

GROUNDWORK



OIL SICK

groundWork is a non-profit environmental justice service and developmental organisation working primarily in South Africa, but increasingly in Southern Africa.

groundWork seeks to improve the quality of life of vulnerable people in Southern Africa through assisting civil society to have a greater impact on environmental governance. groundWork places particular emphasis on assisting vulnerable and previously disadvantaged people who are most affected by environmental injustices.

groundWork's current campaign areas are: air quality, waste and environmental health.

groundWork is constituted as a trust. The Chairperson of the Board of Trustees is Joy Kistnasamy, lecturer in environmental health at the Durban University of Technology. The other trustees are: Farid Esack, Patrick Kulati, Richard Lyster, Thuli Makama, Sandile Ndawonde and Jon White.

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Health Care Without Harm

International POPs Elimination Network

Basel Action Network

Oilwatch International

Global Anti-Incineration Alliance

groundWork is the South African member of Friends of the Earth International

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Oil rigs off the coast of KwaZulu Natal with an oil slick creeping closer to Durban and the KwaZulu-Natal coast. Is this the future of KwaZulu-Natal? Considering the BP oil debacle in the Gulf of Mexico and the oil chaos in the Nigerian Delta we should start preparing ourselves for this reality. Cover design by Barry Downard.





From the Smoke Stack

by groundWork Director, Bobby Peek

groundWork is proud to share the news that Thuli Makama, a member of our Board of Trustees, has been awarded the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize for Africa for 2010. Well done Thuli, we are proud of you and we hope that Yonge Nawe's struggle in Swaziland gains momentum and strength from this recognition.

Taking up from the theme of the last smokestack, government has outdone itself and has finally produced emissions standards which came into effect on the 1st of April 2010. No, it was not an April fool's joke. This is a positive step and all responsible must be commended. The days of protesting outside Engen, Sasol, Caltex, Shell and BP, the eThekwini City Hall, the International Convention Centre and in parliament have finally paid off. I remember vividly when the Air Quality Bill went to Parliament in February 2004 without the mandatory call for air emission standards and groundWork and community people had to demand for them to be included. The response by officials from the Department of Environmental Affairs was that this is not possible and will be a burden on governance. Well, finally we have it. Coupled with the ambient air emission standards, the South African Air Quality Information System and the Green Scorpions maybe there is a possibility that our right to an environment that is not harmful to our health and well-being can be met.

While this success can be celebrated, over the last few months we have seen what I believe will be the beginning of the final phase in the battle to stop the further industrialisation of south Durban.

In a positive yet controversial move, after nearly four decades people from the corner of Tara

Road and Duranta Road, adjacent to the Engen oil refinery in south Durban, have been granted new homes away from the refinery. The homes they were living in were supposed to be temporary settlements developed by the apartheid state in the early seventies. This temporary development lasted nearly forty years and the area became known as 'the Barracks'. One of the controversies around this development has been Engen's background workings to get these people moved and to have the eThekwini Metro declare this area a 'green area'. The question that has to be asked is: Is this the beginning of the re-engineering of the geographical landscape around Engen to create their 'green area' and get rid of people? Only time will tell whether other parts of Wentworth, Merebank and Treasure Beach are next to be moved. Sadly, no matter how Engen and the eThekwini Municipality attempt to create a 'green area' around Engen, this will not solve the broader dynamic of Engen's pollution and the fact that Engen should not be there. Engen has to shut down or relocate; if they don't, the only other outcome is the government and corporate orchestrated plan of relocating people away from the area which was put on the table by the eThekwini Metro and heavily resisted in the late nineties. The eThekwini Metro panicked when the resistance emerged and they took out paid adverts in the media against those leading the resistance.

The second part of this struggle is the fact that the Durban International Airport has moved to La Mercy. Government has made it known publicly that various national Ministries are talking with the KwaZulu Natal Premier and Member of the Executive Council representing economic affairs as to what to do with the land. It is clear from publications and positions of the South Durban



Community Environmental Alliance that people in the south Durban areas want the airport land to be used for residential homes and light labour-intensive industry. We know that government and industry desire the land for further heavy industrial expansion and, more alarmingly, petro-chemical expansion.

The people of south Durban need to mobilise in their numbers again to ensure that their neighbourhood does not become home to another petro-chemical facility. This mobilisation needs to be on all fronts – mass protest and mobilising, political lobbying, legal challenges, and internationalising their struggle – or else south Durban will become a hell hole, home to decaying industry and technology feeding the greed for profits of elites.

The Eskom and World Bank saga continues. These last few months, groundWork, together with Earthlife Africa Johannesburg, has spent time in the Waterberg area speaking to local people and the Inspection Panel on the World Bank which visited in the area in mid-May. This area is going to be devastated by mining as Medupi and the South African industrial lust for coal seeks to be fulfilled. However this is not the only area that is coming under pressure with regards to mining. In an illustrative map of Mpumalanga one is struck by the intensity of mining processes. You would not believe that this is home to our own Lake District. The map displays a swath of destruction by mines. This new push for mining, oil and gas grows as Sasol seeks shale gas in the Karoo, oil is sought off the coast of Durban and the Northern Free State is targeted by African Exploration Mining and Finance Corporation which intends to apply for prospecting rights on seventy-one farms in the Kroonstad-Edenville area. All this happens despite us witnessing possibly the most devastating oil spill in the US waters as a result of BP operations in the Gulf. When will we ever learn that we have to get rid of this fossil fuel addiction? I doubt we ever will because, no matter how much we try, there will always be spin to make us believe that we can get 'clean coal' and 'sweet crude'.

The most recent spin has been what has come out of the Shell annual general meeting in The Hague where Shell claims that it will cease gas flaring,

deepwater drilling and invest \$18 billion US for environmental restoration within the Delta area. And this was not those 'Yes Men' at it again. We will have to wait and see what is made of this commitment or whether it is just spin. At least here commitments are made with figures, unlike when Peter Dent, the ex-CEO of Engen many years ago, in negotiations with the south Durban community and our first democratic President, Nelson Mandela, on pollution from the Engen refinery, indicated a year after negotiations started that when he said Engen had resources to deal with the problem, resources did not mean money.

During these last few months our ex-Minister of Environment, now Minister of Tourism, Marthinus van Schalkwyk, was nominated as head of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. While this might be an honour for some in South Africa, it was seriously questioned by very many environmental justice activists who had to live with the fact that it was during his reign as environmental minister that the fourth largest coal fired power station, Medupi, received permission to be built without adequate pollution abatement equipment. "The appointment doesn't make sense, because if van Schalkwyk was a world-class climate diplomat, why did Zuma demote him by removing his environment duties last year? Judging by van Schalkwyk's silence when Eskom proposed huge new coal-fired plants and Alec Erwin was doing more cheap-electricity deals with multinational corporations, he's shown himself unfit to tackle the other big global polluters" warned Patrick Bond of the Centre for Civil Society at the University of KwaZulu Natal. He was finally not awarded the position which went to Christiana Figueres.

