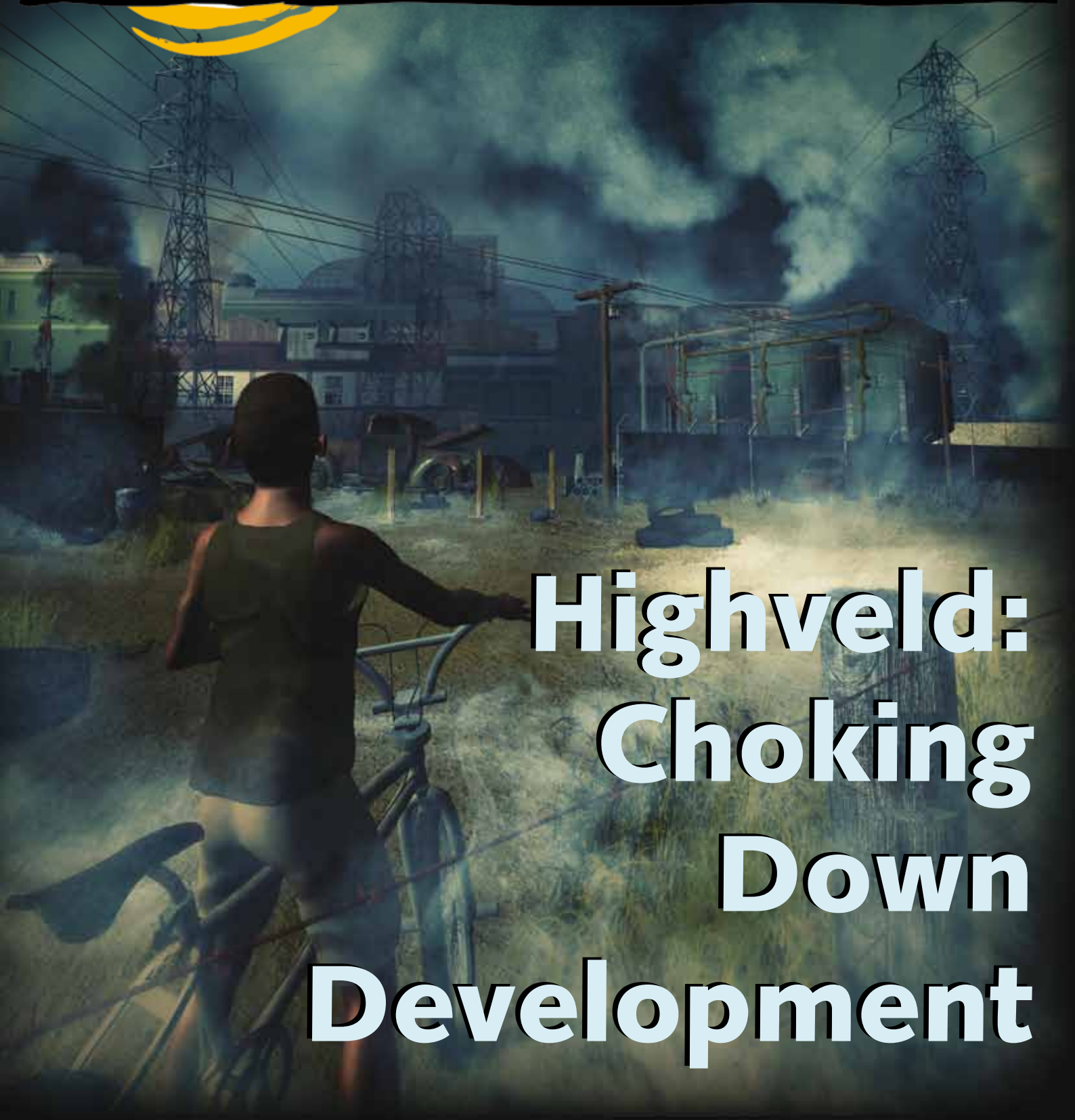




# GROUNDWORK



## Highveld: Choking Down Development

# In this issue

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: Climate Justice and Energy, 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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## **AFFILIATIONS:**

groundWork is affiliated to the following international organisations:

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

## **CREDITS:**

Printed on recycled paper from Sappi Fine Papers

Layout by Boutique Books - Printing by ArrowPrint

Cover design by Barry Downard.



# From the Smoke Stack



Photo by FoE

by groundWork Director, Bobby Peek

On Wednesday, June the 4<sup>th</sup>, Kadar Asmal, South Africa's first democratic Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, passed away. The Sunday papers of that week spoke at length about the vigorous and direct struggle he waged against apartheid and about his commitment to a deep and meaningful democracy post-apartheid. Much was said about the person, Kadar Asmal, as well. In his last public engagement he continued to seek that true democracy and he criticised and warned against the introduction of the Protection of Information Bill, otherwise referred to as the 'secrecy bill'.

But Asmal's legacy lives on in another realm which not many will know him for, and that is his sometime ambiguous struggle against toxic waste dumping in black neighbourhoods in South Africa. This practice was and still is one of the brutal manifestations of the apartheid era. In environmental justice circles he will be remembered for tackling major waste companies in their attempts to further extract profits from poorly managed toxic dumps in black neighbourhoods. This he did with gusto and, in environmental terms, made more of a meaningful impact on environmental justice in the first five years of democracy than the Ministry of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, which was still stuck in the machinations of the old National Party guard as they tried to keep some power. Indeed, it is fitting that in the year of his death, Umlazi's last remaining toxic landfill site, Bulbul, will be closing in November.

In our dealings with him he was direct, pulled no punches and was always prepared for a challenge. I'll never forget my first encounter with him, waiting for him at the old Durban International Airport. As he walked out of the terminal, I stepped forward and introduced myself. His immediate response was to ask who had given me permission to be there and address him. I must say, it took me by surprise, but

later that day in August 1996, he formally made the announcement that Waste-tech's Umlazi site was to close in six months. This was after a year of south Durban people, organisations, the Isipingo school children and various other lobby groups challenging his failure to close what was a development that highlighted the evils of apartheid's environmental racism.

But at the same time there was controversy. Asmal failed to take effective action on other toxic dumps in black neighbourhoods such as Aloes in Port Elizabeth and Bisasar Road in Clare Estate in Durban. After many years of struggle, Aloes still exists despite it having courted controversy throughout its existence. The intrigue of waste politics, and how Asmal was caught up within this, is evident in the continued operations of what is claimed to be Africa's largest dump site, the eThekweni Metro-operated waste dump site, within the black neighbourhood of Clare Estate. Despite the promise by the ANC in the run-up to the 1994 elections that they would close the dump, it remains open, with Asmal signing the extended permit during his tenure as Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry. He was the go-to person on environment for the new governing ANC government; sometimes it worked, on other occasions it did not.

Talking of the eThekweni Metro, we need to reflect on another waste saga that intersects with Asmal in the 1990s, which is the proposal to incinerate waste as a waste management option. During Asmal's tenure, the south Durban people managed to get him to close the hazardous ash dump site of Mondi in the neighbourhood of Merebank in south Durban. Soon after this Mondi and the eThekweni Metro, together with the International Finance Corporation, proposed burning Mondi's and Durban's waste for energy. Needless to say, this was challenged and a protracted battle resulted in Mondi





being allowed to incinerate their own waste, while the city's proposal went nowhere, until recently. Now we hear from sources within the city's bureaucracy that incineration is back on the cards. We know that the ex-mayor of Durban, Obed Mlaba, was clear about his support for this option after visiting Oslo last year. Asked why they are doing this, considering the strong resistance to incineration by the people of Durban, the bureaucratic response is that they are following orders. Is the reality then that the incineration proposals for Durban lie within the realm of benefiting politicians forcing projects down on bureaucrats who do not believe that they will work? Partly so, but it also takes officials on the inside to make sure the road to incineration is paved with as little resistance as possible.

