
P.O. Box 172,
KITWE.

Source: Staff Development Panel – Engineering, Anglo American Corporation of South Africa, 30 March 1963. ZCCM 19.4.1B.

Most tellingly, Broken Hill Mine could not recruit its own staff. Technical, professional and administrative staff outside the Anglo group did get jobs at Broken Hill but they were all recruited by Anglo American South Africa, who had an office in central London. This office advertised jobs at Broken Hill, interviewed applicants, selected successful candidates and made job offers. Letters sent by the office bear the heading "Anglo American Corporation of South Africa."

[see next page]



Anglo American Corporation of South Africa, Limited
(INCORPORATED IN THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA)

HEAD OFFICE:
JOHANNESBURG
TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESSES:
AND: ANMERCOSA, LONDON, TELEX
RHEAS: ANMERCOSA, LONDON-EC1
TELEX:
23597 & 28645
TELEPHONE:
FLEET STREET 1545

6 APR 1964

40, HOLBORN VIADUCT,
LONDON, E.C.1.

1st April, 1964.

DGD/JAL

AIRMAIL

CONFIDENTIAL

A.D. Short, Esq.,
Anglo American Corporation
(Central Africa) Limited,
110 Leslie Pollak House,
KITWE,
Northern Rhodesia.

Source: Letter from D.S. Dobson to A.D. Short, 1 April 1964. ZCCM 19.4.1B.

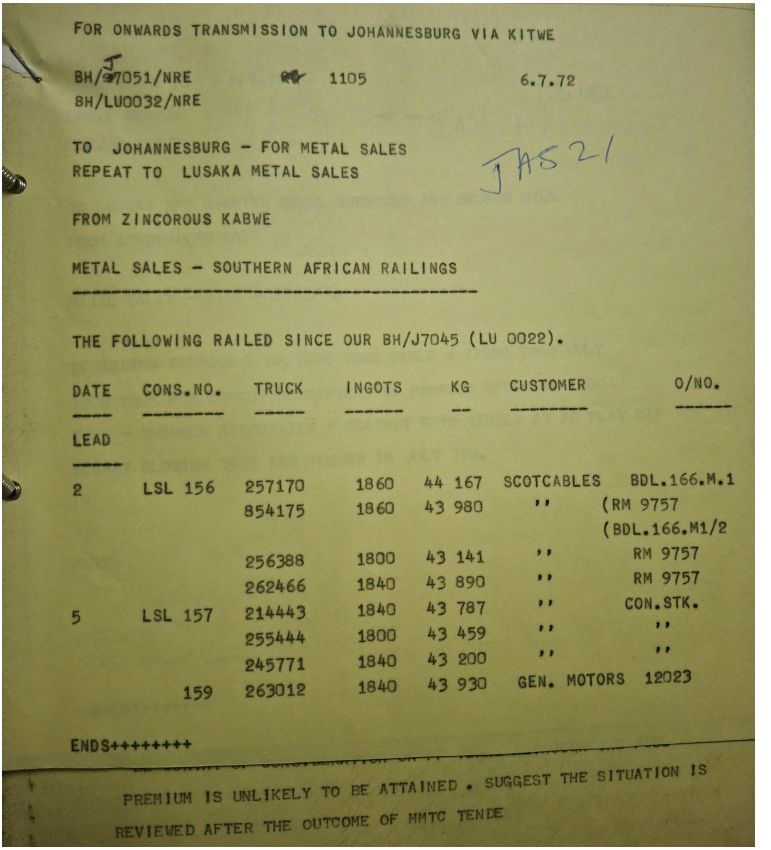
Applicants who were not offered jobs at mines in Zambia were instead encouraged to apply to Anglo's mines in South Africa.[23] When one man wrote directly to Broken Hill asking for possible job openings in geology, he was told to contact Anglo American's London office instead.[24]

A typical telegram sent from the London office at the time reads: "Have already made offers to five miners, six engineers and eight metallurgists in accordance with normal practice... Will notify you details when negotiations including examination results are nearing completion."[25]

[23] Telegram from Anmercosa London to Anmercosa Kitwe, 21 April 1964. ZCCM 2.8.2B.
[24] Letter from G.M. Hindle, Group Training Officer to R.J. Harston, 5 Nov 1963. ZCCM 2.8.2B.
[25] Telegram from Anmercosa London to Anmercosa Kitwe, 7 May 1963. ZCCM 2.8.2B.