Finally, ending off on a positive note, our work with Waste Pickers throughout South Africa has paid off. Government's recently developed Recycling Industry Body, under the auspices of the Department of Trade and Industry, has accepted the reality of Waste Pickers and they are part of the body. All strength to the new movement.

Till next time. 



Thirsty Oil Companies Seek SA Oil

By Siziwe Khanyile

It appears that the current policy is "energy regardless of the cost"

The desperate urgency for energy is leading the oil companies, in bed with governments, to take desperate measures to secure oil – at any cost.

The thirst for energy security, and the extent to which governments will go to secure it, is frightening. The type of energy that is being sought and heavily invested in is predominantly fossil-based: dirty, unsustainable, with huge potential for environmental degradation, destruction of ecosystems and threats to people's livelihoods. Yet our governments continue seeking new oil, coal, gas and tar sands in the most ecologically sensitive environments.

In Uganda

I have just returned from an Oilwatch Africa and Oil Impacted Communities' exchange which took place in Uganda. We were a group of environmental justice activists, community based campaigners and host community members from Cameroon, South Africa, Nigeria, Uganda and Ghana, on a mission to understand oil exploration activities in Uganda and lend solidarity to communities which are already feeling the impacts of oil, even before it has left the ground. We also sought to strengthen our resistance to oil reliance on the continent and to lend support to the Ugandan struggle.

We visited the Rift Valley in the Albertine region, rich in wildlife, biodiversity, plant, animal and bird species and neighbouring the grand Lake Albert where there is fishing activity and which is a water source for cattle. This is the environment in which oil is being drilled. This region was identified as having oil potential from as early as the 1920s, but drilling has intensified in the past ten years.

In the Kabwoya Reserve, drilling is onshore with the well head close to the Lake's shore and lagoon which are highly sensitive environments. The natural environment is disturbed as sections of the nature reserve have been converted into a make-

shift landing strip for small air craft transporting oil company management. Workers are seen waving off a herd of antelope to make way for the landing and take-off. Communities here are already complaining that they are unable to access some fishing grounds as these have been declared out-of-bounds and that migration of fish reduces their source of subsistence. Gas flaring and relocations of people with poor compensation have been a few of the other problems experienced by community people, and the oil is not even flowing yet.

As we drove on the gravel road towards Kaiso-Tonya, in the Northern parts of Uganda, we came across several signs pointing to various oil wells. Mputa 1, Mputa 2, Mputa 3 and 4 and Mzizi, where Tullow Oil is exploring for gas. We were informed by our hosts that the names given to the oil wells are names of fish and wildlife species. Our Nigerian comrades shared the same experience stating that, indeed, oil wells in the Niger Delta are named after fish and wildlife, and that these have ironically been destroyed and replaced by oil impacts.

Oil and gas in South Africa

South Africa is doing everything possible to secure its own, and the region's, energy needs into the future – particularly to facilitate industrial development. South Africa is therefore not immune from the scurry for oil and gas.

Coal has been and continues to be South Africa's major source of energy, but in the past few weeks we have seen reports of oil and gas exploration permits being sought by several notorious extractive multinationals, to scour for oil and gas off our shores. These include Shell, BHP Billiton and Anglo. Both the East and West Coasts are targets. With the existing environmental and human impacts of oil refining in South Africa, the additional burden of oil exploitation is not something to look forward to.



Air Quality

In addition, Petro SA, (the South African National Oil Company) has plans to build a new oil refinery in the Coega Industrial Development Zone in Port Elizabeth. The proposed oil refinery, known as Project Mthombo, is planned to come online in 2015, with the aim of more than doubling the country's current production. This is justified by the government and by PetroSA as necessary to prevent fuel shortages. It is expected that the PetroSA oil refinery will emit two times more CO₂ than other refineries in Cape Town, Durban and Sasolburg.

Further, SASOL (South African Coal, Oil and Gas Corporation) is currently at the pre-feasibility stage of a new Coal-to-liquid plant in Lephalale, Limpopo Province. Turning Lephalale into something like the heavily polluted Sasolburg and Secunda, where Sasol also has a coal to fuel plant, is catastrophic for an area that is replete with wildlife, agricultural activities and a beautiful natural environment. The Department of environment will need to quickly step in if their mandate is indeed to ensure an environment that is not harmful to people's health and wellbeing.

Our beautiful Karoo has also not been spared as companies including Sasol, Statoil from Norway, Shell and Anglo American are looking to explore for Shale gas.

Our policy seems to be energy for industrial development, at all costs!

The peace and safety of the Ugandan cattle is being threatened by aggressive oil exploration in the Lake Albert area.

Picture courtesy groundWork



The Gulf of Mexico

It is surprising that all this activity happens as all eyes are glued to the events in the Gulf of Mexico where an oil rig exploded last month, killing eleven workers and rupturing an undersea well. As the spill continues, estimates range between 2 000 and 70 000 barrels of oil being spewed into the sea each day. Reports are that oil is washing up on southern US coastlines and endangering wildlife and the fishing industry.

President Obama recently called this a "horrific disaster" and is said to be making plans to ensure tougher regulations for the oil industry as well as suspending new exploratory drilling operations.

It's a pity that it takes new disasters to help regulators rethink their energy plans. History is replete with warnings against oil exploitation, known in many sectors as "the oil curse". Yet governments continue in unholy matrimony with oil companies to source and secure more oil.

Perhaps we will enter an era where oil is recognised as a venture where the costs outweigh the benefits. But for now it appears that we see but do not perceive. Thus the call by communities to *Keep Oil in the Soil!* is a rallying cry and campaign we must all support. ☺



The WB, Eskom & the Inspection Panel

By Bobby Peek

Despite huge opposition and tacit support from some countries, the World Bank's loan to Eskom has been approved. Affected persons have, however, called for an Inspection Panel.

Over the years the talk of Sasol, South Africa's apartheid-created, sanction-busting fuel giant, developing another Coal to Liquid (CtL) plant – Sasol 4 – in South Africa has been common. The talk is now a reality and the land for the plant, termed Mafuta, meaning 'big one' in isiZulu, is being turned in the Waterberg area. groundWork has always been concerned about Sasol and its polluting CtL plants and thus became interested in the Waterberg area. What drew Sasol to this area, coal in abundance, has also drawn Eskom. Eskom's Matimba coal fired power station, the largest direct cooling power station in the world, is situated there. Another reason for Eskom building this plant there was that the area was "under polluted".

