

GROUNDWORK

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CORPSE AWARDS



environmental justice action in Southern Africa

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 project areas are: air quality, waste (including health care waste, industrial landfill waste and incineration) and corporate accountability.

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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

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Cover photo: The Corpse Award banner depicting the Grim Reaper. Picture taken by Meindert Korevaar from NiZA.

From the smoke stack



by groundWork Director, Bobby Peek

Dear Friends and Comrades

Another year has passed us by and for groundWork it has been a tough and exciting one. At a recent supper I explained to a colleague from the Philippines what groundWork does and she was blown over by the fact that there are only seven of us in the office. I just want to say to all the guys in the office well done!

As groundWork, we are proud to announce that we are launching the groundWorkers' Union. The groundWork Union seeks to bring together likeminded people to unite against environmental injustices in South Africa, and to share a common platform to challenge these injustices. The groundWorkers' Union will provide people with the opportunity to stay in contact with key critical environmental debates and to take action when action is needed! Please find included the launching brochure. We are looking forward to having the streets lined in black, red and green in the near future!

In preparing for this newsletter, I asked my colleagues if they were prepared to do 'from the smokestack'. The collective, unified, chorused, response was, NO! This is my space to 'rant and rave'.

Well, I am going to do just that!

The general point that I would like to get across in the next few paragraphs is the complete lackadaisical and non-benevolent approach many government officials have towards their work and the public they should be protecting.

The Enviroserv Hazardous landfill in Shongweni, Durban has come under scrutiny once more. In 1997, when it was established, before groundWork was born, I worked with local people and warned them of the historical legacy of waste companies in South Africa – Waste Tech, Enviroserv, Compass Waste, Waste services and Wasteman, to name a few – and the ineffectiveness of government to actually hold them accountable for their transgressions. More critical was the concern that the increase in size of the small landfill site in 1997 would open up the doors for a further 'toxicification' of the area. Over the years this has no doubt happened. There have been holding ponds developed for

the leachate and liquid toxic waste. There was a proposal to put up an old second-hand health care waste incinerator on the site as well. With people power the latter proposal was stopped.

But come the last 18 months residents in the area have been up in arms about the increase in the smell of gasses that emanate from the landfill site. In preparation for a recent monitoring committee meeting on the landfill site, residents staged a public action where they flooded the meeting and questioned the company-hired consultants who gave the company a 98% compliance audit. How could Enviroserv get such a compliance audit if the community who are monitoring them say otherwise? At the meeting a series of government officials were present without a site permit; government officials who are too scared to ask questions of the company, for they are not too sure of the facts; government officials who maintain that they do not have jurisdiction. Why are you there if you cannot act against the company to protect peoples' health and well-being? Stop wasting our tax money and resign! Finally, with regard to the meeting, people must realise that these waste landfill site monitoring committee meetings do not have to be controlled by the company and their facilitator. People must take control over the agenda and demand that they want their critical issues to be addressed.

Moving on, there is my other all time favourite, the oil industry. It is now public knowledge that Pietermaritzburg is an oil refinery town. 'Oil men' have power, as we have come to learn. It is the same power that the FFS used oil refinery is trying to exercise in Pietermaritzburg. In a recent proposal to the authorities they are requesting that an exemption be granted for their new proposed development which has 'considerable positive environmental benefits'. Well, did we not hear this before? A few years ago, an FFS Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was pushed through by Dr Timothy Fasheun from the Department of Agriculture and Environment in KwaZulu Natal, despite concerns from both groundWork and the Msunduzi Health Department. The previous development was to have improved their operational performance, but since then odours have got worse and residents have been up in arms. Now FFS is at it again, wanting an exemption from doing an EIA - and Dr Fasheun is actually considering it!

from the smokestack



Mici McLeod makes her point at the Shongweni protest.
Photo by Lilian Develing

Then there is Engen. After a public meeting about their proposed development which did not go their way in September 2006, Engen's consultants and the DAEA agreed that no more public meetings are necessary and that they could hold their consultation behind 'closed doors' with selected people!

But hey, poor DAEA. We cannot keep on going at them as if they are the only problem. The problem is systemic and it reaches right up to none other than our national Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Minister van Schalkwyk. In a detailed letter raising environmental concerns about the Richards Bay Industrial Development Zone in March 2006, the Ministry only responds after the horse has bolted, 8 months later, in November 2006 in a manner dismissive of our concerns. By then Tata Steel had been given permission to develop their ferrochrome plant adjacent to a community. Well, at least Minister van Schalkwyk replied. We are still waiting for a response from the Department of Trade and Industry on our concerns.

From the above – and if you read further in the newsletter – it is clear that government is doing as little as possible

to actually make a meaningful contribution to the 'health and well-being' of people. And I venture to say that at times they are complicit in the environmental injustices that companies bring to bear on communities!

Moving on from government, it has come to our attention at groundWork that the Dutch Government has not renewed their support for the Netherlands institute for Southern Africa, AKA NiZA. This has come as a shock to all NiZA partners in Southern Africa, for NiZA has long been involved in critical work on the ground in Southern Africa. It is our hope that the review process by the Dutch government is positive.

On a final note, included with this newsletter is the DVD of the 2006 Corpse Awards which was held on 10 November. We hope that you enjoy it and we look forward to all of you being at the next one!

Here is to loads of optimism and all the best for a peace and justice filled 2007!

Aluta continua!

Corpse Awards 2006

By Bobby Peek

This year's Corpse Awards once again 'honoured' the dirtiest companies in southern Africa

"And the losers are ..."

AngloPlatinum – for removing communities from their ancestral lands, stealing peoples' resources and gagging voices of resistance. For this they received the Grim Reaper Floating Trophy Award!

On 10 November groundWork, together with the Centre for Civil Society at the University of KwaZulu Natal, held the second 'corpse awards' at the only prestigious venue left in south Durban, the Clairwood Racecourse – rumour has it that government wants to make it an industrial zone!

This awards ceremony sought to bring to the public's attention the manner in which corporate power operates, the resulting destruction of peoples' lands and the death it reaps.

The evening was officiated by the 'Grimmest of Reapers', Lev David, media analyst and social commentator from Durban!

This year's 'dead body' awards reached out into Southern Africa to understand corporate abuses in the region. Nominations were received from far and wide this year, and the mining companies and the oil companies were neck on neck in terms of who would take the most awards.

Poignantly, this year's awards also stretched beyond Southern Africa to commemorate the death of author, activist and community leader Ken Saro Wiwa and his eight friends, who were murdered by the Nigerian state for their resistance to Shell. The day chosen marked the 11th anniversary of their deaths.

At the awards we were fortunate to have the presence of Terence Conway, of Mayo County, where the Rossport Community are resisting Shell's attempts to build a gas

pipeline through community farms as well as establish a gas refinery in their neighbourhood. This struggle has been ongoing since 2002 and on the day of the awards, while we were protesting outside the Shell Oil Refinery gates in south Durban, the residents of Rossport and civil society representatives from Ireland were clashing with police on the streets of Mayo County, for the police would not allow peaceful demonstrations by the Irish to commemorate the death of Ken Saro Wiwa and raise concerns about Shell's operations in Ireland.