Broken Hill Mine had no say over who Anglo appointed, which is clearly not how independent companies operate.

More fundamentally, Anglo American handled the sale of all lead and zinc mined and processed by Broken Hill. The chain of command is obvious in surviving communications between Kabwe and Johannesburg: Anglo's headquarters in Johannesburg issued instructions and the mine in Kabwe followed them and reported what they had done.



FOR ONWARDS TRANSMISSION TO JOHANNESBURG VIA KITWE

BH/J7051/NRE 1105 6.7.72
BH/LU0032/NRE

TO JOHANNESBURG - FOR METAL SALES
REPEAT TO LUSAKA METAL SALES

JAS 21

FROM ZINCOROUS KABWE

METAL SALES - SOUTHERN AFRICAN RAILINGS

THE FOLLOWING RAILED SINCE OUR BH/J7045 (LU 0022).

DATE	CONS.NO.	TRUCK	INGOTS	KG	CUSTOMER	O/NO.
LEAD						
2	LSL 156	257170	1860	44 167	SCOTCABLES	BDL.166.M.1
		854175	1860	43 980	"	(RM 9757 (BDL.166.M1/2
		256388	1800	43 141	"	RM 9757
		262466	1840	43 890	"	RM 9757
5	LSL 157	214443	1840	43 787	"	CON.STK.
		255444	1800	43 459	"	"
		245771	1840	43 200	"	"
	159	263012	1840	43 930	GEN. MOTORS	12023

ENDS++++++++

PREMIUM IS UNLIKELY TO BE ATTAINED . SUGGEST THE SITUATION IS REVIEWED AFTER THE OUTCOME OF MMTC TENDE

Source: Telegram from Zincorous Kabwe to Johannesburg Metal Sales, 6 July 1972. ZCCM 17.3.6C.

On receiving orders that exceeded the mine's metal stockpile, for example, managers at Broken Hill reported what was available and then asked Anglo which order they should prioritise.[26] When one industrial customer complained about the grade of metal received, the mine management requested that Anglo's Johannesburg office "let us know the minimum requirements regarding impurities."[27]

Managers at Broken Hill sometimes did not even know where the metals they produced was destined. In 1972, for example, company officials in Zambia sent a message to Johannesburg asking for details on "the final destination" of 210 tonnes of zinc that the mine had just sent by rail because they were interested in how it would be used.[28]

The pattern is company officials in Kabwe following instructions and reporting to the Anglo American head office what they have done.