In 2009 groundWork, in preparation for the climate change jamboree in Copenhagen, decided, as part of our Climate Change programme, to focus on Eskom and their plans to build a second power station, named Medupi, in the Waterberg area. The World Bank was the key financier for this plan. This focus allowed groundWork to be informed about the Waterberg area, where Sasol's Mafuta is to be. Alarmingly, when government gave Eskom the go ahead to develop Medupi, they indicated that Medupi does not have to install pollution reduction equipment, for the Waterberg area is not polluted. Clearly, with Matimba, Medupi and Mafuta all in one area, government knew that this would not hold for much longer. So, to be seen to be doing something, they have recently indicated that the Waterberg area is set to become a non-attainment area. Non-attainment areas are heavily polluted areas that need special intervention to manage the pollution. But why, I ask, even get to a stage of having to consider an area for non-attainment? Why not just keep the area free of pollution by, at the very least, putting the necessary pollution

reduction equipment in now? But then, that was not a governance strategy for environment in South Africa during the apartheid regime. Ask the people living next to the Aloes Toxic dumpsite and ArcelorMittal. Government knew that the groundwater would be contaminated, but still they allowed these developments. Has anything changed, I ask myself?

In the middle of 2009 the first concerns of local people started getting through to groundWork as people called the office for assistance.

In December 2009, groundWork's research¹ on Eskom and the World Bank was released during the Copenhagen Climate Change conference. It immediately drew support from a national and global audience all opposing the loan. By February 2010 a formal campaign was launched by groundWork and Earthlife Africa calling for the World Bank not to support Eskom's new build programme that would see Eskom's CO₂ output tripling in a decade. Churches, unions, community groups, large NGOs from South Africa to India, the US to Nigeria, Uruguay to The Netherlands, all called on the World Bank not to grant this loan. Solidarity was tremendous with amazing support from the Diakonia Council of Churches whose Good Friday Service and march was dedicated to Eskom and the World Bank under the theme, 'Creation: Crucified by Greed'. During the procession, which highlighted the corruption of Eskom and the State, senior political figures such as the Mayor of eThekweni and the Premier of KwaZulu Natal had to participate by carrying the cross and sitting in the front rows for the dignitaries. Indeed a humbling experience

1 <http://www.groundwork.org.za/Publications/worldbankesk09.pdf>



Air Quality

The Diakonia Council of Churches' Good Friday march which was dedicated to Eskom and the World Bank under the theme, 'Creation: Crucified by Greed'

Photo by Rikesh Maharaj



considering that the state was supporting the loan that the Church was questioning.

This global pressure catapulted the World Bank loan into the international spotlight. The decision on the loan was put off a couple of times and then finally, on Thursday the 8th of April, a decision was made to grant Eskom the loan. It was not a unanimous decision as The Netherlands, the UK, Norway, Italy and the US all abstained from the vote, taking a softer political position than outright denouncement. As Mr. Erik Solheim, Minister of Environment and Development in Norway, stated: 'Norway liked to demonstrate the disagreement with the Nordic/Baltic support to the disputable coal-fired power plant. It is problematic to contribute to the financing of new and large coal-fired power plants that will continue to pollute for several decades to come.' Long into the night we waited for the World Bank to inform the public and one can only guess that this disunity amongst the twenty-four directors of the World Bank was what held up the final press release from the World Bank.

A few days prior to this, on Tuesday the 6th of April, local residents from the Waterberg area, concerned by this loan and the Medupi developments, worked with groundWork and Earthlife Africa

and submitted a call for an investigation into this loan by the Inspection Panel (IP) that was set up by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development in 1993. Further requests for an investigation into this loan were made by two other parties, one from Limpopo and the other from the Free State. According to protocol the requesters' names are not divulged.

The IP "determines whether the Bank is complying with its own policies and procedures, which are designed to ensure that Bank-financed operations provide social and environmental benefits and avoid harm to people and the environment"². Concerns raised in the call for an investigation were issues of health, water, livelihood, cultural impacts, upstream (coal mining) impacts, cumulative impacts, involuntary resettlement, human rights, country systems (laws and enforcement in South Africa), legacy of World Bank involvement, access for the poor (to energy), impacts on the economy, alternatives and climate change.

The IP responded swiftly and by the 9th of May a preliminary investigation team were in South

² For more information see: <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTINSPECTIONPANEL/0,,menuPK:64132057~pagePK:64130364~piPK:64132056~theSitePK:380794,0.html>



Africa and visited the affected area. groundWork and Earthlife Africa organised with local people to meet with the IP. As the Waterberg area is vast we were fortunate to have the support of The Bateleurs once more who took the IP, groundWork, Earthlife Africa and the local guide, the Chair of the Limpopo Agricultural Union, on a detailed flight over the area to witness the present and potential future devastation of this prime land.

After the flight the IP panel met with the local requesters, the local traditional authorities and farmers from whom they heard detailed accounts of impacts on local peoples' environment and livelihoods in the area, and of false promises of jobs. One of the socially sensitive issues to emerge at these sessions was the fact that Medupi is being built on local peoples' grave sites, which is of concern to the traditional leaders in the area. The last meeting for the IP was with technical people and other social actors who have been concerned about this loan but who do not live in the area. This last session discussed the technical issues of water scarcity, social impacts of mining and the impacts of coal mining and acid mine drainage in South Africa and, in particular, the impact of Eskom policies and

lack of delivery to people in townships in South Africa.

What will the outcome of the preliminary investigation be? By the time that this newsletter is out we will know if a full investigation by the IP is going to be undertaken. The World Bank has yet to respond to the IPs original letter raising society's concerns. Will an investigation get the WB to withdraw the loan? Highly unlikely, but this process will result in Eskom and the World Bank knowing that the world is watching and it will give the local residents in the area a strong chance of making sure that, by organising for this IP, they can effectively consolidate their challenge to ensure that no future power station is built in the area and, hopefully, stopping Mafuta.

Finally, after years of telling the public that Eskom is 'picking the public pocket' to give BHP Billiton and other major companies electricity below cost, a document was leaked to the Democratic Alliance to substantiate this. It caused an uproar, and was a great political debate for a week or so – then all went silent. The question is how do we ensure that this truth is carried forward and that the political elite answer to the people in the street? ☺



Exxaro's Grootegeluk Medupi open cast coal-mine which feeds the Matimba power station.

Photo by groundWork, flight courtesy The Bateleurs.



Air Quality Act Standards

By Rico Euripidou

Will the new Air Quality Act Standards prove to be useful tools or toothless tigers?

The national government has been slow to address and properly regulate air pollution. The Air Quality Act was passed in 2005, but this was a 'framework' law which required further regulations and laws to give it meaning to achieve the objective of ensuring air that is not harmful to one's health and well-being, in line with our constitutional right.

The two regulatory processes that define how we achieve "clean ambient air" and mitigate "air pollution" from point sources have just recently been finalised. The National Ambient Air Quality Standards were gazetted on the 24th of December 2009 and the Listed Activities and Associated Minimum Emission Standards, identified in terms of section 21 of the National Environmental Management: Air Quality Act, 2004 (Act No. 39 of 2004), were gazetted on the 30th of March 2010 (Government Gazette No. 33064).