In our last newsletter we covered the controversy of fracking in the Karoo. The folk in the Karoo have managed to put up a brave and visible struggle against Shell. The reality is that Shell did not expect such a homegrown resistance. Lewis Pugh, better known for his endurance swims in cold arctic waters, has come out in support of the resistance by the people of the Karoo. So, in response to this struggle, government placed a moratorium on fracking in the Karoo in April, but confusion reigns both within government and in the public realm as to how to understand the moratorium, for it is not clear if the moratorium is on all fracking or just future fracking. Shell is presently waiting for a response from Petroleum Agency of SA, due in August. Why can government not be absolutely clear about what their position is?

Fracking is not, however, restricted only to the Karoo. In June, farmers from KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) also voiced their concern about 108 000 prospecting applications for various minerals that had been lodged with the Mineral Affairs Department in KZN.

Government's knack of ensuring that information is not clear is a reality of old. The Thor saga of many years ago, when hazardous waste imports were banned but Thor was allowed to continue, is a classical example of such purposefully poor information transmission and construction. Within the challenge on renewable energy in South Africa we have another such process of information management. However, on this

occasion, one cannot blame government alone. Since the Integrated Resource Plan 2010 to 2030 was released, an oft quoted figure is that 42% of additional new capacity will be renewable. But what is critical is that in 2030 renewables will only be 9% of the energy mix. This latter figure is the one that we should be challenging. As the public, we need to be clearer about which figures we choose to present. We need to continue to place pressure on government, indicating to them that this is not what we want or what is required.

This ambiguity in the way information is presented is critical in that it often makes environmental justice victories so much harder to attain because the truth is never what it really is. Asmal felt the sting of this when, in 1995, his messaging on Umlazi was confusing, to say the least. His pronouncements on closure in 1995 did not actually mean closure. It came back to haunt him in 1996 and, to his credit, he was clear about closure the second time around. Unfortunately we do not have the luxury of a second round in many of the challenges we face today. So the best thing that government can do is to be abundantly clear about what its position is and not get caught up in ambiguities.

Finally, as we remember Asmal, we have to reflect that in his childhood neighbourhood of Stanger the intrigue of hazardous waste dumping is slowly emerging. Between the Department of Water and Environmental Affairs, Wasteman, provincial government and local government, a condition has been allowed to be developed that will allow for KwaZulu-Natal to develop, after many years of resistance, a high-hazard dump site in the farming area around Stanger.

For Asmal's own legacy, it is hoped that the Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs in KZN does not allow Wasteman to bully them into the granting of this licence which will ensure that KwaZulu-Natal will continue producing hazardous waste rather than seeking to become a green province and move towards zero waste production.

If Kadar Asmal was around I feel we would be having a robust debate on this issue rather than an official back and forth of letters. Asmal's no-nonsense robust approach will be missed. X



# The Highveld Priority Area

Bobby Peek & Rico Euripidou

*The Highveld may have been declared a priority area, but are the right things being done to ensure that people's right to a healthy environment is not violated?*

The Highveld area, east of Johannesburg, is the third area in the country to receive 'special' attention by government because of the heavy pollution load that impacts on peoples' health. This pollution load is due to the presence of Eskom's ten coal-fired power stations, Sasol's Secunda synthetic fuel plant – the largest greenhouse gas emitter in the world – and various smelters owned by multinational corporations such as Exxaro, Columbus Steel and Vanchem (Duferco). These are not small players in

the pollution business. They have built their global empires by relying on countries such as South Africa to facilitate their pollution in the South, while they extract profits to the North.

To add salt to the wound, coal mining is pervasive in the region leading to air and water pollution.

In a democratic South Africa, community people have made their voices heard and have fought for environmental legislation that would seek to hold



*Eskom is only one of the many polluters in the Highveld area.*

*Photo: groundWork*



major multinational corporations accountable to the people they pollute. Democratic legislation has another role, and that is to ensure that corporate power is rolled back and that corporations do not take over the job of government via self-regulation. Today, we have the National Environmental Management: Air Quality Act (the Act), which seeks to intervene, through using section 18 of the Act, to declare an area a pollution priority area so that government can step in urgently and act to set in place local regulations and enforcement mechanisms so that pollution can be reduced and peoples' health can be protected. This is government's third attempt at intervening in pollution hotspots – the first being south Durban, then the Vaal (south of Johannesburg) and now the Highveld.

### **Have they got it right? This is the big question.**

It is by no means an easy feat to challenge the likes of Eskom, Sasol and other major corporates to come to the table and clean up. Let us consider the fact that during the negotiations on the Act, Eskom was arrogant enough to be dismissive of a request from the Chief Air Pollution Officer for their air pollution data: 'we will consider it' was their response! Not 'here it is, you have the right to ask for it as government'. To make matters worse, in this part of the world government, like in many other places, has failed to deliver on affordable energy. Thus people burn coal and wood indoors for spatial heating and cooking. Poor township people in the Highveld are part of the 4-million homes in South Africa that cook without electricity. They just cannot afford the electricity from the Eskom power stations in their neighbourhood, even if it is available to them.

In May 2011 the draft Highveld Priority Area Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP) was published for public comment and signalled the beginning of the period meant to bring the Highveld area into compliance with the Act and its associated Ambient Air Quality standards. The primary motivation of the priority area Plan: "Is to achieve and maintain compliance with the ambient air quality standards across the HPA, using the Constitutional principle of progressive realisation of air quality improvements.

The AQMP for the HPA provides the framework for implementing departments and industry."

What is alarming in this process is that there is a role to be played by civil society and we have missed this. We have given our right to act over to government, which is failing in its duty to protect us. We have forgotten that the struggle is not only in the 'committee' developing the plan, but the struggle is in the streets and political offices where we make politicians uncomfortable.

### **Expansion of industry**

The elephant in the room is the expansion of industry. There is no clear explanation in the HPA AQMP of the basis for choosing certain strategies other than a general idea that air quality in the area must be brought into compliance with ambient standards. What about allowances for further industrial expansion? Expansion is only mentioned on six occasions throughout the entire document and there is no meaningful analysis of these projects described in the context of the AQMP. The construction of Kusile and the proposal by the Department of Minerals and Energy (DME) within the Integrated Energy Plan 2003 and Department of Energy's Integrated Resource Plan 2010, which makes no bones about our continued reliance on fossil fuels for our national energy requirements – most of this development will occur in the Highveld – coupled with the industrial expansion is going to mean mining expansion and what comes with it and will no doubt come back to haunt government and the people of the Highveld. Expansion is thus going to occur in an already saturated area.

### **Upset conditions ignored**

Similarly, what is the strategy for "upset conditions"? Upset conditions are something people living next to the oil refinery industry in South Africa are all too fully aware of – because of the visibility of huge flaring incidents during upset conditions. Upset conditions in industries are the source of vast emissions. This poses a significant risk to the community because upset emissions have been proven to be more toxic than normal emissions because they create more harmful products of incomplete combustion like dioxins and furans. Upset conditions are mentioned on only two occasions in the AQMP and then only in passing.



### Cumulative pollution

Furthermore, the HPA AQMP aspires to meet the requirements of the ambient air quality standards which are treated as discrete and separate standards for each pollutant, when in reality polluted areas usually consist of a large number of different pollutants, which have cumulative effects and, in addition, may have synergistic or combined effects on air quality. This document fails to recognise this reality and this approach to meet compliance with discrete ambient air quality standards for each pollutant will not result in compliance with the overall requirement of the AQA 2004 which is to give meaning to the principles of NEMA to protect public and environmental health and ultimately Section 24 of the Constitution.