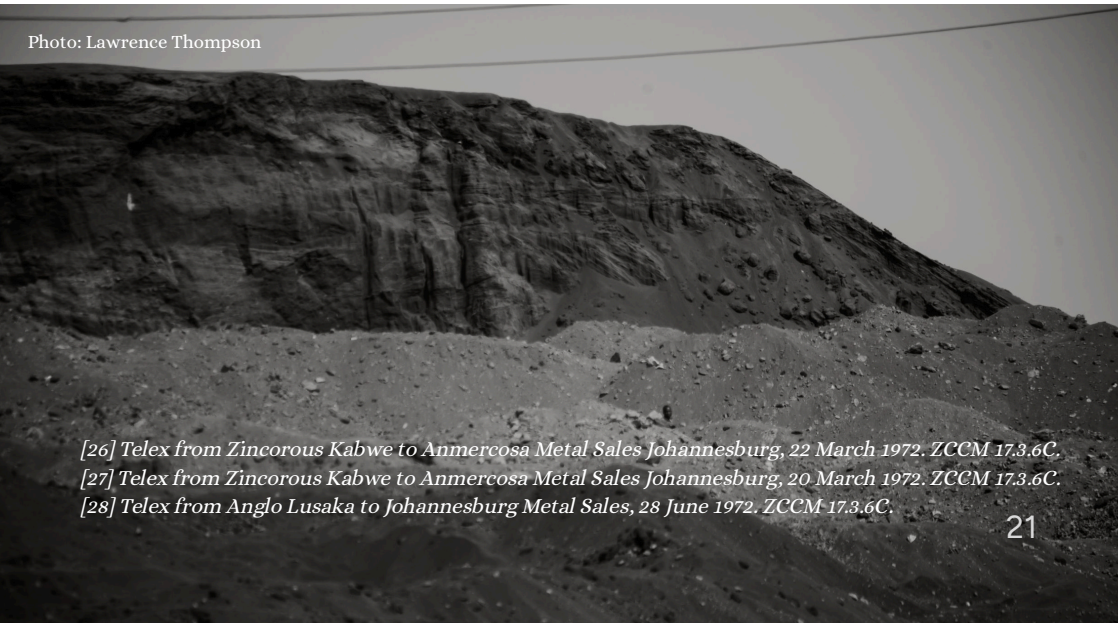


Photo: Lawrence Thompson

[26] Telex from Zincorous Kabwe to Anmercosa Metal Sales Johannesburg, 22 March 1972. ZCCM 17.3.6C.
[27] Telex from Zincorous Kabwe to Anmercosa Metal Sales Johannesburg, 20 March 1972. ZCCM 17.3.6C.
[28] Telex from Anglo Lusaka to Johannesburg Metal Sales, 28 June 1972. ZCCM 17.3.6C.

THE END OF THE ANGLO ERA IN KABWE

The end of Anglo's control over Broken Hill came in two stages. The first occurred in 1970 when Zambia's new independent government purchased a 51% stake in Zambian Anglo American and the other big mining company in the country, Roan Selection Trust. This effectively nationalised the mining industry and brought it under state ownership.

Anglo expressed regret at this. The company's chairman Harry Oppenheimer wrote to Zambia's President Kenneth Kaunda that "I would not be human if I did not regret the loosening of the direct ties between our group and Zambia which is the inevitable consequence of these developments." [29] What Oppenheimer called "direct ties" would years later be re-cast as an "indirect minority shareholding" by Anglo today.

Three large copper mines and a refinery owned by Anglo American in Zambia became part of new state-owned company Nchanga Consolidated Copper Mines (NCCM), though Broken Hill was not yet included.[30] Anglo American remained a minority shareholder through their new subsidiary company Zambia Copper Investments, whose board of directors included Murray Hofmeyr and Gavin Relly, previously directors of Broken Hill.[31]

[29] Cardo, Oppenheimer, 244
[30] Circular to Shareholders and Loan Stockholders, Zambian Anglo American, 16 June 1970. ZCCM 3.1.1B.
[31] Circular to Members and Notice of General Meeting, Zambia Copper Investments Limited, 29 October 1974. ZCCM 12.3.4B.

Not much changed at the mines themselves though. This is because Zambia's government did not try to run the mines they had just bought. Instead, Anglo were given management contracts to continue running them and for the next four years little changed in the industry.

The management contracts granted Anglo the responsibility for all managerial, financial and technical matters as well as day-to-day operations at the mines, recruitment of staff, sale and marketing of metals and the right to nominate a managing director for NCCM.[32]

> ***Internal company documents called the appointment of new staff at Broken Hill "inter-company transfers," precisely because they were not joining a new company.***

NCCM had a board of directors with appointees from the Zambian government and Anglo American. The majority of directors were from the government but Anglo's directors had the power of veto over expansion plans, exploration, prospecting, new investments or diverting money from profits.[33]

[32] Mark Bostock and Charles Harvey, Economic independence and Zambian copper: A case study of foreign investment (New York: Praeger Books, 1972), Appendix A.
[33] Circular to Members and Notice of General Meeting, Zambia Copper Investments Limited, 29 October 1974. ZCCM 12.3.4B.

The situation changed more slowly at Broken Hill Mine as the mine was not originally part of NCCM. This changed on 28 June 1971 when the Zambia Broken Hill Development Company became the Broken Hill Division of NCCM.[34]

This meant the mine came under Anglo's management contract and so Anglo continued to control everyday operations at Broken Hill, as well as investment decisions, staff appointments and sales.