So... what do we now have in terms of legislation to ensure clean air that is not harmful to your health, the right enshrined in our constitution? While the legislative approach is a positive step in the right direction, glaring omissions are evident that seek to undermine the intention of the Air Quality Act. The quick analysis of these two pieces of regulation presented below paints a very worrying picture indeed. The public remain at risk because of some major ambiguities and omissions from the regulations and so society's victory might be bittersweet.

The major omission in the Ambient Air Quality standards is the failure of government to take cognisance of the global trend to set a standard for PM_{2.5}, the smallest particles of emissions and impurities which can penetrate the deepest into the

lungs, which are comprised of the finer particles of dust and heavy metals and which are shown in the scientific literature to contribute more to adverse health effects than the larger PM₁₀ particles. Both the US Environmental Protection Agency and the World Health Organisation have standards and guidelines on PM_{2.5}.

To add insult to injury the twenty-four hour standard for PM₁₀ (120ug/m³) is almost double the global norm until 2015, after which it will only be revised to 75ug/m³. Similarly, the standard for benzene has been gazetted at 10ug/m³ until 2015, after which it will be revised to 5ug/m³. This is a slap in the face to communities who have to live on the fenceline of big industry and oil refineries especially considering that by 2015 the global PM and benzene standards are likely to be further revised and in the case of benzene will likely be close to zero.

Within the listed activities and emission limits standards the definitions of "new and old plants" are not sufficiently clear and unambiguous to ensure that any modification whatsoever to an existing industry in South Africa must be subject to "new plant standards". The definition as it currently stands seems to imply that the whole facility must be new. The definition should, however, include plants that have been recently expanded or modified. Communities who are involved in EIAs must insist that new plant standards apply to plant modifications.

These standards generally do NOT include persistent organic pollutants and heavy metals emission limits for any industrial sector other than for the incineration of waste and a selected few others such as lead recycling and a small part of



the metallurgic industry. Industrial sectors that require persistent organic pollutants and heavy metals emission standards are globally well defined and are routinely regulated for such standards in other jurisdictions globally without this being an unreasonable burden on the industrial sectors to which they apply. Furthermore, these emissions constitute the greatest danger to public health because they are the most toxic, persistent and have the ability to cause acute, chronic, carcinogenic, mutagenic and genotoxic health endpoints in nearby and faraway communities through contamination of the food chain at very low exposure levels.

In the draft version of the gazette that was published for comments the Minister's preamble/introduction made a provision for "possible emission standards relating to, among others, persistent organic pollutants and heavy metals....to a revised schedule in 2010" at the specific request of the NGOs who participated in negotiating these standards. This preamble was, however, cynically excluded from the final gazette.

These contaminants are routinely NOT monitored nor regulated in South Africa. Communities who are challenging the industrial sectors listed below must continue to insist on metals and POPs emission limits. The US EPA and UNEP provide clear data and guidelines on undisputed dioxin emissions from these industrial sources. According to the US EPA these are, in order, the greatest historical contributors of dioxin to the environment from air pollutant sources:

- Municipal Solid Waste Incineration
- Secondary Copper Smelting
- Medical Waste Incineration
- Cement Kilns Burning Hazardous Waste
- Utility/Industrial Coal Combustion
- Industrial Wood Burning
- Cement Kilns not Burning Hazardous Waste
- Secondary Aluminium Smelting
- Utility/Industrial Oil Combustion
- On-Road Unleaded Gas Fuel Combustion
- Sewage Sludge Incineration
- Hazardous Waste Incineration
- Kraft Black Liquor Boilers
- Secondary Lead Smelting

- Boilers/Industrial Furnaces
- Biomass Combustion
- Ferrous Metal Production (e.g. Sinter Plants)

Furthermore, the emissions measurement methodology and requirement is just as important as the emission limit that is eventually agreed on for various industry sectors. If, for example, an international standard is adopted from another jurisdiction, such as the EU waste incineration directive (2000), then it must also adopt the same stringent monitoring and emissions measurement requirement/methodology that goes with that directive – these cannot and should not under any circumstances be de-linked.

Based on the DEA's current timelines, implementation of these regulations will take many years. Existing industries will have five years to meet existing plant standards and a further five years to meet new plant standards. Many jurisdictions around the world have previously enacted similar emissions standards for existing and new installations from a similar starting point, but the vast majority of these processes established immediate compliance timeframes for new installations and compliance timeframes of three years for existing sources. In negotiations on the standards it was agreed by industry, government and community people that existing industry would have five years to meet existing plant standards and a further three years to meet new plant standards. It is clear that industry, despite the 'democratic consultation', went behind the backs of NGOs to lobby government for more lenient standards.

To make matters worse, these regulations make a further provision for postponement of compliance time frames for a further five years. We disagree with exemptions and urged the Minister to only consider (and ultimately allow) an exemption to an industry if it can demonstrate that it has made an effort (with tangible improvements in emission levels) to meet the emission standards as per the requirements set out in the compliance timeframe, without success. Unless this proviso is mandated as part of the exemption eligibility criteria, dirty industries with no intention of meeting the minimum emission standards will continue to operate without making any effort to improve



their performance with the hope of getting an exemption towards their eventual forced closure over potentially a fifteen year window period when they will run the plant into the ground and pollute extensively without fear of retribution before they close it. There have been numerous examples of this, such as Sasol's operations in south Durban.

Furthermore these regulations do not contain any provisions for upset conditions that are normally experienced during start-up and shut-downs of industry. Many industries in South Africa, such as the cement, oil refining, steel and waste incineration industries, operate within a paradigm of upset conditions and could justify exceeding the minimum emission limits on a routine basis thus defeating the objective of this Act. To address this we proposed that the exclusion period be limited to a maximum of twelve hours, after which mandatory shut down of the operation should apply, otherwise non-compliance will not be an effective deterrent to dirty industry.

What next!

Possible next steps for communities affected by air pollution using these standards are communities understanding who has the regulatory authority for ambient air quality monitoring, compliance and enforcement where they live. Ultimately, local authorities are responsible although there has been a lot of debate about whether local authorities have the capacity for this responsibility and whether this

should not instead be a district function. The DEA has been training Provincial Air Quality Officers and ultimately they should be able to provide guidance in this regard.

Once the correct regulatory agency has assumed its responsibility for ambient air quality, communities can then demand action in any instance of non-compliance in which case government has to take action against specific polluters.

We can then collectively identify industry sectors that affect ambient air quality and work together to determine whether the minimum emission limits gazetted are sufficient to protect public health. If not, the legislation allows us to make the emission limits more stringent until the ambient air quality standards are met. The situation described is, however, hypothetical and the reality will be a far messier affair with local government probably experiencing many teething problems and industry shifting the blame as much as they can.

At a mobilising level we need to go back to the streets, as we did in the nineties and early noughties to challenge government and dirty industry and demand improvements in the law. What could have been an overwhelmingly positive step has been clouded in backroom deals. Although we negotiated in good faith, did we really expect anything else? ☺

You simply must...