As always, the senior managers of the nominated industries were invited to the awards ceremony. Some, such as Samancor, gave their slick corporate responses, some tried to challenge the information, such as Engen, and some even threatened legal action, such as FFS refiners – but this we have all come to expect!

Engen management claimed that the government information on which the award was based was incorrect. They indicate that: "we [Engen] do acknowledge a problem, which is being addressed, their [SDCEA's] figure, however, is totally inaccurate". They never gave us the correct information, however, and government's information has never previously been questioned by Engen. FFS, the oil refinery that has put Pietermaritzburg on the map, was a bit more forceful in their response and indicated that if a certain journalist uses their name in an article they would sue the paper. However, we are waiting for the various legal actions for their name was printed in several newspapers.

Samancor Chrome was ever so polite in letting us know that they are no longer part of Samancor Manganese (Pty) Limited, who in turn responded in the usual respectful manner by referring to the Samancor retrenched Workers Crisis Committee as the 'so called' retrenched worker's committee.



Bobby Peek and Meindert Korevaar of NiZA show off the trophy which was awarded to Anglo Platinum.
Photo by groundWork

More than 200 people attended the packed venue where good comrades impersonated big corporate leadership with all the necessary pomp, circumstance and 'bling'. Even Cynthia Carroll, the incumbent CEO of Anglo American, made a personal appearance - or sort of, as she was smoothly impersonated by Mary Galvin.

The evening was rounded off with a review by Richard Spoor, who represents the community people challenging AngloPlatinum, as this company seeks to increase mining profiteering in the Limpopo area.

Finally, long time author, activist and fellow comrade of Ken Saro Wiwa, Dennis Brutus, said a few words in commemoration of the death of Ken and his colleagues, remembering how they met and how Ken was ever so aware of the precarious position he was in as he worked with the people in the Niger Delta.

On this note the ceremony came to an end and, as always, nominations are open for the next one!

Corpse Awards were presented to ...

AngloPlatinum Grim Reaper Floating Trophy Award

AngloPlat was nominated by the Mapela community for several achievements: removing communities from their ancestral land, stealing peoples' resources and gagging voices of resistance. AngloPlatinum has also imposed several 'SLAPP' orders - Strategic Litigation Against Public Participation - against the communities' legal representative, Richard Spoor. An application by AngloPlatinum for an urgent interim interdict to prevent the attorney from 'defaming' it as a 'racist, thug and bully' was dismissed in mid-2006, but the company is proceeding against Spoor with a R3.5 million civil claim for alleged damages caused to the corporation's trading reputation.

Bayer Cropscience Baying For Your Rice Award

The African Centre for Biosafety made this nomination for the company's bankrolling of the South African Sugarcane Research Institution and for illegally contaminating the world's rice supply. Bayer has applied to the South African government for approval to import genetically modified rice into SA even though consumer pressure means that they have been forced out of the UK, have withdrawn their plans for GM canola in Australia and have abandoned their research in India.

South Africa's Cement Industry Do You Think We're Stupid? Award

The cement industry was nominated for their attempts to hoodwink the South African public into thinking that burning hazardous waste is a sustainable practice. Even though the cement industry is responsible for 17% of all dioxin emissions in the USA and in 1998 research found that kilns burning hazardous waste have 80 times higher toxic emissions than kilns burning conventional fuels, and the US EPA found that some clinker is so toxic that it should be classed as hazardous waste, the industry insists that their proposal to burn waste is a 'green' and sustainable practice.

FFS Refiners It Wasn't Me! Award

FFS is a refinery based in Pietermaritzburg and was nominated for polluting Pietermaritzburg and denying this. Even when air samples taken outside the refinery picked up chemicals which are associated primarily with the oil refinery industry, and even though residents of Pietermaritzburg have identified FFS as the source of pollution and bad smells for more than a decade, FFS persist in their litany - It isn't us.

Chevron Oil Refinery (Caltex) Smoked Out at Last Award

Chevron, formerly known as Caltex, were nominated by the Table View Resident's Association for the continual upsets at their Cape Town oil refinery. For years residents of Table View have had to endure incidents ranging from gas clouds overwhelming them to crude oil raining down on them. No one in authority adequately responded to these incidents until finally, and belatedly, this year the DEAT 'smoked out' Chevron, with investigations into emissions releases and fires.

Engen Privatising Public Participation Award

Engen finally wins a Corpse on their third nomination. After experiencing public objections at EIA-related public participation meetings, Engen, with the collusion of the Department of Agriculture and Environment in KwaZulu Natal, have decided to have no more open public meetings on their proposed catalyst plant.

Samancor Manganese PTY Limited Mangling the Workers Award

Samancor was nominated by the Samancor Retrenched Workers Crisis Committee for poisoning workers with manganese at their plant in the Vaal Triangle. In 2001, 509 workers were retrenched and of those about 100 have died. Samancor denies having retrenched these workers because of their health and, in fact, appears to deny the existence of the Samancor Retrenched Workers Crisis Committee.

Paladin Resources Picking the Public Pocket Award

Paladin is an Australian uranium mining company based in Perth, and was nominated by Citizens for Justice, the Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation, the Foundation for Community Support Services, Karonga Development Trust, and the Uraha Foundation Malawi, all of whom have objected to Paladin's uranium mining proposal in Malawi.

AngloGold Ashanti Loot the Minerals & Bloodstain the Soil Award

AngloGold Ashanti, an Anglo American company, was awarded a prize for their role in the deaths of workers on the Carletonville's Tautona mine, and their activities in the DRC, Ghana and Columbia where there are allegations of workers being abused, tortured and even murdered. 

It wasn't me!

By Siziwe Khanyile

Problems in Pietermaritzburg are compounded by the fact that no-one is willing to take responsibility

Pietermaritzburg, like many cities and towns in South Africa, is crumbling.

There are a myriad of problems ranging from political infighting at council, allegations of corruption and mismanagement of public funds, poor service delivery, electricity outages, and issues with sanitation, waste and air pollution. The list is endless.

An interesting and common element which seeps through the fibre of the City is that no-one wants to take responsibility for their contribution to the poor state of affairs. Each culprit is keen to point a finger at the other.

This was highlighted in groundWork's Corpse Awards

ceremony where FFS Refiners were given the "It Wasn't Me" award for a decade of complaints by residents who object to the dirty oil and petro-chemical smells. Air samples taken by groundwork outside the refinery indicated chemicals that are specifically associated with the petroleum refining industry. Of course FFS' response was that "It's not us!" They forgot to mention that they are the only oil refiners in Pietermaritzburg.

The plot thickens where FFS is concerned. In contacting the local Umsunduzi Municipality, as well as the Provincial Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs (DAEA), to locate the operating permit for FFS, we were told that it is not available. The regulators did not have an operating licence for a scheduled process whose licence

A view of FFS from the fenceline.
Photo by Toussaint Losier



has been renewed less than a year ago? The response from both these regulators? It wasn't us! It is the Chief Air pollution Control Officer (CAPCO) who has the copy of the permit and who was responsible for the renewal.