The Managing Director appointed to run NCCM was Murray Hofmeyr who was on the board of Anglo American. When Hofmeyr was promoted to Anglo's headquarters in August 1972, the new Managing Director was Zach de Beer, another senior Anglo employee.[35]

De Beer worked at Anglo American in Johannesburg before being appointed to the job in Zambia. After he left Zambia, he was appointed to Anglo's board of directors in 1974 and remained on the board for many years.[36]

[34] Nchanga Consolidated Copper Mines, Minutes of Board Meeting held on 24 June 1971. ZCCM 17.3.3C.
[35] Nchanga Consolidated Copper Mines, Board Meeting, 31 August 1972. ZCCM 17.3.3C
[36] 'Dr. Zacharias "Zac" Johannes De Beer', South African History Online, 15 October 2021. Accessed 2 July 2026. https://sahistory.org.za/people/dr-zacharias-zac-johannes-de-beer

> ***The people who made decisions about production methods, levels of production, where mine dumps should be located and where worker housing should be located all worked for Anglo American.***

De Beer's Christmas message in December 1973 expressed:

> *"The hope that 1974 will see the continuation of the fruitful partnership between the Zambian Government and the Anglo American group of companies which has meant so much for the mining industry and for the nation."[37]*

De Beer got his wish, even after the Zambian government cancelled Anglo's management contract. Anglo remained the principal minority shareholder in Zambia's nationalised mining industry until the industry was privatised again in the late 1990s. Even in 1999, Anglo still held a 27% stake in Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines (ZCCM) – the state-owned company that ran the industry – and Anglo employees remained on the company's board of directors. [38]

We can pinpoint the moment when Anglo American ceased to have control over the mine from a series of monthly progress reports with contractors building a new processing plant. Senior mine managers are listed as working for "AAC Kabwe" in meeting minutes until 31 December 1974 and then "NCCM Kabwe" in meetings from 1 January 1975.[39] Anglo's era was over, though the decisions taken during that time have had enduring consequences.

[37] Zach de Beer, 'Maintain Industrial Harmony', Mining Mirror, 21 December 1973.
[38] Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines, Annual Report 1999, 31 December 1974. ZCCM 13.3.6C.
[39] Waelz Kiln Plant 65th Site Progress Meeting, 31 December 1974. ZCCM 13.3.6C.



WHAT DID THIS MEAN IN PRACTICE?

Establishing Anglo American operated Broken Hill Mine in Kabwe for decades is not simply about correcting the historical record or highlighting the convenient mistruths of one of the world's large mining companies. It establishes that Anglo have a moral responsibility to clean up a site that they were largely responsible for polluting.

At Broken Hill Mine for many decades the people who made decisions about production methods, levels of production, where mine dumps should be located and where worker housing should be located all worked for Anglo American. Anglo appointed these people and gave them instructions. Company officials at Broken Hill ran the mine's operations as part of a broader Anglo American group and deferred to decisions made by Zambian Anglo American and Anglo American South Africa.

We can identify the people who made decisions on day-to-day operations at Broken Hill from historical records and it was people who spend their working lives with Anglo American.

In 1973, Anglo promoted two managers at Broken Hill Mine. The first, Bernard Barlin, had worked for Anglo since 1949 and had been mine manager at Broken Hill since 1968 and was promoted to consulting metallurgist within the company. The second was Barlin's replacement as manager, David Shutt, who had been in charge of the Imperial Smelting Furnace at Broken Hill since 1968.[40] This was the plant that dumped thousands of tonnes of lead into the local environment every year.

Beyond the day-to-day operations of the mine, crucial decisions taken by Anglo in successive decades prolonged the life of Broken Hill Mine and thus increased the amount of lead in the local environment. This was described openly at the time in publications produced by the mining industry to promote the industry.

This chain of decisions goes back to the 1920s when Anglo first took over Broken Hill. At that time, lead and zinc ore at the open pit was forecast to be exhausted by 1936, which would have forced the closure of the mine. Lead mining even briefly ceased in 1929.

[40] 'Senior AAC Men on the Move', Mining Mirror, 10 July 1973

Instead, Broken Hill was saved by a "development programme of the mine by the Anglo American Corporation" which included opening an underground mine and a new power station.[41]

As a result "the mine continued to expand steadily" until the late 1950s when it was again threatened with closure. Anglo again extended the life of the mine by investing in a new furnace and this promised to keep the mine open until the early 1980s.