VISIT

For a change, some good news sites:

www.biomimicryinstitute.org and www.asknature.org - These are fascinating sites which outlines the work done in taking ideas from nature and using them to improve our lives and environment.

Find out more about WIEGO, Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing, at www.wiego.org. This is a global research-policy network that seeks to improve the status of the

working poor, especially women, in the informal economy.

READ

The Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth at <http://climateandcapitalism.com/?p=2268>.

You should also read the University of Portland Commencement Speech 2009, given by Paul Hawken. You can access this at www.paulhawken.com.



Green Jobs in a Green Economy

By Musa Chamane

Green jobs are what are needed in order to fight poverty

Green jobs and green economy are a current global phenomenon for both the formal and informal economy. It has taken decades, if not centuries, for governments to realise that green jobs can be a solution to international job losses following the recent global economic meltdown. Even the South African Government has taken cognisance of this thing called the green economy, and has recently held a large jamboree in Sandton. The Green Economy Summit was just a green wash by government to feign commitment to creating green jobs and as a result we did not attend the meeting. Green jobs are not only about specialised job opportunities but also involve soft-skill jobs such as waste picking, craft making and agriculture. As fifteen years of poverty reduction strategies, plans and promises made by our supposedly democratic government have not borne any fruits for the poor, this article will focus on informal green jobs with a strong emphasis on waste and waste reclaiming in South Africa, with case studies from a few local municipalities.

Poor black people in South Africa have been sold out by the current ruling organisation because everyone has been promised a better life. We hoped that everyone would have a decent job, a house and access to clean water, as well as a pollution-free environment to live in. We also hoped that all the injustices emanating from polluting industries and dumping sites would be reduced and these sites removed from black residential areas, and that the impact or would be significantly reduced. Most of these factories and dumping sites are still located next to black townships and little has been done to reduce their impact.

South Africans are very innovative and powerful regardless of their skin colour, class or culture. Our government has been advised on numerous occasions that the world has changed and we must change with it. Waste is no longer waste but a commodity, especially for the poor. We no longer

need a mentality of collecting waste for disposal but need to shift our thinking to say there are steps that are being omitted between collection and disposal. The steps that are being skipped are re-use and recycle; re-use in a sense that waste can be utilised more than once without changing its form.

In every province in this country entrepreneurs, in the form of waste pickers, have discovered new opportunities for themselves. Waste picking is viewed as a job, even though it occurs informally at various dumping sites, and is practised in more than seventy towns and cities in South Africa. It does not occur only at a dumping site level but also on the streets of the cities in South Africa. This is practised not only in South Africa; Brazil, Columbia, India and Egypt are the trendsetters when it comes to this practice.

We need to learn from progressive governments of the north where informal jobs have been formalised into professions. We need to move away from saying we need to have decent jobs without providing even a single one. People have challenged government by rolling up their sleeves and doing something for themselves and government should assist by creating a conducive environment for this to flourish. This cannot happen when green economy debates exclude the very people who are at the forefront of this on the ground, the Waste Pickers. Ironically, at the same time the Department of Trade and Industry has recognised the Waste Pickers in the Recycling Industry Body. It is clear that the left had does not know what the right hand is doing.

The Mpofana and Mafikeng municipalities have bought into the process of assisting waste pickers in their endeavours. Mpofana municipality, based in KwaZulu-Natal, is the first municipality to grant waste pickers an official written permit to reclaim recyclables in their area of jurisdiction, including the dumping site. The municipality has donated land



to the waste pickers to utilise for waste reclaiming activities. Further to that the municipality is planning to erect an electrified undercover shelter for waste reclaimers. As a result of the collaboration between the council, groundWork and reclaimers, Central Waste Paper from Pietermaritzburg has decided to donate R2000 to the waste reclaimers for start up costs.

groundWork, waste pickers and the Mafikeng council have been in negotiations to devise a plan to work with waste pickers. The negotiations are not only to assist waste pickers but also to assist the municipality to improve their rate of waste recycling. Mafikeng municipality have granted waste reclaimers permission to reclaim anywhere in the city of Mafikeng. More than 100 waste reclaimers are at least certain of their day jobs since they are no longer harassed by the council security. The negotiations are seemingly fruitful for everyone.

Some municipalities, especially in metros, are already working well with waste pickers, while others are still locked behind closed doors with waste picker organisations trying to negotiate how they could work well together. The most challenging issue with most municipalities is the lack of knowledge when it comes to this newly found area of work. History is also to blame for the failure of municipalities to incorporate waste pickers into their waste management systems. Reclaimers were regarded as a very low class of people who trespass into anyones property with the aim of stealing. This mentality has begun to change because some

council officials are now aware that waste reclaimers are part of waste management system.

The challenges and intensity of the struggle of the waste reclaimers has led to organisations such as groundWork, WIEGO and ILRIG playing a role in working with waste reclaimers. Waste pickers have formed a democratic national structure referred to as South African Wastepicker's Association (SAWA). The intention is to fight for the rights of the waste pickers. The structure was launched in September 2009. Waste pickers can now speak in one voice and share experiences. It is very encouraging to see the poor coming together again for one common need as we did under the old government system. SAWA has started to work with international movement of waste reclaimers. South African waste pickers are learning lessons from the Kenyan waste pickers association, called Kenyasuit, because the history and struggle of waste pickers from these two countries is almost identical.

Having mentioned all of the above, it is vital for our government to have legislation, plans and strategies that involve waste reclaimers. Reclaimers have not requested a single cent from the municipalities and it does not make sense to deny them an opportunity to assist the nation in dealing with waste. Their contribution has positive impacts towards climate change mitigation. As employment statistics do consider people who work in the informal economy, such as waste reclaimers, it does not make sense for our democratic government to refuse reclaimers a right to work, especially if reclaimers are given an opportunity to do work that also contributes positively towards millennium development goals.

Simon Mbata (left), with compatriots Eduardo di Paula and Madalena Duarte, representatives of the MNCR, toast the success of the waste picker's meeting in Brazil (see article opposite)

Photograph courtesy Melanie Samson



From the Dusty Streets of Sasolburg ...

By Simon Mbata

Waste Picker Simon Mbata has travelled from the dusty streets of Sasolburg to Brazil as part of an international movement towards recognising waste picking as legitimate work*

In April 2010 the department of political science of Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, a Brazilian university, and WIEGO, organised a public event called "Inclusive cities for the working poor". This was a meeting convened to facilitate the sharing of experiences and ideas on informal work, including waste reclaiming, in Brazil and other countries.

I am one of the few lucky ones in South Africa to have gone on the trip to Brazil and this is the story of my third international trip since I became the member of the South African Wastepicker's Association (SAWA).

Belo Horizonte was the host city of the conference. Fortunately for me it was not the first time that I was visiting Brazil on the same mission of meeting with Brazilian waste reclaimers, researchers and public officers. In September 2009 I visited Brazil with the intention of sharing experiences and ideas with my counterparts. I was thrilled with the warmth and beauty of people in that country.