We contact the National Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT), where the CAPCO is employed to ask for the permit. Needless to say, many months later we still do not have it.

The irony in all this is that FFS is applying to the DAEA to be exempt from the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process for a proposed development which seeks to "significantly reduce pungent odours in the plant". FFS also states in their request for an exemption from DAEA that "Odours from the plant may contribute to the source of several community complaints." Therefore, in applying for exemption to their development, FFS admits to their odour problems, but have in the past threatened groundWork with legal action for calling them "the bad boys of pollution". So it IS them.

Another example of finger-pointing in the City is in relation to the overpowering sewage smell in Sobantu and Mountain Rise. Residents have complained that it is so strong that they are unable to open windows, and their freedom of movement is highly restricted as a result. Umgeni Water was very cooperative in explaining to the community what the rotten egg smell (hydrogen sulphide) is, how sewage ends up in rivers and kills fish, the problem of storm water leaking into sewers, power outages which disturb the process, industries discharging their effluent into the sewage system, waste dumping by communities in manholes, the fact that the capacity of the sewer pipes is being overburdened due to the increase in development within the City, etc., etc.

What is evident when talking to Umgeni Water, as well as to Umsunduzi Municipality, is that each claims the other is responsible for the problems. The assertion by Umsunduzi Municipality is that the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) is responsible, or else the Roads section of the same Municipality, or Umgeni Water.

This finger-pointing demonstrates a very poorly coordinated intergovernmental management system where a problem is not tackled holistically but rather blame is apportioned elsewhere.

The same finger-pointing is taking place with regards to the waste management situation within the City. For a decade the residents of the City have been complaining about the poorly managed landfill site in very close proximity to people's homes and businesses. The landfill site has experienced serious problems for many years. The problems



The Bucket Brigade tests the air at the FFS refinery. Despite FFS's pleas of innocence, these samples contained chemicals which are strongly linked to refineries. Photo by Toussaint Losier

range from scavenging to spontaneous combustion on the landfill site, as well as equipment which does not operate. A landfill site committee has been set up to address these problems, and comprises of municipal councillors, municipal process managers, local and district municipality officials, various government departments, NGOs, as well as local residents.

Invariably, even in this scenario, it is unclear where the responsibility lies. The municipal officials lay blame on Council for not releasing funding for the proper management of the landfill site, the Department of Water Affairs threatens to take legal action against the municipality, and the local municipality claims that they are managing the site for the District Municipality where capacity does not exist. Yet, a solution that will benefit the City and its residents is still not found. Residents await the winter months when the landfill site will once again be set ablaze.

Pietermaritzburg is termed the City of Choice, the headquarters of kwaZulu-Natal's provincial government, and high court, yet the city has failed to coordinate itself in the interest of public health and access to environment which is not harmful to people's health and wellbeing.

In my opinion the "It Wasn't Me" prize could have been given many times over, or shared between FFS, DEAT and the Umsunduzi municipality. 

A Terrible Waste

by Rico Euripidou

The illegal trafficking and dumping of toxic waste in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, highlights the problem of hazardous waste trade

By November 2006 the Ivory Coast's Health Ministry reported that 10 people had died, 69 had been hospitalized and up to 10 000 residents had suffered adverse health effects following the illegal shipment and dumping of 500 tonnes toxic waste, comprised of gasoline cargo residue contaminated with hydrogen sulphide and organochlorines, around up to 18 garbage dumps in Abidjan.

By September 7, 2006 President Laurent Gbagbo had accepted the resignation of Côte d'Ivoire's cabinet as anger mounted over the dumping of toxic waste Abidjan.

An area cordoned off after the illegal dumping of toxic sludge. Photo by Associated Press



The waste was originally offloaded in Abidjan on August 19th from the tanker 'Probo Koala', a vessel chartered by the London branch of a Swiss trading corporation which is part of a Dutch commodities trading company called Trafigura Beheer BV, a global oil and metals trading company. It had leased the tanker from a Greek shipping company which sails under the Panamanian flag. The majority of the company's shares are in American hands.

After operations in the Mediterranean, the vessel arrived in Amsterdam on July 2, whilst en-route to Estonia to dispose of what the company initially reported was "250 tons of regular slops", normally comprised of waste wash water from cleaning ships' holds, and usually laced with oil, gasoline, caustic soda or other chemicals. A local firm 'Amsterdam Port Services', initially agreed to dispose of the waste for \$15,000, however whilst workers unloaded the waste they found that the volume was much higher and their workers experienced health effects when handling the waste.

"It was pitch black and had a heavy stench," said Luut Planting, a spokesman for Amsterdam Port Services. "No one had ever seen similar waste." Amsterdam Port Services then stopped unloading the waste, informed the Amsterdam City Port Authorities and ordered analyses.

"After analyzing the waste," said Planting, "Amsterdam Port Services told Trafigura's London office that the price to treat and dispose of it would now be much more expensive, close to \$300,000. Trafigura, which in 2005 had revenue of \$28 billion dollars, balked at the cost."

The 'Probo Koala' then left the Netherlands on July 5 and arrived August 19 in the Ivory Coast capital Abidjan, where they chartered a local company named "Tommy" to dispose of the waste. Under the cover of darkness "Tommy" employees pumped the waste into trucks and dumped the toxic waste in at least 18 dump sites around Abidjan, sparking a health crisis. As word of the illegal dumping crept out and public anger rose, residents became aware of what was happening in some places and some trucks were simply abandoned by drivers fearful of being attacked. However, what eventually followed is a human tragedy with over 10,000 poisoned people reporting respiratory and digestive health effects. By November the toxic waste dumping had been directly linked to the deaths of 10

people and 69 hospitalised patients. European toxic-waste experts and oil traders said it can be easily ascertained that Ivory Coast has no facilities capable of handling high-level toxic waste.

Local residents reported how they were awoken at night by the stench of the sludge that appeared beside their fields and huts. One Abidjan resident reported how he was awoken by his infant son's gasping cries. He then became aware of a rotten egg, garlic and petroleum smell. On investigation, beside the family's home he first saw the stinking black sludge. "The smell was so bad we were afraid, it burned our noses and eyes." A few days later, his 6-month-old son's skin began to blister and burst into weeping sores. The whole family experienced headaches, nosebleeds and stomach aches.

Up until September 24th Trafigura maintained "the material unloaded in Ivory Coast had little or no toxicity," stating that "the company does not accept it has acted improperly in any way." U.N. experts, however, say the waste that was dumped in Abidjan contained hydrogen sulfide, which in concentrated doses can kill humans.

The European Union's Environment Commissioner, Stavros Dimas, said the actions of the Dutch-chartered tanker resulted in innocent people being killed and injured. "Such highly toxic waste should never have left the European Union. European and international laws were broken. There is no excuse for it. What happened was not only unethical, it was criminal," Dimas said. "What is more, I fear that the Probo Koala incident is only the tip of the iceberg. In simple words it is prohibited to export hazardous chemicals and wastes to non-EU countries... It's important ... to make sure that criminal cases like this will not go unnoticed and will not be repeated in the future." "Legally we have the means to fight illegal transportation of waste. What was needed was better policing in such transit places as harbours," he added.