> ***...crucial decisions taken by Anglo in successive decades prolonged the life of Broken Hill Mine and thus increased the amount of lead in the local environment.***

The final significant decision by Anglo came in 1973 when the company commissioned a new processing plant which meant "the mine, which was threatened to close in eight years' time, will now be saved."[42] This meant that "the life of Broken Hill Mine will be extended from the present estimated 9 years to 20 years," which is exactly what happened as Kabwe Mine eventually closed in 1994.[43]

[41] 'The Birth and Survival of the "Elephant Head"', Mining Mirror, 19 March 1974.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Gilbert Katumbi, 'Broken Hill to Get New Life', Mining Mirror, 31 October 1973.

Anglo was proud of its role in keeping the mine open and overcoming difficult technical challenges at this time, and so wanted to publicise this.

There were other consequences of Anglo's decisions. Anglo had prolonged the life of the mine but, amidst low prices for lead and zinc in the 1960s, the company had declined to replace ageing equipment. This meant that the mine Anglo handed over to Zambia's government in 1974 was hardly in good shape.

In 1975, Broken Hill had to initiate a year-long project to update the plant and improve the working conditions of the workforce. This was because, as one senior engineer put it at the time, "the present plant and equipment is old and difficult to maintain and the equipment does not meet today's requirements."[44]

This was Anglo's legacy in Kabwe, decades of mining that left thousands of tonnes of toxic metals dumped around the town and an ageing mine handed over to the government. These toxic metals are still there and still harming the people living there.

[44] Frank Mukupo, 'The Mine With a Chain of Problems', Mining Mirror, 18 April 1975.

TIME FOR ANGLO AMERICAN TO DO RIGHT

Rachel Palma Randle, Director of Action for Southern Africa

The new research presented in this report puts to bed any doubts about London-headquartered Anglo American's central role in the creation of one of the world's most toxic towns.

The Kabwe, or Broken Hill, mine, was part of the Anglo American Group from 1925 to 1974. The resulting pollution has given generations of children lead poisoning, which has affected all areas of their lives, from their health to future prospects. Pollution of air, water and soil also deeply affect the lives of other residents, especially pregnant women, and stunt crops.

Yet despite rising scrutiny and class-action proceedings, the still world leading mining giant has so far avoided accountability.

This report shows that:

- Anglo integrated the mine into their corporate structure and in 1937 were appointed as managers, making the Rhodesia Broken Hill mine a direct subsidiary until the 1970s.
- Its entire board of directors all worked for Anglo in senior roles including its founder's son, Harry Oppenheimer.
- Anglo was responsible for all staffing decisions, made from headquarters in London and Johannesburg.
- When Anglo were appointed as consulting engineers it re-organised and expanded operations over the next 30 years.
- In this 'company town', housing and infrastructure was under Anglo's control. It decided to house its African workforce very close to the mine dumps.
- Anglo American operated a complex 'group' system of corporate ownership which allowed it to exercise control over companies without owning a majority stake in them.

- It was aware of significant 'losses' of lead during ore processing, which went directly into air and soil.
- Anglo prolonged the mine's life, with ageing and therefore more highly polluting equipment.

We also know from material made public during class-action proceedings against Anglo that the mine's own doctors raised concerns about lead poisoning in the 1960s, after local children died. A report Anglo commissioned from the University of Manchester confirmed the health risks. Yet most of its recommendations, such as moving worker housing away from the dumps, were ignored.

This evidence makes it hard for Anglo to continue parroting its denial of responsibility with any degree of credibility.

The people of Kabwe deserve justice and Anglo American has a moral responsibility to put things right. The pollution in Kabwe and resulting health crisis is a colonial legacy. If this mine was in the global north, surely reparations would have been made. Over 100 years after it first took over Broken Hill, pollution still saturates Kabwe's homes, roads, soil, gardens and waterways.



Loveness has two children, both with lead poisoning.

Lead still makes its way into children's bodies as they play outside, into their homes blown by the wind, into their bones when they eat lead-poisoned fruit. Mothers like Loveness agonise daily about their children's health and future.

We urge all those involved with Anglo – from shareholders to the UK Government – to demand it finally does the right thing.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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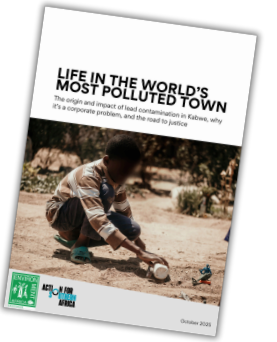


The mining industry archives in Ndola, Zambia.