### Failing to deliver – facilitating pollution!

Of alarm in the document is the continued reliance and persistence of the DEA on the Basa Njengo Magogo (the Basa), which does not move people away from burning coal indoors but rather facilitates the practice of burning coal indoors through using a different method under the guise of improved burning.

Although the method has been shown to achieve some particulate matter reductions under controlled conditions (albeit with no reductions in any other pollutants, including  $\text{SO}_2$ ), the reality is that where the method has been rolled out at community levels very little improvement has been realised in either DEA field trials or Anglo Coal field trials. The observations in ambient air quality in fact point to a further deterioration in air quality following the rollout of this Basa methodology at community level.

Thus serious attention needs to be given to domestic fuel burning and seasonal spatial heating requirements by communities within the HPA generally. The AQMP correctly identifies a wide array of factors affecting the extent of household fuel combustion, including population density and growth, the availability of electricity, household income, the degree of urbanisation and the percentage of informal (un-serviced) households, and then remains silent on how to address these pertinent issues. It is critical that housing, poverty reduction measures and energy access are core

to the AQMP. Initiatives and strategies require a multi-government-department approach, including the DEA, DME and the Department of Housing, if we are ever to seriously address this issue.

### Failing to live up to principles

The development of the AQMP must be guided by the over arching principles which are detailed in key regulatory and policy documents, including the constitution and the principles outlined in the National Environmental Management Act (Act 107 of 1998). Key principles that relate specifically to civil society include: environmental justice, equitable access to environmental resources, benefits and services to meet basic human needs. The participation of all interested and affected parties in environmental governance must be promoted and decisions must take into account the interests, needs and values of all interested and affected parties. It is not clear in the AQMP that these principles have, in fact, guided its development – adherence and compliance with these principles must be demonstrated in the context of the various elements of the Plan. We believe that, based upon the above, the HPA AQMP falls appallingly short and will not secure people's health and well-being in the Highveld Area.

Government has not got it right. But groundWork will work using all available avenues to assist them in getting it right. Considering that only 8% of all the industries in the Highveld have submitted air pollution reduction plans to the DEA in response to the AQMP, the fight is on. ✖

*A Sasol flare during upset conditions.*

*Photo: Denny Larsen*





**What groundWork and community groups expect from the  
Highveld Priority Area Air Quality Management Plan**

The overall purpose of the AQMP must be to provide a clear operational template that will assist the authorities in achieving compliance and good governance by:

- Understanding and characterising the existing air quality in the HPA and the major contributors to air pollution;
- Setting realistic and achievable targets of reduction with punitive measures for non-compliance.
- Linking exceedances of ambient air quality standards to industry-specific source emissions;
- Developing the expertise of local authorities for planning and implementation so that they have the ability to use the AQMP to investigate and determine these source emissions and, if required, impose measures to mitigate future emissions;
- Ensuring that provincial government's expertise is also developed to support local authorities and that DEA support is clearly articulated, i.e. what indicators will trigger the DEA intervention;
- Setting aspirational goals with clear time frames and targets to ensure that progress is always made on a continuum;
- Developing an integrated approach to air quality management to respond to the prevalence of energy poverty, sub-standard housing and poor spatial heating in the Highveld;
- Ensuring that government has the necessary technical tools that provide real time data and that will alert them to exceedances in air quality ambient standards and link these exceedances to source.
- Developing public health surveillance systems (in partnership with the DoH) to determine the health impact of air pollution and to be able to understand if emission reductions have the desired positive health outcomes; and
- Placing the burden of proof for compliance on the polluter – community people must not have to prove that their health or wellbeing is being impacted upon.

Finally, the biggest and known polluters in the Highveld must take responsibility and proactively set urgent pollution reduction targets in alignment with regulations and beyond forthwith and not hide behind time frames and extensions, etc. These polluters are:

1. Exxaro Base Metals: Zincor
2. Silicon Smelters – Rand Carbide
3. Evraz Highveld Steel and Vanadium
4. Columbus Stainless
5. Vanchem Vanadium Products
6. Zimalco
7. Sasol Synfuels
8. Samancor Ferrometals
9. Elkem Ferroveld
10. Brokor – Bronkhorstspuit and Midrand
11. Eskom and coal mines and coal waste that is presently burning.





# Landfill of Shame

Musa Chamane

*From once being one of the best-run landfills in South Africa, the New England Road Landfill has become one of mismanagement, chaos and corruption*

## History Rich City

The New England Road Landfill in Pietermaritzburg was one of the best run landfills in the mid-90s. During this time the city of Pietermaritzburg went to the extent of winning the cleanest town competition in KwaZulu-Natal. Pietermaritzburg is the pride of the nation in terms of South African history. The Zulu King Dingane had his kingdom in Pietermaritzburg, Nelson Mandela was arrested just outside Pietermaritzburg and Mohandas Gandhi was famously thrown off his train in Pietermaritzburg. This is the capital city of the province of KwaZulu-Natal, but I now regard this city as a city of corruption. Nothing seems to be working in this city and services are not rendered, despite people paying their rates every month.

## Corruption is rife in this city

Corruption is everywhere in this city. It all starts at the municipal headquarters where five high-ranking officials are still on full pay despite suspension due to corruption allegations. The landfill is also engulfed in a corruption cloud. Mismanagement, flawed Materials Recovery Facilities (MRF) projects, questionable operation tool hiring/leasing, suspected fraud, bogus overtime scams... I am concerned about the management issues and the lack of oversight, but there is nothing to substantiate a criminal prosecution, despite evidence that has been uncovered in a number of forensic investigations that the municipality has undergone since the Scorpion involvement in 2005. These audits have indicated that there are businesses that

benefit repeatedly from the municipality and some of these companies are partly owned by municipal employees.

## It has now become a city of filth

As a result of corruption the dumping site is operated by uncommitted staff. The waste management unit of the Municipality is also run by acting management staff whose focus is not 100% on this job. This opens opportunities for lower and middle management staff to be involved in corrupt practices. The city of Pietermaritzburg has a population of more than 1 million but only three municipal waste collection trucks service the area. There are only three trucks because this limit has opened the window for the corrupt practice of hiring trucks from friends. The municipality then ends up paying exorbitant lease rates at the end of the month. The municipality could buy or fix the tools that they have, but that is not happening. Instead, such tools are hired from outside for a long period of time.

## We have a government that never listens

Since 2004 groundWork has been sitting on a landfill monitoring committee which was chaired by the municipal official and very few issues were really taken seriously. The issue of crowd control at the local landfill was constantly discussed. The license does not permit any waste recovery on site but the municipality has been under enormous pressure to allow people to have access to the site so that they can earn livelihoods. We constantly advised the landfill manager, supervisor and foreman to



## Waste

A broken-down compactor lies stranded in the muck at New England Road Landfill site.

Photo:  
groundWork



have a plan as to how to involve waste reclaimers. Eventually they accepted them on site but failed to control the access and the landfill ended up being a free for all. The numbers of reclaimers has multiplied to the extent that even covering and compacting of waste material has been badly affected.

### **Breach of Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA)**

A Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) is in the offing and now the council has a challenge as to how they are to deal with the high number of reclaimers. The MRF has been approved by the council without public consultation or even consultation with the waste reclaimers. Our local government has to be transparent but in this case it has been the opposite. It is not clear who will be operating the MRF and when this company was appointed, yet there are

more than 100 jobs to be lost. We are not even sure whether the MRF will prioritise employing cooperatives of waste pickers who are currently earning a livelihood from this site. This project proves to be one of the projects that have corrupt elements based on the issues raised above.