A French engineering cleanup company 'Tredi International' was then chartered by the Ivorian government to safely contain and remove the waste. An employee, Jean-Loup Queru, reflected that "In 30 years of doing this kind of work I have never seen anything like this. This kind of industrial waste, dumped in this urban setting, in the middle of the city, never." However, whilst undertaking their cleanup activities wearing respiratory masks and personal protective equipment, Tredi International employees frequently encounter local boys scouring these contaminated Abidjan dumpsites looking for scraps of metals to sell to make



A clean-up worker in full protective gear. Photo by Associated Press.

a living, their feet and legs coated with sludge from the dumps. The toxic sludges were being contained in large steel containers, sealed and sprayed with a chemical cleaning solution. On November 7th, 2006, 141 sealed containers arrived in Le Havre from Ivory Coast, containing 5,000 tons of contaminated soil and sludge which will be neutralized and then delivered to Isere, where it is destined to be high temperature incinerated.

To date Six Ivorians, one Nigerian and two European officials from Trafigura have been jailed in Ivory Coast. However Jim Puckett from the Basel Action Network summarised this incident most succinctly when he described it as "the underbelly of globalization". Africa has long been a dumping ground for all sorts of things the developed world has no use for. "Environmental regulations in the north have made disposing of waste expensive, so corporations look south," he said.

In solidarity, following this event, groundWork, the International POP's Elimination Network (IPEN) and the African NGO community send our condolences and sympathies to the people of Cote d'Ivoire. We condemn this practice of rejecting, exporting and dumping hazardous waste in Africa which violates international agreements¹ and assaults human dignity.

¹ Under the Basel Convention, the Bamako Convention, and the International Maritime Organisation Law, this practice is banned and illegal. This tragic event also violated the Rio Principle 14 which says that "States should effectively cooperate to discourage or prevent the relocation and transfer to other States of any activities and substances that cause severe environmental degradation or are found to be harmful to human health."

waste campaign

A young waste picker walks across a toxic dump shortly after the illegal dumping of toxic sludge caused the death of several people.
Photo by Associated Press



Furthermore we - groundWork, IPEN and African NGO's - recommend that:

- 1) Those responsible for rejecting this shipment of hazardous waste from Estonia and Amsterdam be investigated to determine if they are liable for contravening the principles of International treaties and conventions relating to the movement and dumping of chemical waste. If these parties are found to be in contravention of these conventions we call for strict penalties to discourage future practices of illegal dumping of hazardous waste;
- 2) Those parties responsible for this event in Abidjan also be investigated to determine liability;
- 3) Those who are found to be responsible must be liable to pay for a full assessment of the environment and health impact, the cleanup and remediation, health care, and compensation for those affected by this event.
- 4) A trust fund (from those responsible parties) be established under the Basel Convention to compensate the victims and pay for their long term rehabilitation.
- 5) "Liability and compensation" and "Polluter pays" be included in the SAICM Global Plan of Action. These two important elements were excluded from the Global Plan of Action and placed in Table C in the "List of activities for which consensus was not reached at the 3rd Preparatory meeting for SAICM". (SAICM/ICCM.1/4)
- 6) The UN agencies and the EU provide assistance to monitor the situation.
- 7) Any other trafficking of waste in the context international conventions must be met with strong penalties to deter future events.
- 8) We urge the African countries to properly implement the international conventions related to chemicals and hazardous wastes and call for holding the first Conference of the Parties of the Bamako Convention on the ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes within Africa. 

SA government delegations to international meetings conspicuous by their absence

by Rico Euripidou

A report back on IFCS V and SAICM

Report Back from the Fifth Plenary Session of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS V) – Budapest, Hungary, 24-29 September 2006.

The IFCS was established in 1994 as a place for world governments and stakeholders to discuss chemical risks. It was instrumental in talks that led to an international agreement on a strategic approach to chemicals management (SAICM) in February 2006 in Dubai. Governments are now split over the future of the IFCS. The United States and others are pushing hard for it to be wound down, while the EU equally strongly favours its continuation in order to tackle issues such as heavy metals (mercury in particular), nanoparticles, substances in electronic waste and chemical substitution. A working group has been set up to present recommendations to the next IFCS meeting.

The most striking development for South Africa at this Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS V) was the absence of the South African delegation. The IFCS is a forum for chemical managers, whose job it is to manage chemicals in their countries in government, inter-governmental organisations, industry and civil society. The Forum provides an opportunity to set up multi-stakeholder

working groups to initiate discussion and negotiation on safety and success in attaining the goals of a safe, sustainable future for our children in chemicals management. Might South Africa's absence be an effort to undermine the future of the Forum in solidarity with the position of the United States? We hope not for the following reasons:

- ◊ The (IFCS) has to date a long and successful track record of engagement and operation. As the age of SAICM dawns on us, the function provided by the IFCS is an equally important part of implementation towards the SAICM's 2020 goal. Furthermore, because SAICM is still in its infancy, the IFCS should continue to serve its important function.
- ◊ Most importantly, the IFCS provides a valuable international forum to address the issue of chemical safety, equally, for all stakeholders, allowing collective brainstorming to address the goals agreed within Agenda 21, Chapter 19, unlike SAICM which is a programmatic instrument for governments that limits the participation of other stakeholders. It allows a mechanism to develop partnerships between



Delegates to the Budapest meeting. Photo from IPEN

governments and other stakeholders to foster understanding and provide guidance on issues of chemical safety to inform actions and policies. As a discussion forum IFCS is not hindered by political processes. It bridges the gap between science and policy and has provided the genesis for important international processes to address chemical safety such as SAICM and the UNITAR program on chemical safety. Furthermore, the IFCS provides an important mechanism to take up topics as they emerge as well as topics that have been "left open" in other international chemicals processes like SAICM

- ◊ The final resolution of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM) in February 2006 decided that IFCS should continue: This resolution (UNEP/GCSS. IX/6/Add.2, Annex III, Resolution 3) recognizes the unique and multifaceted role played by IFCS in the area of sound chemicals management, and invites IFCS to continue its role and to contribute to the implementation of SAICM and the work of other chemicals-related international organizations and institutions. Governments at IFCS should take decisions that are consistent with those that were made at ICCM.
- ◊ Finally, we draw attention to the fact that in South Africa the Department of Environment and Tourism's Environmental Quality & Protection, Directorate: Hazardous Waste would not exist were it not for South Africa's previous engagement in International Forums on Chemical Safety. In light of the above concerns we would like the DEAT to clearly state its position on how it proposes to engage meaningfully in the arena of emerging themes and findings for safe chemicals management if it is absent from such an important international meeting in which it has previously engaged!

Report on the African regional meeting on the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management. Cairo, 11–14 September 2006

DTI, the face of chemicals mismanagement in South Africa

Adopted by the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM) on 6 February 2006 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) is a policy framework for international action on chemical hazards. SAICM was developed by a multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral Preparatory Committee. SAICM supports the achievement of the goal agreed at the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development of ensuring that, by the year 2020, chemicals are produced and used in ways that minimize significant adverse impacts on the environment and human health.

