

## **Resistance to Imposed Development in Rural South Africa**

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Mbizana, in Mpondoland along South Africa's Wild Coast, is at the centre of a struggle between local residents, a multi-national mining company and the South African government. In 2007 the local residents formed the AmaDiba Crisis Committee (ACC) in opposition to a government-supported proposal by Mineral Commodities Ltd, an Australian company, to mine their communal land. The mining venture, Xolobeni Mineral Sands, proposes to strip away indigenous vegetation, so they can mine valuable titanium along a 22 km stretch of coastline in Mbizana. The ACC opposes this form of neo-liberal development. It argues that the mining company and the government have violated established democratic processes and undermined the local community's control over communal land. The ACC's resistance is informed by four interlinked issues: the lack of consultation about development strategies, communal land rights, threats to livelihood strategies, and the lack of legitimacy of those who ostensibly represent the community. The formation of the ACC is an example of how ordinary rural people organise to defend their understanding of democratic decision-making in the context of development.

The protesters, in their public demonstrations against the mining of their land, have made reference to the well-known Mpondo Revolt of 1959-1960. In interviews they have also mentioned resistance to the Mbizana sugar project in 1985-86 and the Gum Tree Rebellion in 1999. These references locate their struggle to retain the right to decide how best to develop their land in a history of resistance that started in the era of Apartheid, and has continued in the new democratic South Africa. At the heart of their activism is a collective consciousness that is best described as collective agency. This paper focuses on the current resistance to imposed development with connections to past resistance, especially the Mpondo Revolt 50 years ago.