FIND OUT MORE

Further reading about Kabwe by Environment Africa Zambia and Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA), including four mothers speaking about the impact on their children, at *www.actsa.org*

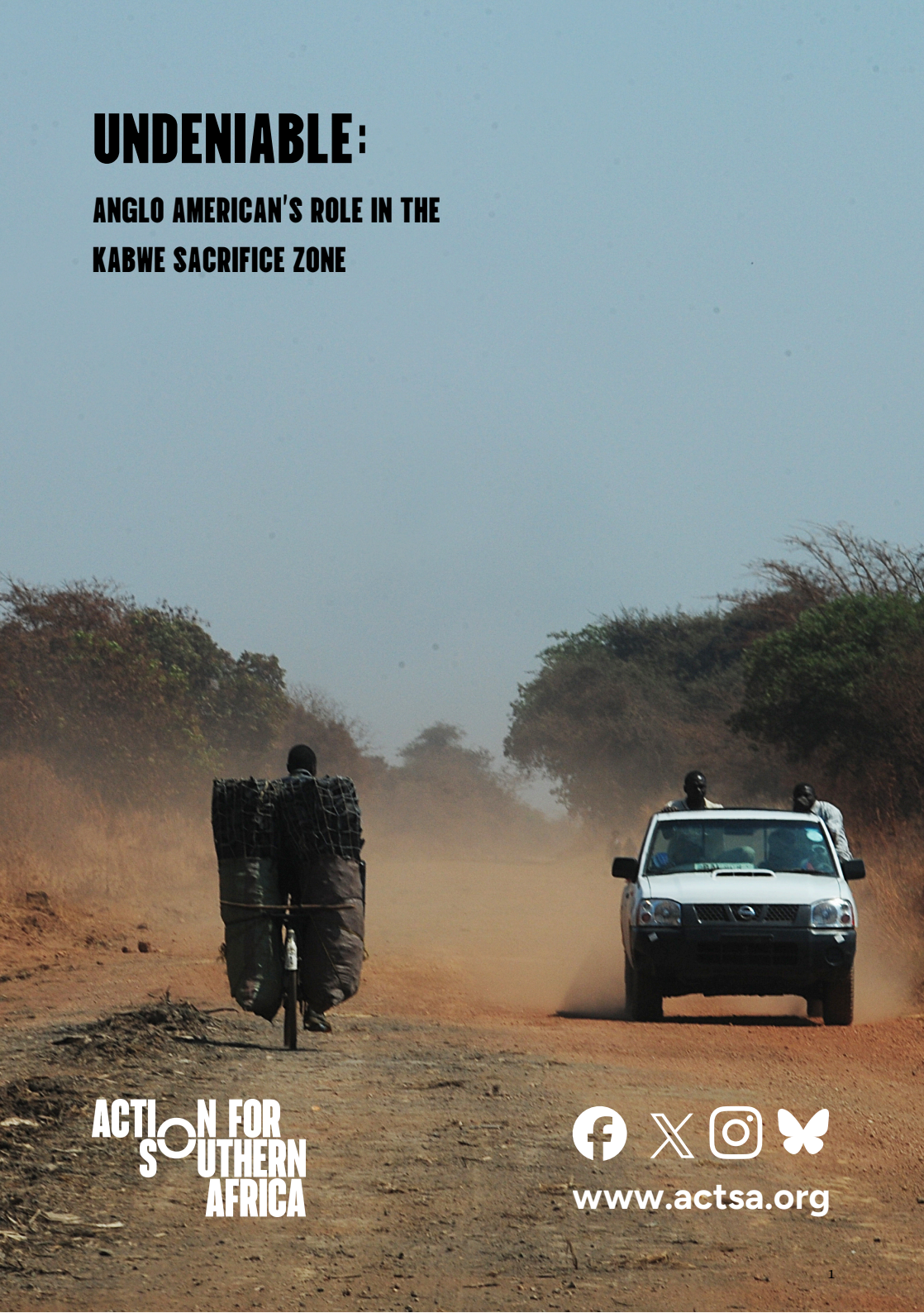


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UNDENIABLE:

ANGLO AMERICAN'S ROLE IN THE KABWE SACRIFICE ZONE



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