Following the adoption of SAICM, the SAICM Overarching Policy Strategy called for Regional meetings as a key element in the collective efforts to commence implementation of SAICM. The first of these meetings was the African Regional Meeting on the Implementation of SAICM.

The major aims of the meeting were to provide guidance on SAICM implementation to all stakeholders at the regional and national levels and to facilitate technical and strategic discussions and information exchange. Broadly the meeting aimed to facilitate stakeholders' transition to a focus on implementation following the completion of negotiations to develop SAICM, and to catalyse regional and national planning for SAICM implementation, as well as to maintain the political momentum behind SAICM that has been generated by the September 2005 World Summit.

Now, considering that SAICM is a forum to enable senior chemical managers in countries to deliberate and enact on matters of chemical safety, good practice and sustainability, one would expect that the South African delegation would be lead by our most senior chemical manager! Not so, instead the South African delegation was lead by the Department of Trade and Industry, which in my opinion is a gross misunderstanding of the spirit of SAICM – and a negligent conflict of interest to boot!, or perhaps a sadly true reflection of where our government's priorities lie! 

Remember Bhopal

by Sunita Dubey

22 Years after the Bhopal disaster people are still awaiting justice, but
 "\$500 is plenty good for an Indian." - Kathy Hunt,
 Dow Chemical Public Relations, 2002

As we approach the 22nd anniversary of Bhopal chemical disaster, which is considered one of the world's worst industrial disasters, we are reminded of two very important facts; firstly how corporations can perpetrate the worst of crimes and then go on with business as usual and, secondly, how a strong community action can keep this issue alive for 22 years and turn it into an international voice for justice and corporate accountability. The importance of the Bhopal issues has become paramount as it will define the future course of action of corporations vis-à-vis crimes committed by them in the past. The experience of the Bhopal disaster has turned common people into powerful community leaders who now have the strength to shake the foundation of a giant corporation like Dow Chemicals.

The account of what happened 22 years ago in Bhopal can still send chills down the spine. It was on the cold night of December 3rd 1984 when tonnes of deadly gas, Methyl Isocynate (MIC), leaked out of the Union Carbide plant due to sheer negligence of the management. This resulted in the direct death of 20,000 people and affected more than 150,000 survivors, who still suffer from chronic illness. On the night of the disaster, when people poured into hospitals in their thousands with their eyes and lungs burning, urine and faeces running down their legs, the doctors called up the Plant Medical Officer to find out what they ought to do. The Union Carbide officials told them that the gas is like tear gas. "Just wash with water". However, this gas had killed thousands of people within hours.

With no help from the Corporation, people turned to their government for justice but, rather than protecting her own citizens, the Indian government's negotiations with Union Carbide Corporations were marred by sham, deceit and fraud. The Indian government compromised on the miseries, sufferings, health and trauma of their own people, who were left without proper health and compensation.

Even after more than two decades since the disaster the

UCC values profits over lives

Union Carbide started out as a carbon company in 1886 and diversified to gases and chemicals during World War II. Before Bhopal, Union Carbide Corporation (UCC) caused the largest industrial disaster in the US. In the construction of the Hawk's Nest Tunnel in West Virginia in 1934 nearly 2000 company workers, most of them black, died of Silicosis - an occupational disease caused by unmitigated exposure to silica, which is found in rock dust.

As part of UCC's economy drive, the management at the Bhopal plant had switched off the refrigeration unit to save about Rs.700 (US \$50) per day. Had the refrigeration unit been working, a runaway reaction in the MIC tank could have been delayed or even prevented. The sole manual alarm in Bhopal plant was also switched off so as not to 'unduly' alarm people.

All over Europe the maximum permissible storage limit for MIC is half a ton. At the Bhopal plant, the US company's management overrode the wishes of the managers of its Indian subsidiary and kept the storage capacity hazardously high at over 90 tons. On the night of the disaster, 67 tons of MIC was stored in two tanks.

Union Carbide is the first company in the US to violate laws relating to providing information on chemicals used in a facility. The company claimed "Trade Secrecy Protection" in refusing to identify one of the key chemicals used in its plant at Henderson, Kentucky. Using the same cover, UCC continues to withhold vital information in Bhopal about the exact nature and composition of the leaked gases and its effects on the human system. After 15 years, this is still one of the prime reasons for the absence of a proper line of medical care for the victims.





Sunita Dubey,
Coordinator
groundWork
USA, presenting
the organisation's
stand on Bhopal
Chemical Disaster
in front of the
Cambridge city
hall.

Photo by
Ananth
Chikkatur

remnants of poisonous gas are still affecting the lives of people in Bhopal. According to a Greenpeace report in 1999, testing done near the site revealed mercury at levels between 20,000 and 6 million times higher than those expected. The ground water is so contaminated that all the drinking water sources are unfit for consumption. Researchers have found chromosomal aberrations in the exposed population indicating a strong likelihood of congenital malformations in the generations to come.

Amnesty International's report in 2005 estimated that 22,000 people were gassed to death in Bhopal, including thousands of women and children. Some 30 people die each month from the effects of their exposure. More than 120,000 people are critically ill and in desperate need of medical care, and thousands of children have been born with birth defects, learning disabilities, and stunted growth.

Dow, since its merger with Union Carbide in 2001, has refused to assume these liabilities in India, despite the fact that over 20,000 people in the vicinity of the Union Carbide factory continue to be exposed to toxic chemicals through groundwater and soil contamination. This stands in stark contrast to Dow's acceptance of Union Carbide's liabilities in Texas, USA, where they recently settled an asbestos-related lawsuit. It is ironical that on the one hand the Courts in the United States have rejected the pleas people of Bhopal against the Union Carbide Corporation for

clean-up of site and personal damage, whereas the Courts have ordered corporations like Exxon to pay \$5 billion in punitive damages to Alaskan fishermen, natives and property owners for an oil spill in gulf of Alaska. This shows that not only the Corporations have double standards while doing business in the developing countries; even the justice delivered is not the same for people in the developing world.

groundWork USA, has been actively participating in the "Greater Boston Coalition for Justice in Bhopal" which is a community group that works for justice and a life of dignity for the survivors of the Bhopal Chemical Disaster, India. Recently we supported a demand asking for Cambridge City to pass a resolution in support of people of Bhopal and not to invest in Dow shares.

We believe that Dow Chemicals must be held accountable for the Bhopal Chemical Disaster because it stands as an international symbol of impunity, disrespect for the rule of law and basic human rights, and profit from environmental racism. Dow Chemicals has changed its practices little since the disaster. We all have a responsibility to prevent disasters like Bhopal from ever happening again. Many multinational corporations are watching this case carefully to see if Dow will be held accountable. The result profoundly effects how Dow and other dangerous industries will conduct business at home and abroad.

The World Social Forum

by Bobby Peek

Big oil in Africa – Africa's energy for whom?