### **Reclaimers Memorandum never considered**

In December 2008 waste pickers marched to the council offices to submit a memorandum of grievances to the municipality. The memorandum was received by one of the top officials but none of the issues raised on the memorandum has been addressed. In fact, there has never been any response. Amongst other things that the memorandum raised was the safety of waste reclaimers operating on site. Safety in terms of having trucks and compactors working on one side



while waste pickers work on the other. The idea of demarcating the site was discussed but never came to fruition and now the safety has become an issue following the death of a middle-aged woman who worked there as a waste picker.

### **Chasing the Poor is like moving a mountain**

The main problem is with the management of the landfill. The council has tried repeatedly to chase waste pickers off site but that has never worked. The management noticed that it costs them a lot of money to have extra security on site and they confessed that having waste pickers on site saves them landfill space. After such revelations waste pickers were allowed to operate at the landfill but only in principle. Currently the waste pickers earn a livelihood by picking recyclables at the landfill. There are various challenges that the waste pickers have and safety is one of them.

### **Landfill Committee is no longer sitting**

New projects coming to the landfill should be discussed at the monitoring committee meetings and these meetings are usually called by landfill management but they have not called one since September 2009. One of the license requirements is to have this committee to assist and oversee the operations of the landfill. The committee is no longer there and so it is no wonder that there are so many challenges at the landfill. I suspect that one reason why we are not having these meetings is that some corrupt practices maybe uncovered by the committee. The committee comprises the municipality, civil society and members of the public.

### **Divide and rule tactics**

The failure by the municipality to manage the site has resulted in a number of problems, including the division of waste reclaimers. The municipality does not have to be too involved in terms of waste pickers organising themselves. Currently there is a democratically elected committee and the municipality knows about it. groundWork has assisted the waste reclaimers in organising themselves. In the past few weeks the municipality has called a meeting with waste pickers and called for elections, without groundWork as a lead

organising assistant, to elect the new committee. The existing committee of waste pickers raised concerns to the municipality and the resolution was that a meeting will be called to discuss the ground-rules for waste pickers. The issue of the municipality calling for elections was never discussed during the meeting between the committee, groundWork and the municipality. The municipality is using the old trick of divide and rule.

### **Msunduzi, get your act together**

The waste pickers feel that the municipality is colluding with some of their members in order to divide the movement that they have formed. Someone has to take responsibility for what is happening at this landfill. Failure to do something about this will result in a lot more problems. We have consistently warned the municipality but, because we are part of civil society, they never take us seriously. The municipality needs to get their act together by calling the landfill monitoring committee meetings so that issues can be discussed and resolved, reversing the tragedy that we are experiencing. There must be a clear plan for every operation at the landfill. There must be a recycling space for reclaimers and operation space for the municipality. The municipality needs, in short, to do its duty and get its act together. ✕



*groundWorkers use the bucket to measure air quality at yet another fire at the New England Road landfill.*

*Photo: groundWork*



# Exposing the Climate Gangsters

Bobby Peek

*groundWork, along with other NGOs, is planning a Dirty Energy Week – and a Climate Gangster Award – to kick off the COP17*

Every dog and pony show will be in Durban at the end of the year. Governments are going to want us to believe that they have citizens' interests at heart. Corporations are going to be pushing greenwash and claiming that they are actually reducing their pollution. We have heard it all before!

So groundWork, with community groups and non-government organisations, will be seeking to build solidarity to expose and challenge false energy solutions at the UNFCCC and beyond.

We are calling for Energy Ubuntu!

From Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> to Friday 25<sup>th</sup> November, at the Blue Waters Hotel, Durban, South Africa, we are expecting 150 community, social movement and NGO representatives to gather for four days to focus and work on strengthening people's struggles against dirty energy and show the bottom-up demand for the cleaner energy and climate-proofing of economies.

What is our rationale? The world is in crisis: The ecological crisis – as manifested by climate change; the energy crisis – as manifested by peak oil and the global price of oil; and the imperial crisis that is the decline of the global hegemony of the United States. This triple crisis impacts upon poor people the most, as Southern governments give up more of their land, water and air to polluting industries in the name of 'development'. This, in turn, impacts upon peoples' health as social services get cut because of austerity measures and as the impacts of climate change affect the poor more greatly, especially in Africa where temperature rises are 1.5 times higher than the global average and already exceed 1°C.

The United Nations Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) holds its 17<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP) in Durban from November the 28<sup>th</sup> amidst this crisis. It is being referred to by government as the African COP. This is appropriate considering that Africa is the hardest hit by climate change impacts and is also a continent which exports up to 80% of its energy – which is carbon based – for consumption in Northern economies.

groundWork is working to ensure that the COP in Durban is remembered for global movements coming together to support African civil society in their endeavours to build democratic pressure to ensure that governments the world over respond to people's voices rather than corporate money.

After 16 COPs, the UN is nowhere near a negotiated solution that would impact positively on slowing and reversing climate change as required by science. Instead, what we have seen is increased rhetoric by rich countries, corporations and selected southern governments and elites.

**Activities:** groundWork, recognising the above, is seeking to bring together communities who face climate justice challenges on a daily basis, where corporations and governments undemocratically enforce decisions which destroy people's lands, livelihoods and lives. From communities in the Niger Delta, challenging oil exploration, to communities in the Philippines and South Africa, challenging coal developments; from communities in the US to South Africa, challenging shale gas extraction; and people from Kosovo to India, challenging power plants based on dirty coal, people will have the space to share their struggles, to work on common strategies and to link with key NGOs working at local levels supporting community campaigns, and at policy level nationally and internationally in order





that policy work is positioned in the experience and articulations of those that face day-to-day challenges.

Some of the potential focus discussions during the gathering will be:

- Understanding and unpacking the corporate fossil fuel agenda – with case studies on coal, oil, tar sands and gas – and how it intersects with the UNFCCC debate;
- Exposing the impact of financial mechanisms that are being pushed within the UNFCCC and their true cost to society;
- Exposing false solutions including: Carbon Capture and Sequestration; Waste to Energy; Nuclear power; so-called 'clean coal'; Carbon Trading; the Green Economy and others; and
- Exposing corporate capture of UN Institutions and Government that result in furthering the crisis.

Moving forward, discussions will focus on:

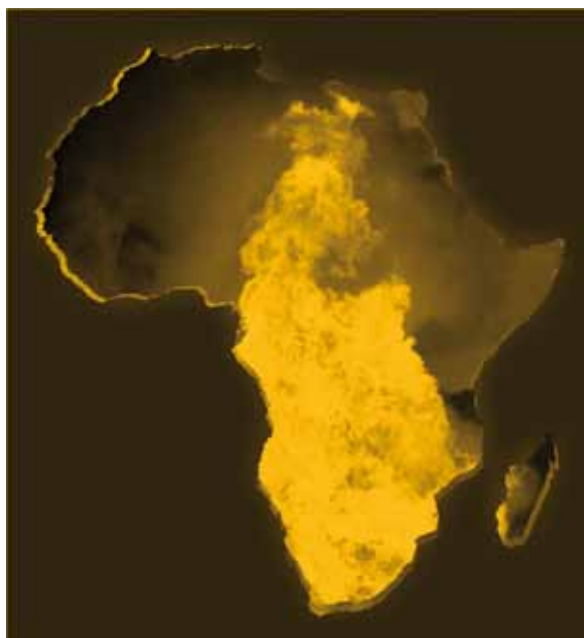
- Alternatives to the present moribund UNFCCC process through interrogating new strategies and mechanisms for avoiding global climate catastrophe;
- Interrogating ways of democratising energy locally, nationally and globally;
- Labour and climate change;
- Presenting low carbon energy solution examples from various countries; and
- Taking further the concept of Energy Sovereignty.

groundWork envisages that such a gathering of key civil society people will be able to shape a position that reflects the experiences of those affected and that this position can then be used in the building of solidarity with social movements, community groups and NGOs who are asking for climate justice.

