

## **MEDIA BRIEFING**

groundWork (Friends of the Earth South Africa)  
South Durban Community Environmental Alliance

### **PLANNING POVERTY: NEW REPORT UNPACKS NDP THROUGH SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL LENS**

Where no-one grabs a surfeit, everyone can have enough.

- Durban People's Climate Camp Declaration, 15<sup>th</sup> November 2013.

*Planning Poverty* is launched in the year marking 20 years of democracy. The South African community landscape was created by the brutal system of apartheid. Now, post-apartheid, the land is changing again. A new history is being created by a new politic, a politic as brutal as the apartheid capitalist economy. The report looks at how government infrastructure plans are constructing the destruction of south Durban. These plans are being developed in an undemocratic manner: government refuses to have a democratic dialogue with people about their future and fails to respond to the letters of concern, the calls for meetings and the requests to engage in a meaningful manner.

In November 2013, community groups from the pollution hotspots of the Highveld and the Vaal Triangle joined people from KwaZulu-Natal to create a people's climate camp in Durban. South Durban was chosen for the camp both because it is heavily polluted, primarily by petrochemical industries centred on two large oil refineries, and because plans for the expansion of the port and petrochemicals make it the ground on which one of the most significant environmental justice struggles is being fought. These expansion plans are nested within South Africa's National Development Plan (NDP) and the grandiose Strategic Infrastructure Projects (SIPs).

This planned destruction is not restricted to south Durban. Government's grand dream of a South Africa that is linked into a global world order to produce economic growth is built upon a failing global economic, ecological and energy system. This is something government does not want to admit because admitting this means it would have to change the politics of development. It would have to admit that it is failing the people of South Africa who, in 1994, thought a new South African community would be built on justice and equity.

The NDP and the SIPs are unpacked in this report to highlight how government is reproducing poverty, inequality and environmental injustice. The state of environmental justice in South Africa presently is appalling. In 2001, groundWork reflected on environmental justice and concluded that environmental justice is about "empowered people in relations of solidarity and equity with each other and in non-degrading and positive relationships with their environments". The NDP and the SIPs do not enable this; they do not operate in this frame. Thus, the report reflects that the state of environmental justice in South Africa is bleak.

But this report also speaks to people's resistance to these so-called 'development plans'. Civil society organisations, starting at the grassroots level, have taken it upon themselves to understand what their struggles are and what they want for the future. The cry that another world is possible, and indeed necessary, remains central to their struggles and to their solidarity with each other. People throughout South Africa, have found a unity and solidarity with peoples' struggles in south Durban. For the struggle in south Durban against the proposed dig-out port is part of a broader struggle for the future of democracy and environmental justice in South Africa.