The World Social Forum (WSF) will be held in Africa in Nairobi in January 2007. groundWork is working with various organisations in preparation for the WSF. Our main focus however is going to be working in solidarity with oil affected community people in the Niger Delta and South Africa.

groundWork and Environmental Right Action (ERA), in Nigeria, have a long relationship with community organisations and representatives challenging the oil industry in both South Africa and Nigeria. groundWork and ERA have teamed up on several occasions to share experience and advocacy platforms. The WSF provides a critical platform to further interrogate and strengthen our joint concerns, as well as Africa's concerns around how the oil industry impacts upon community livelihoods in Africa.

In September 2005, groundWork released 'Whose Energy Future: Big oil against people in Africa'¹. The report challenged the oil industry in Africa, and called for 'Another Energy Future'. In Abuja, at the ERA organised FoEI Conference on Climate Change, this finding was further endorsed by community people from the Niger Delta and international civil society with the Abuja Declaration².

ERA and groundWork are taking this theme forward within the WSF by facilitating the participation of community people from Nigeria and South Africa at the WSF events. We will be working with the International Oil Working Group to bring meaningful political dialogue and practical experience and possibilities to tackle the oil industry as Africa inexorably becomes the new middle-east.

Together with Oilwatch International, La Via Campesina, Centre for International Environmental Law and FoEI these

community people will participate in: 'Regaining control of our natural resources'. The extraction of crude oil – the blood of Mother Earth, as the Uwa refer to it – will be a focus area within the process.

Furthermore, ERA and groundWork, as members of FoE Africa, will coordinate and host an event on 'Oil and Energy in Africa' to start investigating what, as Africans, we are going to do post peak oil. This will feed into 'The groundWork Report 2007', which will focus on livelihoods and economies post peak oil. This process will seek to strengthen the Oilwatch Africa network, to build a more articulate challenge against the oil industry and to start discussing meaningful alternatives to the oil industry. It is envisaged that this event will stimulate a more active debate within civil society in Africa on environmental justice and energy issues.

This event could be a key platform to articulate Friends of the Earth, Nigeria's new role in Oilwatch as the Oilwatch International Secretariat. Africa indeed does have a series of challenges with regard to oil and, with Oilwatch International being in Nigeria, it offers Africans a stronger incentive to recognise the value of Oilwatch and to develop it as a meaningful force of resistance in Africa.

Upon our return from the WSF, groundWork is working with other civil society organisations in Pietermaritzburg to hold an official report back to the people of Pietermaritzburg! We will have our own post-WSF gathering to understand what possibilities there could be local action that could feed into and feed from the international work.

Till we return and build to mobilise, resist and change! 

¹ <http://www.groundwork.org.za/Publications/Report2005.pdf>

² http://www.eration.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=14&Itemid=12



Remember Ken Saro Wiwa

By Bobby Peek

November 10 should be marked as a day of action and resistance

November is the month that marks the anniversary of the hanging of Ken Saro Wiwa and his eight colleagues - Baribor Bera, Saturday Dobee, Nordu Eawo, Daniel Gbokoo, Barinem Kiobel, John Kpuinen, Paul Levura and Felix Nuate.



The Ogoni Nine.
Picture taken
from
<http://www.remember-sarowiwa.com>

Their lives were sacrificed at the altar of the oil industry, because they chose to defy a government and Shell, because they decided to defend their sovereignty and their community livelihoods.

The 10th of November will always be remembered for this. It is our duty to ensure that we commemorate this day annually to be aware of how the state and corporations will collude to deny people their birth right. We often hear of local people being murdered as they resist corporate power. The name of Chico Mendes is globally recognised as one of those who have lost their lives in the struggle for environmental and social justice. But very seldom do we have an example of the state colluding with corporations to 'legally' sentence people to death. Shell will deny that they colluded with the Nigerian state, but the question that must be asked is why they had representatives at the trial of these nine people?

However, as oil reaches peak production, the situation becomes more desperate, and corporations like Shell are prepared to explore in sensitive zones globally like in the Sakhalin Island area but, even more brazenly, we have Shell teaming up with the Irish government to jail farmers who are resisting Shell's operations.

To drive this message home, communities and NGO's globally working within the Shell Accountability Project, undertook a global day of action focusing on Shell's activities in Nigeria and Ireland.

In south Durban, groundWork and SDCEA held a protest where comrades from the Vaal Triangle, Limpopo Province, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, Zambia and Ireland all gathered to protest outside Shell's oil refinery, calling on them to listen to the people and get out of County Mayo in Ireland and the Delta in Nigeria.

Terrence Conway, a community representative from the Rossport Community in County Mayo participated in the protest and called on Shell to remove themselves from Ireland, for the people of County Mayo do not want them there.

As Terrence was protesting with Africans outside Shell, his brothers and sisters were defending themselves from police brutality in Ireland where police would not allow a peaceful protest against the Shell facility. A peaceful protest such as we had in south Durban. Indeed a sick twist of reality.

Police brutality in the North? Something we only associate with the South!

Community resistance and mobilisation in the North? Something we only associate with the South!

Shell's disregard for human rights in the North? Something we only associate with the South!

The writing is on the wall, and we need to use the 10th of November as a spring board for action and resistance.

Corporate Social Responsibility

by Bobby Peek

CSR means different things to different people!

Recently, I was privileged to sit in and observe a meeting between community people who were questioning proposed mining operations in their neighbourhood and the mining company manager along with their black empowerment arm.

It was a typical manoeuvre in the present day South Africa, where the real power players, the mining company, said very little and the black empowerment representative spoke passionately about how the mining company is doing so much good in the area. Some of the key things they have done are to send a student to university, provide one 4X4 to ferry people in this remote rural area and provide crèche facilities for the local people. There were a few other 'bits and pieces' that they provided.

This all sounded good, and I was questioning myself as to why the community – and I – are cautious about this mining company. They are providing a transport vehicle into a system where none exits, they are providing crèches where none exist, they are providing bursaries where none exist, so what am I feeling uncomfortable about? Then, as the black empowerment person spoke further, I realised why. Firstly, why is government not doing all of this, is this not a government responsibility? Secondly, if a mining company comes into a situation such as this and throws some crumbs onto the floor, people are surely going to jump at it, for there is nothing else present. But what these 'crumbs' do is divide communities, pit fathers against sons, neighbours against each other, and make people all compete and hope that their children will land that one bursary – a hope that will never be fulfilled.

This is what is often termed corporate social responsibility by companies. Many people will argue with me and say this is corporate social investment and not social responsibility. Well, in there lies the problem; the confusion of language and, more importantly, the confusion about a language that many of us do not own. What we do understand, however, is that government must provide better enforcement and regulations in order that people do not die as a result of pollution from corporates, that government must provide

transport for people, that government must provide education for people. This we understand – but we know we do not get it so, when corporations say they will help and can be trusted, how can any of us refuse, for they are filling a desperate vacuum.

It is this challenge of understanding corporate social responsibility that the Netherlands institute of Southern Africa (NiZA), together with partners in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, Malawi, Botswana, South Africa and Angola, are trying to grapple with. In the Peace, Principles and Participation (PPP) programme to which organisations from these various countries signed, we have organisations from a broad range of backgrounds and areas, and who understand corporate social responsibility from a variety of different backgrounds.