The reasons for bringing together community groups, movements and NGOs before the main COP event are to secure a dedicated space for intense dialogue and discussion that will not be competing with the other critical events; to ensure that an agenda is set rather than responded to; and to secure media space at a critical time just before the event, rather than competing for limited space during the COP. Critically, this process will also allow those involved in it to feed the outcomes into critical work of allies the following week.

Finally, on the Friday evening of the 25<sup>th</sup> groundWork is seeking to end off the event with an award ceremony for the world's largest 'Climate Gangsters'. This will build upon the legacy created by groundWork's Green Oscar for Greenwash at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002, the groundWork Corpse Awards and awards such as the Angry Mermaid award in Copenhagen in 2009.

A new energy future is needed! Let us go out and challenge those who do not want one! ✊



# Power to the People, by the People

Bobby Peek

After many decades of struggle South Africa finally gained its democracy in 1994. One of the most celebrated pieces of this new South Africa was the right to stand in long queues and cast one's vote. Another was the delivery of a constitution that guaranteed people a new tomorrow through a Bill of Rights. One of the most progressive of these was peoples' right to "an environment that is not harmful to their health and well-being." It put people and their health at the centre of protecting the environment. This was far-reaching as South Africa had emerged from centuries of colonialism and apartheid where conservation of wildlife was put ahead of local people's lives and well-being. Nearly two decades after the dawn of our democracy, are we better off? Has there been delivery of these rights?

The facts and figures tell a sad and depressing story.

42% of Africa's greenhouse gasses are emitted by South Africa. So you would think that South Africa is a fairly developed nation with good employment rates. Not the case.

41% of South Africa's potential workforce is employed, according to Advorp Holding, Chief Executive, Richard Pike.

16% is the total amount of energy consumed by South Africa's residents.

44% of South Africa's energy is used by 36 companies. Industry, mining, agriculture and commerce use more than 70% of all energy produced.

11% of South Africa's energy is used by one company, the Australian multi-national, BHP Billiton.

9.7 Billion South African Rand was the loss Eskom, the South African power utility, made because of

the provision of cheap electricity to BHP Billiton according to Eskom's annual report March 2010.

50% below cost is what BHP Billiton paid for this electricity, which is around 1.7 US cents/kWh.

4 million homes cook without electricity according to the Citizens United for Renewable Energies and Sustainability (CURES).

2.5 million homes do not have electricity.

10 million is the number of people who have experienced periodic electricity cut-offs since 2002, according to Queens University researcher David McDonald.

This is not a story of a democratic state, but rather a story of a state that has failed to deliver to its people. It is a state that is managed for the benefit of multi-national corporations.

It is against this backdrop that people have to take control over their own energy provision. As in the case of the Nyeleni Declaration on food sovereignty, energy sovereignty should put those "who produce, distribute and consume" energy, rather than the demands of markets and corporations, at the heart of the energy systems and policies.

When viewed in a global context one realises that the underdevelopment of the greater population of South Africa is not something that is a mere hangover from apartheid. It is an active process of the development choices made by the South African government today. This development trajectory is facilitated by global finance and the ongoing development paradigm of extraction of Africa's resources for the benefit of northern consumption. It is common knowledge that 80% of the World Bank's oil extraction investment in Africa is for northern consumption. In South Africa, the World Bank and the European Investment Bank's more than US\$6 billion investment in Eskom's



coal fired power stations facilitates the same process – extraction of energy cheaply for northern consumption.

The daily experience of people is one of broken promises. With the lack of energy access by the majority of people in South Africa, the battle to avoid catastrophic climate change is deeply intertwined with the battle to achieve access to clean, affordable energy. Because people do not have access to energy from Eskom, they are forced to burn coal indoors as a source of energy. Coupling this domestic pollution with heavy industrial pollution is a recipe for disaster. Consider the fact that from May to August 2010, the South African ambient air pollution standards protecting health were exceeded on 570 occasions in the Highveld. Peoples' right to an environment that is not harmful to their health and well-being was therefore contravened on 570 occasions. This is not a surprise in this area considering the presence of ten Eskom coal-fired power stations, and Sasol's synfuel plant which has the dubious distinction of being the highest single-source greenhouse gas emitter in the world. So, while all this energy production is around people, directly impacting upon their health, they get very little of this energy. Access to energy is a struggle.

It is in this context that South Africans need another energy future; an energy future that ensures decent levels of affordable basic services and infrastructures to be enjoyed by all in society as a basic human right – and not only by 'consumers' who can afford them; an energy future where individuals and families are able to access, at minimum, the most basic necessities of human life, starting with nutritious food, clean water, safe and comfortable accommodation, and a clean healthy environment – both where people live and where they work. And these necessities must be nurtured by the very way in which people live and work, not undermined by them.

To deliver the above, the people of South Africa, and not multinational corporations, must be at the centre of energy delivery. People have to start taking ownership of how energy is produced –not only the physical production but the democratic decisions on how production and distribution are

decided upon. It means a deepening of democracy and, indeed, through this, energy sovereignty.

The South Africa leadership cannot continue to hoodwink its people and the world. Its Copenhagen offer to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by a 34% "deviation" below baseline by 2020 and 42% below baseline by 2025 is based upon an assumption of growth without constraint, which will take South Africa's greenhouse gas emissions from 440 million tons in 2003 to 1600 million tons by 2050. This is an inaccurate and politically naive claim of carbon rights it does not have. Based upon present figures, South Africa already reached 500 million tons in 2008 – its commitment to 42% renewables in the future energy development mix only translates to 9% renewables in 2030.

The government also throws figures around about how many millions of people they have connected to the electricity grid. To make it even more democratic, and for people to have a stronger say in their energy use, government presents the installation of prepaid meters as the panacea so that people can better manage their consumption. In reality this is so that people can be the agents of their own disconnection when they do not have money to pay for the most expensive electricity in the country.

So South African's have to start challenging this political greenwash and start working on systems that result in them not being dependent upon big power producers such as Eskom. This would mean tackling small local municipalities to start thinking of local energy development for their own needs. It would mean calling for better houses so than in winter people do not lose energy through leaking roofs, and poorly constructed state homes. It would mean that community people get access to affordable energy and don't have to pay up to seven times more for their electricity than industry does. It would mean ensuring that industry pays the real price for energy and doesn't continue to get the cheapest electricity in the world at the expense of people. ✕



# Waste Pickers Gear Up for COP17

Musa Chamane

The South African Waste Pickers Association has been getting international invitations to countries such as India and Brazil. We did not envisage that what is happening in South Africa is also happening in other countries. Waste pickers in this country are organised in exactly the same manner as their international counterparts. In South Africa, waste reclaimers are being assisted to form cooperatives and organise themselves locally and provincially as well as nationally. Waste picking has proven itself by employing more than ten thousand of the poorest of the poor. These job opportunities have not cost government even a single cent. Whether in South Africa, Brazil, India or Egypt, the challenges of waste picking are the same. The only difference is that waste movements in all these countries are not in the same phase. Some countries are still on the forming phase while others, such as Brazil, passed that phase twenty years ago.

UNFCCC is going to be held in South Africa come December 2011. The international community of waste pickers has expectations from South African waste pickers to host and lead them. As a result, in preparation for that, South African waste pickers have been attending international capacity building initiatives. As an NGO organiser it is very encouraging to see someone who operates from his or her local landfill getting an opportunity to go abroad, travelling on their own, to discuss his or her work.

Mapule Baloyi is a mother and a waste picker based in Hammerskraal landfill in Tswane. She was elected by her regional constituency to go to a workshop in India, organised by the Alliance of Waste Pickers and facilitated by GDIA. WIEGO paid for Mapule's trip. She left for India on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June and came back on the 7<sup>th</sup>. The workshop she attended was for landfill-based waste pickers in Delhi. She also visited other areas where waste pickers are operating. During the workshop she was given an opportunity to share her South African experience,

but it was clear that waste pickers from India and South Africa have common problems.