Waste reclaimers from Belo Horizonte are very organised when compared to us in South Africa. We are still at the forming stage while they are almost at maturity. In Belo Horizonte reclaimers are organised and have their own organisation, which has played a big role in reclaimers gaining recognition by government. In 1990 demands were made by ASMARE, the Brazilian Waste Reclaimers' Association, which included the creation of recycling centres and issuing of protective equipment but these were not successful. In 1993 recognition by government occurred when the labour party won the elections. Worker issues in government were at the forefront and that is how the movement of waste reclaimers flourished in Brazil. Prior to 1993 waste reclaimers had existed, operating informally without any rights nor recognition, but 1993 was

a turn around by a new labour based government. As a South African I have noticed that without government inputs, sorting out waste reclaiming issues will be like climbing Mount Everest.

Waste reclaiming in Brazil is a dignified job and the strategies such as National Waste Management Strategy involve waste reclaimers. In Belo Horizonte the city sanitation department introduced a new solid waste management system which included a role for waste reclaimers. In the late 90s even municipalities started working and supporting other waste picker organisations and this resulted in the formation of PAMPULAH recycling warehouse and plastic recycling plant, which is owned by a co-operative of waste pickers. The recovery of recyclables has formed a permanent pillar of the waste management in the city of Belo Horizonte.

On the 24th of April there was a fund-raising workshop hosted by Othon Hotel. The Waste pickers interim committee meeting, where different regions were represented, was also held. There were waste pickers from Latin America, Africa, India and US. There were also South Africans represented in this meeting and WIEGO, Street Net and SAWA were in this meeting. It was the best experience I ever had. It was good to observe that in countries such as Peru, Brazil, Columbia, Mexico and India waste picking is a formal employment, unlike in South Africa where waste pickers suffer because of the poor working environment and are looked down upon by other people.

I would like to thank groundWork and WIEGO for the untiring support that they have given to the South African Waste pickers Association (SAWA). You made it possible for us to unite nationally and internationally as well. Obrigado!!

* Simon Mbata is one of the members of the Waste Pickers Working Group for the South African Waste Pickers Association (SAWA). He had recently travelled to countries where waste picking is practised. He plays the role of national co-ordinator as well and represents SAWA in waste pickers international conferences.



A Hospital Audit in Matatiele

by Nomcebo Mvelase

Nomcebo was invited to by Khotsong Hospital in Matatiele to visit and help them with their health care waste problems

I was looking forward to this year's Easter weekend but looking forward even more to the day after the holiday because then I was to drive to Matatiele, Eastern Cape Province, Khotsong Hospital.

This was after a request we received from their infection control nurse who was part of the Pre-ICN¹ meeting that groundWork hosted in June 2009 at the Playhouse in Durban. At this workshop we spoke to about fifty-five nurses from different countries about the dangers related to mercury and medical waste. This infection control nurse from Khotsong Hospital then gave feedback to the rest of her colleagues in her hospital. They all agreed that they wanted me to go to their hospital to train them further on how they could improve their internal waste management policies and also the general environment of their hospital. We then agreed that the first step will be to do an audit of the whole hospital from the wards to the rest of the premises within the hospital.

So the journey began early at 06h00 in the morning and within myself I was busy wondering as to what exactly I was heading to. Driving for about 300km on a very windy and sharply curved road, full of unbelievable potholes, I was saying to myself, "Is this road experience a mental preparation for what I am going to find in Matatiele? No ways!"

It has been quite a while (if it ever happened at all) since I've met governmental workers who are so warm at heart and so welcoming. When I got there I found that everybody, from the management officials right down to the people who are working on the ground, from the nurses to the general staff, had been expecting me with anticipation. I must

express how impressed I was to observe the level of cleanliness in that hospital. Most of the patients are bedfast as they are a Tuberculosis and HIV hospital, but still their general hygiene was impressive.

They took me to various departments and, like any other hospital I have visited, the commonest problem is the infrastructure and the equipment. The buildings are way too old and were not designed to be a hospital in the first place. The building was initially an encampment for soldiers and it later on was converted into a hospital. Without proper architecture or anything sophisticated you can simply imagine how inappropriate the building was structurally. The hospital is situated in a sloping area and, when it rains, water from the top goes down to the hospital grounds and collects there, so there were stagnant pools of water in various areas near the wards and this has negatively impacted on the walls as they are cracking and some green algae is forming and the paint itself is chipping because of the constant moisture. Most patients were reported to be complaining of sinusitis and all sorts of acute respiratory related conditions

Coming to the specific departmental observations that I made, I realised that medical waste segregation is a universal problem everywhere I go. In some departments the staff is doing fairly well, in the others the problem is a bit bigger. A lot of factors contribute to this problem though. For example, in some wards there are not enough bins and some of the bins do not have lids and the issue of following the infection control principles is therefore not attainable regardless of whether or not the policies are there.

Excitingly, they are already in a process of phasing out all their mercury-containing equipment but, because of financial limitations, at this time they have only done away with the thermometers. They

¹ ICN is the International Congress for Nurses. The side event was organised by groundWork in partnership with Health Care Without Harm and the Democratic Nursing Organisation of South Africa.





The vegetable gardens at Khotsong Hospital in Matatiele are to be improved by composted kitchen waste from the hospital kitchens and garden waste from the hospital surrounds.

Photograph by groundWork.

will be slowly moving to the BP machines when funds are made available.

The kitchen does not meet Health and Hygiene requirements for Food Premises as per Regulation 918. Khotsong Hospital was contravening these regulations in the following ways:

- Food Handlers were not dressed in proper attire;
- They have no proper hand washing facilities.
- There is no separate changing area with storage facilities for clothes;
- They are using a gas stove and they keep the cylinder inside the kitchen;
- Refuse is not properly stored and it attracts rodents which poses health hazards;

On top of that, they have a large amount of food waste that has attracted a lot of cats that stay in the hospital. This is an environmental concern as these cats are not vaccinated and they loiter around and sometimes even go to the wards. Can you imagine a hospital with immuno-compromised patients turning into an SPCA of some sort! Imagine how terrifying it must be for little children in the paediatric wards to wake up to the sight of a cat

pussyfooting! To deal with this we came up with the idea of bringing in one of the emerging farmers who could explain to the kitchen staff, and also the garden staff, how they could use some of their garden waste to produce compost.

This process subsequently took place on the 18th and 19th of May as a first follow-up step to support this institution. This was beneficial in two ways; firstly because it has helped the gardeners to understand the negative impacts of using pesticides and how they can make their production better and healthier using organic methods. Secondly, it has also helped the hospital to decrease the amount of waste that they are sending to Compass Waste Company for safe disposal. This includes food waste and also garden waste which they now use for composting. This is in full support of the Waste Act to reuse, reduce and recycle waste as a waste minimisation strategy.