Bringing these various voices together in the third PPP meeting in November 2006, in Durban, was indeed a challenge. Some participants considered the idea of CSR as something that must be used to hold corporations accountable, some organisations recognised that this could never happen, for the EU has deemed CSR as a voluntary tool, but were willing to use the process to get corporates to improve, and then there were the 'state-ists' who were clear that governments must govern and provide services and protection from environmental injustices.

Through the process of debate these various partners must come to an agreement on how to tackle corporate power within the natural resources sector, and to regain control over natural resources. Everyone agreed at the meeting that corporates have too much power and that we need to dismantle the power of corporations.

Fast forward to the present time and in speaking to the community representatives during the meeting on this hot, humid summer's day, all they wanted was to be left alone, and for their government to provide them with the democratic services that are promised within our constitution.

So why are we discussing CSR? 



Anglo Platinum has stolen our land

By Phillipos Dolo

Phillipos Dolo is co-ordinator of the Anti-Anglo Platinum Campaign being organised by the Jubilee Charter section for Ecological Debt



Open cast mining and huge rock waste dumps are destroying traditional farming land.

Photo by Richard Spoor

On 17 March, 1926, an agreement was made between the Ksoshi Alfred Masibe and Potgietersrust Platinum Limited (PPL). Under this agreement the company gained control of the mineral rights for 1016 morgan of portion 7 of the Swartfontein Farm.

On October 23, 1993, the present chief, Atalia Langa, took a tribal resolution which gave the former self-governing territory of Lebowa powers to enter an agreement with PPL. Per this agreement four farms, Vaalkop, Sandsloot, Swartfontein and Overysel, were leased to the company for their economic life time.

Communities were not consulted. Both then and previously the community had attempted to talk to the mine and to the tribal authority, municipality and various government departments. Nobody wanted to talk to us.

In 2001 the community of Ga-Pila was relocated to Strekwater. About 23 families refused to move. They were unwilling to go and live at a place which was far away

from everything. The mine and the municipality decided to cut off their services. These families are still without any services. And, even if they had moved to Strekwater, the social conditions there are also very poor indeed.

On the four farms mentioned above, thousands of hectares have been destroyed by huge rock dumps and open cast mining operations. Thousands of ancestral graves have been destroyed, while others were exhumed.

On 23 November, 2006, the people of Ga-Chaba started re-occupying the land that was taken away from them by Anglo Platinum. When they re-occupy they begin ploughing the land. Despite intimidation, harassment and threats from the police, who are used by AngloPlat as their own enforcement body, we will continue to plough our land.

For more information contact M P Dolo on 084-023-6237.

NASA KE YA RONA! THE LAND IS OURS!

Poisoned Spaces

The groundWork Report 2006, Poisoned Spaces: Manufacturing wealth, producing poverty, has recently been published

"We will use it as a weapon!"

People across southern Africa were dispossessed of their land to force them into working on the mines and industries. Now their descendants are being forced out of the factories and abandoned, without income, in the toxic spaces produced by 130 years of development.

The groundWork Report 2006: *Poisoned Spaces: Manufacturing wealth, producing poverty* looks at this history through the lens of the Vaal Triangle. This is a space that lies at the heart of South Africa's minerals and energy complex. It is dominated by giant plants: Eskom's Lethabo Power Station, Mittal's Vanderbijlpark steel works, Sasol's coal-based chemicals industries and Samancor's manganese smelter. The air is filled with wastes from their smoke stacks and flares, they lie at the feet of great hills of their own solid waste and they are surrounded by lakes and pools of liquid waste. It is the space of a toxic catastrophe that eats into the bodies of the people of the Vaal.

Poisoned Spaces is about who gets rich and who is made poor, who makes the rules and who is made to suffer by the rules. It is also the story of people's resistance to the orders of development, of their struggles for another world in which all have the means to a decent and healthy life.

At the launch of the groundWork report on 23 October 2006, representatives from the Vaal Triangle, both civil society and government, recognised the challenges facing community people in the Vaal Triangle.

The launch was attended by more than sixty people from various community based organisations in the Vaal Triangle who collectively represent the Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance, an alliance formed to challenge the environmental injustices perpetrated by Vaal-based corporations such as Mittal Steel, Samancor and Sasol.

To resist, mobilise against and change the system is critical in bringing about a new Vaal Triangle. Phineas Malapela, Chairperson of VEJA, welcomed the publication and indicated that: "The struggle must be accompanied by what is written here" and that "the Report must be taken to the Union Buildings" during the next mobilisation.

Nina Benjamin from Khanya College called on people in the Vaal Triangle to reflect seriously on the publication and recognise that: "The Report is not just a document; it is the voice of issues people are facing".

In the next year groundWork is going to develop a popular publication of the report and some previous reports in order that the message could be used in broader forums!



Waste Management Bill – Civil Society Meeting on the 12 February 2007

Finally, a piece of legislation on waste management has seen the light of day – the Waste Management Bill! Cabinet will be releasing the Bill for comment during the festive season, we are told. To respond to this important piece of legislation, which we have been calling for for many years, groundWork will be hosting an International Waste Meeting on the 12-13 February, where South African civil society will be able to engage with key technical waste people to interrogate the Bill. We are hoping to address the national Portfolio Committee on Environment and Tourism on our concerns during the week of the 12 February.

The comment period is rumoured to be four months. If this is the case this will be a good step. We hope that the four months will not include the December month, for as we all know this is the silly season. The formal invite for the process was sent out in early December.

South Durban Relocation – EThekwini Gets Brave!

As the years progress, the language and the approach of the eThekwini politicians and bureaucrats become more sophisticated in their attempts to get people out of south Durban. The eThekwini Council, in late November, passed a motion that will facilitate the depopulating of south Durban by rezoning residential land as commercial land in order that residents can sell off at industrial rates.

What is alarming is that this process will no doubt divide the community of south Durban, who has to date been united against their relocation out of the area. What is also a milestone in the debate is the city stating that people cannot live in polluted areas. While this is a noble statement, they do not take the next noble step and that is to manage the pollution in order that it does not impact upon people, but rather they seek to relocate people away. Pollution knows no boundaries!

More alarming still is that the methodology that they have chosen – to create a market based process to manage relocation by increased pricing of housing – will most certainly see the end of Wentworth, Clairwood and Merebank as a community.

It is now critical that the people in south Durban unite to ensure that those who have the least power and resources mobilise to attain power to challenge this system.

Niger Delta Community Activists to Visit South Africa

In May 2005 groundWork and community representatives from Richards Bay, the Vaal Triangle, Secunda and south Durban visited the Niger Delta and met with local community people challenging Big Oil. At the end of January 2007, groundWork and the local community organisations we work with in the above area will be hosting community representatives from the Niger Delta, in a reciprocal visit.

This visit seeks to build solidarity amongst community people affected by big oil in Africa. The community people from the Delta will be joined by Environmental Rights Action, Friends of the Earth Nigeria. This exchange feeds into the Friends of the Earth International Corporate Campaign which seeks to link community groups that are challenging corporate power in various parts of the world.