Government's failure to recognise their existence, discrimination and physical abuse are some of the challenges faced by waste pickers. It is very disturbing that Indian waste pickers are still divided in terms of gender. The male counterparts are normally paid higher when compared to women, despite the weight of the recyclables collected. Men are paid 40% more when compared to women. In South Africa, waste pickers earn the same and gender does not matter. What is common is that in both countries pickers work more than twelve hours a day. There are waste pickers who are part of cooperatives while others are not, just like in many landfills in South Africa.

Mapule also visited a place called Nahur. Waste pickers in this city will be out of employment in September because the city of Nahur is planning to shut down the landfill. It was not clear what plans the council of Nahur has for waste in this city in the future. In Pune the gender divisions were also clear in terms of what was being paid to women as compared to men. Indian waste pickers are assisted by NGOs called Chintan, KKP and Safysana.

On the same dates Simon Mbata from Sasolburg, Free State, was representing waste pickers in Brazil. The Packaging Council of South Africa (PACSA), together with their Brazilian counterpart CEMPRE, organised the visit. CEMPRE has a model of working with waste pickers in Brazil. PACSA, together with South African waste pickers, wanted to learn, so that they can import whatever ideas would work for South Africa. What came out clearly was that CEMPRE played a vital role in assisting waste pickers in Brazil. They assisted in organising waste pickers, organised a series of workshops on cooperatives, financial management, etc. The relationship between CEMPRE and waste pickers is more than ten years old. Even the government of Brazil is very accommodating to waste pickers.





The visit to Brazil was also attended by the leadership of Brazilian waste pickers, which already have close relations with South African waste pickers. There was a chance as well to see the re-manufacturing of material since Textapek was visited to experience plastic manufacturing.

The delegation included not only PACSA and SAWPA but also the plastic federation and Wasteplan. After the visit to Brazil the delegation had a planning session for what is needed in South Africa for this to work. The outcome of this visit was that PACSA committed to three pilot projects in South Africa. SAWPA still needs to discuss this internally but coordinators or a working committee have been agreed to in principle. The working committee has been told about the outcomes of the Brazilian visit and this is being discussed in their constituencies. The pilot projects will be manual basic recovery systems, where a number of cooperatives of waste pickers will be involved. During the working group meeting it came out clearly that the Materials Recovery Facilities, based on machines, are a big no-no because that will displace a number of the waste pickers.

In September SAWPA will be having a workshop on waste and climate change. The workshop intends to deepen the understanding of this subject in preparation for the December Durban COP. Waste is a tool that can be used to create jobs in any country that is serious about recycling. Recycling is not only about jobs but also about a cleaner environment and mitigating the impacts of climate change. The workshops will still take place at different local or regional areas. This is preparing the waste reclaimers in South Africa to be able to negotiate at any level.

South Africa is preaching the gospel of a green economy, where green jobs will be created. Waste picking should be part of green jobs because it is a job emanating from the natural environment and has positive impacts in eliminating greenhouse gas emissions. Green jobs should not be misrepresented by allowing big business to take control of the recycling industry and exploit waste pickers. Government needs to create a conducive opportunity for these jobs to flourish. If waste pickers could get permission to do what they do

and could be assisted in getting a proper market this would definitely be one of the decent jobs that our government has committed to create.

A large portion of our waste streams are due to over-packaging of goods and this is still being discussed with PACSA. PACSA is compelled by the laws of this country to either minimise or recycle their waste, therefore collaboration with waste pickers will accelerate their work and they do not have to spend too much money in trying to be on the right side of the law. Waste pickers on the other hand will use this opportunity presented by PACSA to further their livelihood strategy. According to my interpretation this is a win-win situation for everyone, even for government.

Brazil has proven that public-private partnership can bear astonishingly positive results. A good relationship between Catadores (waste Pickers) and CEMPRE benefits everyone. I see no reason why South African government should not assist in such initiatives since employment is very scarce.

An interim committee of global waste pickers was formed at the end of last year and SAWPA interim leader, Simon Mbata, is part of the international committee and will be leading a delegation of waste pickers in the Durban COP. Simon has gained a lot of experience over the years and he has a deep knowledge of waste issues. He has been a guy operating at Sasolburg landfill site and now he operates at Vaalpark drop-off centre where he collects the recyclables from the neighboring suburbs since the landfill will be closed soon. He is a pillar of SAWPA. It is also interesting that the working committee in South Africa is gender balanced as women are also represented.

The South African government should learn from other countries, especially those that are part of the BRICS and who happen to be of the same economic system. Brazil and India have a lot to learn from us and we also have a lot to learn from them. Let us hope that all the energy and attempts in trying to show the light to our government eventually bear fruit so that one day we will have a government that is not arrogant, a country that will really be governed by the people; a government that will listen to the voice of the masses. ✕



# An End to Endosulfan?

Rico Euripidou

*Strides are being made to phase out the use of Endosulfan in agriculture, but there is still a long road ahead.*

Marketed under the names Thionex, Endocil, Phase and Benzoepin, Endosulfan (a neurotoxin from the same family of chemicals as DDT), is one of the most toxic pesticides in use today, and has been linked to cancer and birth defects especially in the epicentre of where it's produced and ultimately used – the Indian agricultural sector.

The global pressure for a ban on Endosulfan had been mounting since 2010, when the persistent organic pollutant review committee (POPRC) under the Stockholm Convention, an international treaty to eliminate the usage of toxic chemicals, nominated Endosulfan for inclusion in a global ban list. Consequently, in a widely hailed move, the parties to the Stockholm Convention voted at their 5<sup>th</sup> conference of the parties in mid-April 2011 to phase out this controversial pesticide. Sadly India, along with Uganda and China, requested exemptions to continue its use for possibly another eleven years.

Three companies in India produce between 70-80% of the 12,000-odd tonnes manufactured globally (a market value estimated at over \$300 million). Half is bought by the country's 75 million farmers, making them the world's largest consumer of Endosulfan, for use on cotton, cashew, tea, fruits and horticulture, etc. However, following decades of pesticide application malpractice and coupled with an inadequate health surveillance systems to evaluate the ongoing public health impact (which the agricultural and pesticides industry has been exploiting over the years), the Chief Minister of the Indian State government of Kerala "sat on a fast demanding its ban"<sup>1</sup>, while the Agriculture Minister

Sharad Pawar and Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh opposed it.

Finally, public health concerns won the day and a complete Indian ban on production, sale and use of pesticide Endosulfan for eight weeks was ordered by the Supreme Court in mid-May which held that human life is more important than anything else. The bench said "*it was concerned about the right to life of the citizen guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution and even the companies involved in the manufacturing of the controversial pesticide cannot ignore corporate and social responsibility by ignoring the hazards posed to human lives*".<sup>2</sup>

This was only after a 2011 public health survey, undertaken by the Indian State Health Department, identified approximately 4000 victims after screening 16000 persons. The health survey found that 526 victims of Endosulfan in the Kasaragod district of Kerala were bedridden. More than 2100 patients needed assistance to move around and many had congenital malformations including skeletal and neural abnormalities. Other cases included neuro-behavioural disorders, cognitive disorders, hydrocephalus resulting in enlargement of head, mental retardation, cortical blindness, seizures, Parkinson's disease, allergies and skin diseases, besides problems related to the reproductive system and certain types of cancer<sup>3</sup>.