We then sat down and discussed some reasonable and practical strategies by which they could improve some of the challenges they are experiencing, at the end of which consultation we concluded that we should meet again in the next three months to evaluate progress. ☺



gW Workshop on Pesticide Alternatives

By Mr S.C. Hadebe

*groundWork's workshop on alternatives to pesticides, held from the 20th to the 22nd of April 2010, was much enjoyed by emerging farmer Mr S.C. Hadebe**

The first of groundWork's pesticide workshops, which was held at Midrand on the 8th and 9th of December 2009, was a real eye-opener to me. It was quite something to hear that we are living in danger.

The more recent workshop, which was held between the 20th and 22nd of April 2010, influenced us to change our way of farming to using fewer chemicals and beginning to practice organic farming. The field visits to Dove House and Evedon Estate were especially interesting.

Dove House

Dove House is a small scale farm and the family earns a living out of organic farming on about four hectares. They plant vegetables, herbs and fruits, fertilizing with compost and manure. The family produces a lot of produce for their own consumption and sells the balance in their shop.

Before they start planting they use a chicken and pig tractor system where they keep chickens or pigs on the plot to till the soil. They make their own compost out of grass, leaves and tree trunks and branches. They use a grass mulching system which

Organic vegetables provide a sustainable livelihood for the family on Dove Farm.

Picture courtesy Dove Farm <http://dovehouse.co.za>



protects the soil, and the water in the soil, from the sun. It also reduces the weeds.

Evedon Estate

This is a commercial organic fruit farm. It is a very big farm with fruit planted on 150 hectare fields. They produce organic fruit for export. They have all the mechanisation and equipment that you would expect on a commercial farm. For fertilisation they use kraal manure and make compost directly under the trees. Their business is successful and is growing.

Agricultural chemicals in society

Many people are unaware that they are being affected by the horrible mess that agricultural chemicals is causing. One thing that is necessary to address the problem is to introduce safer management of containers. Chemical containers are spread all over the place and are being used by people for carrying water. The sellers of chemicals do not collect their used containers. The legislation around this is not clear – it is good for the transporting of pesticides but is not specific when it comes to collecting back unused and empty containers.

Pesticides and safety workshop

We also workshopped how to use pesticides safely. We should try to use alternatives to pesticides. We can use natural controls such as rotating crops and intercropping, or using barrier control methods. If we have to use pesticides we should make sure that we work with them safely and try to use pesticides that are less dangerous.

We thank groundWork because these workshops have helped to change our minds and influence us to use compost and kraal manure which are both lively and safe. ☺

* Mr Hadebe is an emerging farmer who is based in Newcastle, KwaZulu Natal. He is a member of KwaNalu which is a farmers' union in KwaZulu-Natal. He does not own a farm himself but together with nine others he lease a 200ha mixed crop farm.



ArcelorMittal's Orbit

By Sunita Dubey

Rather than being, as it has been touted, the epitome of sustainability, ArcelorMittal's Olympic Tower is a symbol of deceit

ArcelorMittal recently announced that they are building a tower, to be known as the Orbit, for the 2012 Olympic games in London. The 400 ft tall structure made out of 1 000 tonnes of steel is supposed to represent the sustainable games. ArcelorMittal is going to put up approximately US \$23 million to build this tower.

It is interesting to note that the most carbon intensive and polluting material, steel, has been chosen to represent sustainability. ArcelorMittal is the largest steel company in the world and the EU's fifth biggest polluter, producing eight percent of world steel output and generating US \$65.1 billion revenues in 2009. Despite this wealth the Orbit's sponsor has aggressively pursued an anti-environmental agenda and is responsible for significant opposition to carbon cap and trading schemes. Not only that, ArcelorMittal's court challenge to Europe's cap-and-trade scheme is its most recent act of resistance against the EU emission trading scheme (ETS), the main mechanism for driving down CO₂ levels in industry. ArcelorMittal's action, brought before the European general court, sought damages for being forced to pay for its greenhouse gas emissions because the company claimed the scheme threatened its business unfairly. The court dismissed the challenge.

The countries where ArcelorMittal mines and makes its steel pay the price of subsidising their operations. The communities living around their mines and steel plants bear the brunt of pollution which results in the loss of agricultural land and livestock, and their health.

For example, in Liberia, where ArcelorMittal has invested heavily in iron ore mines and steel plants, the benefits are still not reaching the affected people. The County Social Development Fund, established by the Government of Liberia and ArcelorMittal, is failing to address the needs of communities impacted by the operations of ArcelorMittal. There is public dissatisfaction with the manner in which the fund is being managed by the Government and ArcelorMittal. Reports of misappropriation and misuse of the fund are widespread, but none of those implicated in the alleged misuse of money from the fund have been investigated or punished. It is apparent that the Fund has been turned into a cash cow for corrupt local officials and their agents.

Despite much pressure, the company has still not made pivotal information about the extent of pollution in South Africa public. Their "master plan", which was finalised in 2001 to help understand the pollution and take mitigative steps, has remained secret, while ArcelorMittal continues to claim its fabulous record in stakeholder management and information sharing with communities. Communities living around ArcelorMittal steel plants are left with no options and are looking towards the legal system to help them tackle the massive problem of water and air pollution.

ArcelorMittal's Kazakhstan-based operation is another example of pollution and labour and safety disasters. Even after more than 100 deaths in mines, the safety conditions have not improved to the community's satisfaction. Local groups have



been demanding action and information from ArcelorMittal.

Despite its abysmal environmental and safety record, this company is all set to represent sustainability at the highly regarded Olympic games, through its steel tower. The question that needs to be asked is: how much sweat and blood of local communities is hidden behind this shiny steel structure? This tower, in reality, is the representation of the manipulation, pollution and impacts on communities on which this steel empire is built. ☺

The ArcelorMittal Orbit is destined to become the largest work of public art in the United Kingdom. It is going to be almost 400 feet tall, taller than both the Statue of Liberty and Big Ben, and visitors will be afforded a wonderful view of London.

British mayor Boris Johnson has been quoted as saying of the architect behind the tower, Anish Kapoor: "He has taken the idea of a tower and transformed it into a piece of modern British art. It would have boggled the minds of the Romans. It would have boggled Gustave Eiffel."

He's certainly boggled us!

A representation of the ArcelorMittal Orbit.



Thuli Makama Wins the Goldman Prize!

groundWork Board Member, Thuli Makama, has been awarded the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize for Africa

Thuli Brilliance Makama, long time board member of groundWork and director of Yonge Nawe, has this year been awarded the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize for Africa.

Thuli, Swaziland's only public interest environmental lawyer, won a landmark case to include representation by environmental NGOs in the Swaziland Environment Authority (SEA).

Swaziland has a population of about a million people. The tiny country has been plagued by food and water shortages, and the ravages of HIV and AIDS have overwhelmed the health care system, left many families decimated and contributed to the increasing levels of poverty within the country.