Visit www.groundwork.org.za for more information and updates!

Waste Tyre Regulations – are we going to incinerate tyres in SA?

It is groundWork's opinion that government is joined at the hip with the cement industry to grease through such a process. The draft phase for these regulations is now extended through to March 2007. It will be premature to release these regulations before government and the industry has, through some means or the other – the Waste Management Bill or the hush-hush, behind closed doors Incineration Policy that is being developed – developed a legal framework to allow for the incineration of tyres. It is clear that if this set of regulations go through in this manner – supported with accompanying legislation on incineration of waste – that tyres in South Africa will be incinerated and whatever present non-burn alternatives there are with regard to recycling tyres will be seriously jeopardised.

It is important that these regulations do not facilitate the incineration of tyres, but rather foster non-burn alternatives to manage tyres. So please raise your concerns to DEAT by communicating with Ms Mashadi Mapena at 012 310 3964 or email her on mma pena@deat.gov.za.

Join the groundWorkers' Union

by Gill Addison

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.....

Margaret Mead

Time and again we see that when people band together with a common purpose it is impossible for the 'powers that be' to ignore them. The growing tide of social movements across the world is proving this and shows that we have reached a turning point in history. The world as we know it is changing; oil will run out, our climate is changing and the results will be severe and will directly affect us all. Ordinary people like you and me are realising that we must take responsibility for our future and take the power away from those who put profits before people and the earth. We all have to get involved and mobilised - and through unity we will change the world.

We call on you to join our "union" of environmental activists to strengthen all our voices through unity. At groundWork we are often asked by people if they can become more involved in groundWork's campaigns with communities fighting to change unfair environmental practices. So this is your chance. It is up to you to decide what your contribution will be. You could be a loudly protesting, banner waving activist member or someone who supports the cause in the background by writing letters and so on. The Movement needs us all.

Through the groundWorkers' Union we want to have more direct contact with activists and people who want to make a real contribution to the fight for environmental and social justice. We want to know your names and be able to call on you directly when there are events or campaigns in your area. We will have a section in the groundWork newsletter and web page for information on activities and events that members might want to get involved in or publicise. groundWorkers' Union members will be invited to contribute to the Newsletter and Webpage. We will ask members what they would like from the groundWorkers' Union and if possible these things will be done. groundWork has an excellent track record of 'getting things done' so this is an opportunity for you share your ideas with us and together we could make big things happen.

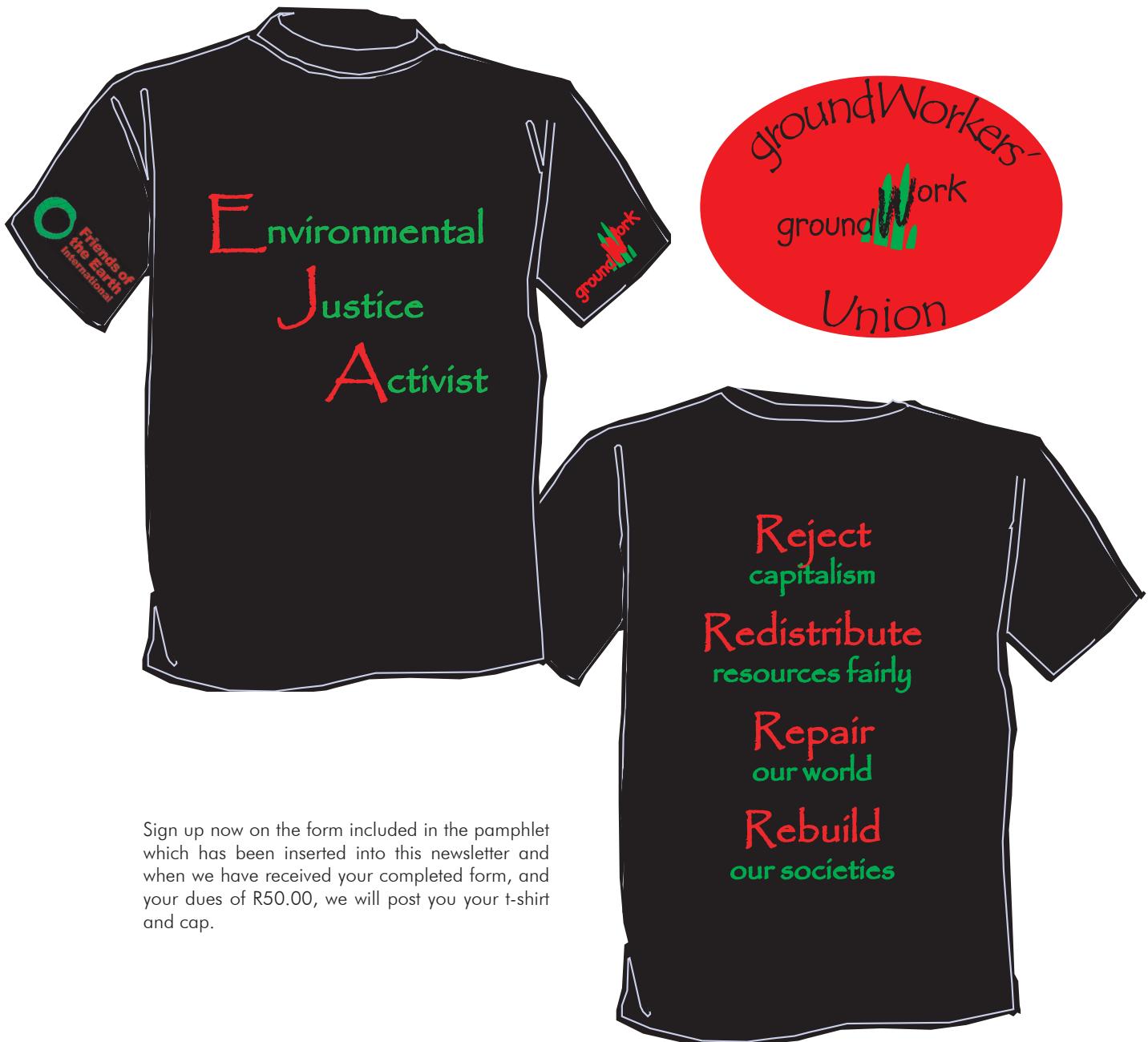
The Pledge

As a member of the groundWorkers' Union I pledge:

- ◊ To support the call for environmental justice for all and to spread the word.
- ◊ To share information and experiences with people to further the call for environmental justice.
- ◊ To join groundWorkers' Union public campaigns and marches when called on if possible.
- ◊ To support groundWork and uphold its values of :
 - * Acting in the interests of people who experience environmental injustice
 - * Striving for sustainable change through supporting environmental justice campaigns and advocacy.
 - * Believing that everybody has a right to a just environment.
- ◊ To wear my T-shirt and cap with pride.
- ◊ To respect our planet and all that depend on her for life.

Let's go change the world!

When you sign up as a groundWorker Unionist, you will receive this free t-shirt



Sign up now on the form included in the pamphlet which has been inserted into this newsletter and when we have received your completed form, and your dues of R50.00, we will post you your t-shirt and cap.