Vol 8, Issue 19, Dated 14 May 2011. Ravi

Agarwal: [http://www.tehelka.com/story\\_main49.asp?filename=Ne1405411PROSCONS.asp](http://www.tehelka.com/story_main49.asp?filename=Ne1405411PROSCONS.asp)

2 SC Orders Interim Ban on Endosulfan: <http://news.outlookindia.com/item.aspx?721748>

3 Evidence mounts against Endosulfan as Centre dithers. Roy Mathew. The Hindu. Thiruvananthapuram, April 3, 2011 <http://www.thehindu.com/news/states/kerala/article1596645.ece>

<sup>1</sup> Kill the slow poison now: From Tehelka Magazine,



Animal testing has revealed significant effects on hormonal systems and also that the chemical may accumulate in human fat tissues.

### **The situation in South Africa:**

In South Africa Endosulfan has been used in agriculture to control insect pests including whiteflies, aphids, leafhoppers, Colorado potato beetles and cabbage worms.

The Air That I Breathe Foundation (Tatib)<sup>4</sup> was formed by the people of Stellenbosch, Franschhoek, Paarl, Somerset West and surrounding areas, as a community response against the harmful effects of exposure to potentially toxic spray drift from the adjacent vineyards and orchards, into bordering dwellings/residential areas. Citing community health impacts, dwindling numbers of small birds and lifeless rivers and streams, they aim to ensure that the air that they breathe is kept pesticide, fungicide and herbicide free *"at all times and that this happens in a spirit of harmony and cooperation with the local farming communities"*.

The DEA, the South African focal agency responsible for implementing the Stockholm Convention in its evaluation of Endosulfan decided that "taking into account that a lack of full scientific certainty should not prevent a proposal from proceeding, and asserting that Endosulfan is likely, as a result of its long-range environmental transport, to lead to significant adverse human health and environmental effects such that global action is warranted".

The Department of Agriculture has subsequently indicated that it will not renew the registration of Endosulfan by 2011. Similarly, in most countries that have ratified the treaty, the ban will take effect in a year. For some crop-pest combinations, use of endosulfan will be phased out over the next six years.

### **Broader victory for civil society**

Important for Civil Society is the fact that the additional listing of toxic chemicals such as Endosulfan for global elimination potentially opens the door for other controversial chemicals. IPEN co-chair and recent Goldman award winner Olga Speranskaya commented that *"when*

*Jayan of Thana<sup>5</sup> first brought pictures from Kerala everybody was shocked. These photos and stories about people suffering travelled all over the world and contributed to the final decision made in Geneva. It was a long fight that was won by families in India, by Thanal and other Indian groups who tirelessly fought for people's rights on health and safe environment, by international networks providing constant support to the actions on the ground"*.

There are still, however, countries that are not signatories to the convention such as Russia, Italy, Malaysia, Zimbabwe, Saudi Arabia and the U.S. Furthermore, of particular concern to South Africa is the fact that many countries in SADC and East Africa, including Botswana, Burundi, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mozambique, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe, are still legally using Endosulfan and have not announced a ban nor any formal plans to phase it out.

Our experience at groundWork and that of our partners working on pesticides in SA is that banned "street pesticides" are commonly being traded across our borders and sold informally in South African townships to lower socio-economic customers<sup>6</sup> and it is this situation that is particularly worrying to the health of our communities. These pesticides are commonly banned, highly toxic agricultural pesticides (and thus particularly effective) which are sold and used without measures to mitigate human exposure. These pesticides are responsible for many pesticide poisoning cases in South Africa.

Hopefully there will be very little demand for Endosulfan this time next year provided the Stockholm signatories hold up their end of the bargain. ✕

<sup>4</sup> <http://tatibfoundation.blogspot.com/2011/03/stop-Endosulfan-lobbys-effort-to-block.html>

<sup>5</sup> [www.thanal.co.in; http://www.thanal.co.in/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=5&Itemid=80](http://www.thanal.co.in; http://www.thanal.co.in/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5&Itemid=80)  
<sup>6</sup> Rother, HA (2008) Implications of South African Women Controlling Poverty Related Pests with Street Pesticides. Women & Environments International Magazine, Issue 76/77: 36-43.



## More research planned for SDB

Rico Euripidou

Even though the eThekweni municipality put in place measures in the early noughties to reduce air pollution in the South Durban Basin (SDB), community groups have never quite felt that things have changed significantly or that there have been wholesale improvements in community health. Organisations like the SDCEA still maintain that respiratory disease and childhood cancers are prevalent and that the current status of the general environment is not good enough to meet the objective of our South African environmental right. In order to determine whether these eThekweni environmental interventions to reduce air pollution in the South Durban Basin (SDB) have in fact reduced the prevalence of respiratory disease in the SDB community it is now necessary to objectively undertake research to disentangle and try to understand the relationship between environmental exposures, i.e. the concentration of pollutants in the air that people breathe in the context of their daily lives, the concentration of pollution in the ambient air, and the National Air Quality (AQ) standards, i.e. the limits in air pollution that the government determines is safe and will not affect people's health.

Previous studies in the SDB have clearly shown that certain sub-populations, such as children with asthma, are at increased risk for pollutant-related adverse outcomes. The Multi Point Plan for the South Durban Basin was announced by the Environment Minister Valli Moosa during November 2000 to develop an air quality management system backed by a state of the art air quality monitoring network. This plan aimed at controlling and reducing ambient pollution in the area, through several mechanisms. These include ambient air quality monitoring stations, issuing polluting industries with permits that set reduction targets to drive down emission levels (the schedule trade permitting process) and addressing traffic pollution. Currently bylaws are also being developed by the eThekweni legal department.

In 2003 the eThekweni Municipality commissioned the continuous air quality monitoring network as one of the major elements of its Air Quality Management System. The primary objectives of the network are to quantify the quality of air in South Durban in particular and eThekweni in general, measure compliance with air quality standards and provide a means of verification for dispersion models. The network consists of twelve air monitoring stations, three of which are background stations, and five meteorological stations. The network instruments continuously measure the priority pollutants sulphur dioxide ( $\text{SO}_2$ ), oxides of nitrogen ( $\text{NO}_x$ ), particulate matter with an aerodynamic diameter less than 10 microns ( $\text{PM}_{10}$ ), particulate matter less than 2.5 microns ( $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ ), ozone ( $\text{O}_3$ ) and carbon monoxide (CO). In addition, measurements of total reduced sulphur (TRS) are also conducted. The eThekweni Municipality has also put in place a licensing program whereby polluting industries are issued with permits that set reduction targets to drive down emission levels, etc.

However, the extent to which recent ambient air quality interventions have improved the health of the community in the SDB is not clear. Exposed communities still maintain that air pollutant related ill-health is present, despite these interventions. For example, even though exposure to particulate matter (PM) air pollution has been shown to exacerbate children's asthma, the exposure sources (i.e. where the air pollution is originating whether it be from traffic, industry or domestic) and temporal characteristics (i.e. the time that it occurs) are still unclear. Therefore, to objectively evaluate these community concerns and determine whether the MPP environmental interventions to reduce air pollution in the South Durban Basin (SDB) have worked to reduce the respiratory illness associated with air pollution in the community it is necessary to develop and validate exposure assessment tools to quantify at what level of ambient and corresponding personal exposure adverse outcomes are observed in sub-populations with pre-existing respiratory disease. ✕





# Cleaner Energy or a Quandary?

Sunita Dubey

*Is the German energy policy a step towards a cleaner energy future, or does it simply create a new quandary?*

Germany has taken a big decision to phase out nuclear energy by 2022. This is a step in the right direction, showing Germany's commitment towards sustainable energy provisions sourced largely from renewables. It was largely the tragedy at Fukushima – a nuclear power plant that has been badly damaged after the earthquake and subsequent tsunami in Japan – that triggered such a drastic step. This caused a reassessment of the

risks of nuclear power, which provides 22.6% of total electricity, in Germany.