The rural communities are very dependent on the environment, which has been an integral part of their lives for thousands of years, for their basic needs. Increasingly, however, these communities are being forced to compete with commercial interests for access to these resources.

The Swaziland Environment Authority Act was passed in 1992 and amended in 2002. The 2002 amendments strengthened the spirit of public participation and included a specific provision that the SEA board must include one representative of an environmental NGO. Despite pressure from Yonge Nawe Environmental Action Group, the NGO which Thuli leads, the Minister for the environment refused to comply with the law. Concerned that this defiant action could set a precedent for future ministers, Thuli and Yonge Nawe decided to challenge his actions in Swaziland's highest court.

Finally, in April 2009, three years into the battle, the High Court of Swaziland agreed with Thuli and ruled that the Management Board of the SEA

was illegally constituted. This ruling ensures that environmental groups will now have a place on the board and will be more easily able to monitor the activities of the SEA.

Yonge Nawe is one of the many environmental organisations in Africa which have, over the last two decades, started to challenge environmental issues from a justice perspective and which have recognised that ensuring clear mechanisms for participation is a key element in securing environmental justice. 



The Letter Page

Good day.

We run an adventure camp for school children. Recently we started looking at getting an incinerator for our camp's plastic, paper and sanitary waste. Seeing as you do not believe in incinerators as a solution to waste management I thought maybe you had some advice as to what we can do in terms of recycling. WE are based near Hoedspruit in Limpopo province.

Any help will be greatly appreciated.

Kind Regards

Deon Breytenbach

Dear Deon,

At groundWork we believe in and practise an approach of Zero Waste. Zero waste means reducing what we throw away in landfills and incinerators to zero. In nature there is no waste and most things can and should be safely and economically recycled, reused or composted.

Waste is not a high tech problem - it is, in fact, a low-tech problem. Waste is made by mixing and it is undone by separation at source. As long as your wet and dry wastes are separated then you can begin to do useful things with them – all you need to do to achieve this is have separate bins for your waste streams. All dry recyclables such as paper, plastic, and metals such as tins etc. should be kept dry, then compacted as much as possible and, on a weekly/monthly basis, be taken to a recycling centre for recovery. If none exist in Hoedspruit I am sure there are some in Tzaneen, Nelspruit or Phalaborwa – and usually they can be encouraged to collect once the volume is economically feasible for them. Ideally you would use local community recyclers.

All food, vegetable waste and any organics should be composted (either by worms – vermi-composting is now widely available, or in windrows) and used for soil fertiliser etc. In a typical kitchen scenario this is easy to do by instructing the food preparers to use dedicated bins for food scraps and veg waste.

Batteries, CFL light bulbs and any other potentially hazardous waste such as e-waste should also be kept separate and disposed of at dedicated collection points such as Woolworths, Clicks and Pick 'n Pays that have current programs for batteries. Incredible Connections countrywide are taking back all e-waste including computers, cell phones, monitors etc.

My sense is that you can incorporate all of these activities into your adventure camp as educational tools, and even take it one step further and incorporate a food sustainability/food security component if you want to demonstrate this. If not there are many commercial agriculture farms around Hoedspruit that would be willing to take your compost.

Incineration is probably the worst option you could choose. It is the most wasteful and dangerous because when you burn plastics the trace amounts of chlorine in them combine with the organics and form new and very dangerous and persistent compounds such as dioxin and furans which have very negative impacts on communities' health. I am sure that this is not your intention but this is the unintended consequence of incineration – and I am sure you don't want to spend hundreds of thousands of rand on an air pollution cleaning device.

If you require more material or have any questions in this regard please don't hesitate to ask or call.

Kind regards

Rico Euripidou



In Brief

At last, SAAQIS is launched

On 23 March 2010 the South African Air Quality Information System (SAAQIS) was launched at the celebration of the 150th anniversary of meteorology in South Africa held by the South African Weather Service (SAWS) who will be the custodian of the system.

A web-based interactive system, SAAQIS has two main objectives; firstly to meet the legal purpose of reporting air quality related information to the public and, secondly, to be an information system that assists all spheres of government in strengthening policy-making related to air quality issues. In the past such policy-making has been based on ad-hoc information and there has rarely been historical data that could be used to understand air quality trends and impacts.

In order for this system to be effective all provinces and local municipalities that have air quality monitoring stations are encouraged to report their data to the SAAQIS. At present, forty-two stations are doing so.

This initiative is divided into three phases. The first phase, the development of the reporting system, is now complete. The second phase will be to make emissions inventories from sources such as industries, vehicles, residential dwellings and other sources. The final phase will focus on air pollution modelling which will enable real-time reporting and forecasting of air pollution. This will assist travellers who could then avoid highly polluted areas, useful for individuals who suffer from respiratory illnesses.

In the future this system will have all industrial permits and emission data on the website so this information, for which we currently have to make a PAIA application, will be freely available - certainly a step in the right direction.

The address for SAAQIS is <http://www.saaqis.org.za/>.

Government plans to set up own waste sites

Health Care Risk Waste (HCRW) includes, amongst other things, used or discarded medicines and needles, bandages and dressings, as well as anatomical waste such as amputated body parts and foetuses. This type of waste is, according to a presentation by the Department of Environmental Affairs to Members of Parliament, subject to poor management and unhealthy competition within the medical waste sector.

The amount of HCRW generated nationally apparently rose sharply to 42 200 tons in 2007, which was six thousand tons more than the country's facilities, which use autoclaves and incinerators, could adequately handle.

The spokesperson said that the increase of waste could be related to the high incidence of HIV and AIDS in South Africa and to the poor training of staff at medical facilities, who tended to mix general waste with HCRW waste.

Although government had made it clear to industry in 2007 that it did not want to enter the HCRW treatment industry, industry has not adequately addressed its problems and has not organised or managed itself to provide a proper disposal service. In fact, the problems have worsened as companies and facilities have been shut down due to poor operation and non-compliance with environmental regulations.

Because of the current situation the department was proposing that government should have regional facilities. A feasibility study is being done to determine whether there should be nine regional or one centralised facility.

Currently there are five major medical waste incinerators operating within the country, and a similar number of autoclaves. Two new facilities, one in the Western Cape and one in Gauteng, are due to come into operation in May.



THE STORY OF STUFF



HOW OUR OBSESSION WITH STUFF
IS TRASHING THE PLANET,
OUR COMMUNITIES, AND OUR HEALTH
— AND A VISION FOR CHANGE

Annie Leonard

Host of the Internet film sensation
The Story of Stuff

The Story of Stuff has been a remarkably successful film and is now available as a book. As the book's cover, shown here, quite explicitly points out, it explains just how our obsession with stuff is wrecking our world. A must read for everyone, the book is available directly from www.storyofstuff.com or from www.kalahari.net for SA readers or Amazon.com for those elsewhere.