Germany has the potential to provide a road map for cleaner and safer energy options, when more and more countries, including South Africa, are thinking of nuclear power as a panacea for energy deficit. In South Africa, Eskom plans to double its total generating capacity to 80 000MW over the



*Protest Action in front of Chancellor's office in Berlin against German support for Angra III nuclear power plant in Brazil*

*Photo: groundWork US*



next two decades, with nuclear power making up about half of the new capacity. The state supplier is considering bids from France's Areva and the US's Westinghouse Electric to build a new conventional nuclear power plant that could start generating electricity from 2016, and has said that it could build more nuclear stations by 2025. There is currently one conventional nuclear station in the country: Koeberg in the Western Cape, which contributes about 1 800 MW to the national grid.

### Road to Durban

South Africa and Germany claim that they are committed to combating climate change. Germany's goal is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40% by 2020, whereas South Africa announced a target to reduce emissions growth to 34% below business-as-usual levels by 2020 and 42% by 2025 with finance, technology and capacity-building support from the developed world. The question is how these targets are going to be achieved as their actions tell a different story. In Germany, the new nuclear phase-out plan will see a hefty 11GW of new coal plants built in years to come, with an additional 5GW of new gas, with carbon capture and storage as a condition, even though this technology still has its hiccups and needs to be proven. The German government has also extended subsidies for loss-making coal mines until 2018. South Africa, meanwhile, is in the process of building two giant (4800MW each) coal power plants with approximate carbon dioxide emissions of 60 million tonnes annually.

### German domestic policy contradicts international funding

In September 2008, Eskom signed a US\$ 342 million export credit deal with German government-owned development bank KfW. The 12-year loan was used to partially finance six boilers that the Hitachi Power consortium supplied for the Medupi power plant.<sup>1</sup>

In December 2009, Eskom secured a € 705 million (US\$ 1,038 million, ZAR 7.2 billion) 12-year loan from a syndicate of banks. These loans, covered by the German export credit agency Euler Hermes, were used to fund part of the foreign content

of the Kusile boiler contract with Hitachi Power Europe (HPE). This funding is not just limited to the government-owned financial institutions, but German banks like Deutsche Bank (705 million euro syndicated loan) and Commerzbank are also involved in coal financing.

In Brazil, the local civil society groups are fighting against the German support for Angra 3 nuclear power plant. Since Siemens is the reactor designer, the Hermes (German Export credit agency) is likely to give a guarantee for € 1.3 billion to complete the project. This power plant will be responsible for less than 3% of Brazil's electricity generation capacity.

This is despite the fact that Germany has opted out of domestic nuclear power because of the associated risks. The story for coal funding is the same as, on one hand, Germany is the flag-bearer of the green energy revolution, while, on the other, the government-owned banks are supporting mega power plants. An expert advisory panel to the German government, the German Advisory Council on the Environment, has studied "Pathways to a 100% Renewable Electricity System". According to the different scenarios analysed, that goal would be reached by 2050, while in 2020 renewables would already account for around 50% of electricity consumption.

### Resolving Incongruity

groundWork was invited by the local German group Urgewald to attend the meetings with the Banks and to also use this opportunity to talk to the policy makers. The issue of contradictions in their internal policies and international funding is a real challenge, though the blame also falls on the recipient countries which are choosing either a fossil fuel or a nuclear-heavy energy future. Europe also boasts of "decarbonising itself" but that is mostly as a result of transporting carbon elsewhere. The whole notion of "Not in my Backyard" (NIMBY) is not relevant in the climate change debate: the stress should be more on "Nowhere on Planet Earth" (NOPE).

The upcoming UN Conference on Climate Change in Durban is the ultimate test of the real resolve of countries like South Africa and Germany to choose a path which is lighter on earth. ☒

<sup>1</sup> Agence France Presse, "A German bank lends 342 mln dlrs to South Africa utility", Agence France Presse, 10 September 2008.



## **In Brief**

### **Eskom agrees to release pricing agreement**

After many years of struggle by NGOs and others Eskom has at last said that it will abide by the court decision that compels the power utility to release information on its pricing agreements with BHP Billiton, one of several groups benefitting from special electricity tariffs.

By offering the lowest tariffs in the world, South Africa was able to attract investment from major companies, especially those in electricity intensive arenas like aluminium smelting. Until now, however, the cut-rate pricing agreements have not been known by the public.

The judge in a case brought by a local publishing group has ruled that Eskom release the information as it is in the public interest. But, while Eskom has said that it will not appeal the ruling, BHP Billiton still may.

### **People of Malawi demonstrate**

The people of Malawi took to the streets in a peaceful demonstration on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July. The demonstrations, organised by NGOs, were to protest the mismanagement of resources by the Malawian government and new and unconstitutional laws that threaten human rights in the country.

Government response was to arrest the organisers of the demonstration and demand that they stop the protests. When the leaders attempted to communicate this to the crowds, the people refused to abandon the demonstration. Tear gas and live bullets were used to suppress the protest and a number of lives were lost. Later, the leaders were attacked by the police and many severely injured.

While those arrested were ultimately released, nothing has been resolved and the protestors are still holding fast to their demands.

### **Shell accepts responsibility**

Following a class action suit in Britain, brought on behalf of Nigerian communities, Shell have accepted full liability for spills which occurred in Bodo in Ogoniland. Shell now faces a bill which will amount to hundreds of millions of dollars. The oil spills devastated a community of 69 000 people and may take up to twenty years to clean up.

Shell has claimed that less than 40 000 gallons of oils have been spilt in Nigeria, but experts, who studied footage of the spills at Bodo in Ogoniland, believe that potentially up to ten million gallons might have been spilled.

Until now, Shell has offered £3 500, 50 bags of rice, 50 bags of beans and a few cartons of sugar, tomatoes and groundnut oil in reparation, while no attempt has so far been made to clean up the oil, which has seeped deep into the water table and has polluted the surrounding farmland.

It is expected that many other communities in the Niger Delta, where there are three spills a day, are likely now to seek damages.

### **CoAL fined again**

Beeld reported that Coal of Africa (CoAL) has paid another administrative fine of R666 000 for transgressing environmental legislation. This reportedly brings the total that CoAL has had to pay in fines to R10 million.

The latest fine was for a contravention at the Mooiplaats mine, outside Ermelo. A spokesman for the Mpumalanga Department of Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism said that CoAL have admitted to the contravention and that the department will now decide whether the mine should close or whether rehabilitation of the area will be ordered.





## Eco-Pirate!



### **Eco Pirate: The Story of Paul Watson and the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society**

'Confronting the totality of harsh Antarctica ...' is how the documentary announces a particular period towards the end. But 'confronting the totality of harsh human beings' is actually what Paul Watson and the Sea Shepherd Society does best. Some of us may not agree with Watson's approach, which at times borders on violence, but then this highly respected, admired and controversial 'animal person' is comfortable with this persona and not being a people's person.

When we consider this documentary in the context of the environmental injustices happening today globally, we have to consider the violence of human beings not only from an animal rights perspective, but also from the perspective of the violence against each other. The countless wars that we engage in – like the recent Bush and ongoing Obama wars in the middle east – all in the name of peace. The death of Ken Saro-Wiwa and friends in the Niger Delta. The imprisonment of local farmers in Ireland for resisting Shell attempts to dig up their farms for gas pipelines, and the ongoing pollution by large corporate giants on poor communities who have little economic and political clout, such as in south Durban. So let us understand violence from this perspective as well.

This is a strong documentary that will no doubt make the stark reality of the murder of one of the most intelligent species on our planet hit us at the very core and get us to think about what are we doing in our lives to protect each other as fellow species on this one world that we have.

See more at [www.seashepherd.org](http://www.seashepherd.org).

