



# Building Activism



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*groundWork is a non-profit environmental justice service and developmental organization 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, Coal, Waste and Environmental Health.*

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*Global Anti-Incineration Alliance*

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

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Credit: groundWork



# From the Smoke Stack



by groundWork Director, Bobby Peek

## *Can the UNFCCC save the planet?*

This smokestack is dedicated to the failure of Paris. Now not many people or organizations will like these words. There was much spin in the aftermath of Paris as to how CoP21 has given the world something to work with. What is at stake here, for many organizations and people, is not what we can work with in future, but what we are facing as I write this today: the brutal injustice of the fossil fuel world, which harms people and their environments and which we experience every day.

After twenty-one years of negotiations, groundWork believes that the negotiations at the UNFCCC will not save the planet or the millions of people who are least to blame for climate change and who will nevertheless pay with their lives. Let us be clear: from the recent science out, the commitments made in Paris were too late and too weak. We have already overshot any hope of keeping temperature increases to below 1.5° Centigrade. Reading the Fair Shares report on the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC), it is clear that the process is a scam and the commitments made in Paris will, according to scientists, take us way beyond the 2° increase in global temperature. Paris has failed The People's Test, a document that was agreed on by various NGOs and peoples' organizations, as to what we will need from Paris to save the world. Critically, as we returned from Paris – yes, I was there, despite all my misgivings – coal fired power stations, fracking and off shore gas and oil exploration and coal bed methane extraction were all still on the table in South Africa, and of course the rest of the world.

I am not all doom and gloom about Paris. Being at my first full CoP outside South Africa – I only briefly flirted with the CoP in the Hague in 2002 as we exposed Shell's dirty practices globally – it was incredible to go around the city and see how local Parisians were embracing the very many people who came from all parts of the world to show solidarity with social justice issues in Paris and France. Despite the gloom of the recent violent attacks in Paris, people worked together to understand each other's viewpoints.

Let's review why I left Paris disgusted by our political elite – those that bullied and those that accepted the bullying. It was clear on the morning of the 12<sup>th</sup> of December, even before the text was out, as the delegates were convened by the General Secretary of the United Nations Ban Ki Moon, President of France François Hollande and President of CoP21 Manuel Pulgar-Vidal, that they had been told they would sign the document, a document that was not out yet. The threat was that this was the "last chance saloon". It was the type of diplomatic bullying that was brutal and un-democratic. I remember all too clearly when the then Minister of Environment and Tourism in South Africa, Valli Moosa, said to the Portfolio Committee on Environment and Tourism in 2004, on the eve of our third election, that signing an Air Quality Act void of references to health and air pollution emission standards is the last opportunity they would have before a new government. At least our democracy still worked then; the Portfolio Committee rejected his preposterous demand.



By why am I saying Paris was a failure? groundWork has since 2010 worked actively within Friends of the Earth International (FoEI) to ask what criteria we would use to judge our involvement in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). These criteria are simple. They “are about whether we believe that the parties are really serious about climate – enough to prioritise it over economy but also to recognise that a commitment to economic justice flows from prioritising climate – or that there is any chance they will get serious.” Some of these criteria are:

- The number of countries negotiating for climate rather than their economic advantage, or the number of countries actively promoting a people’s agenda rather than an economic one;
- A 1.5° maximum increase with low risk of missing it;
- Negotiations focus on a credible global carbon budget and consequent distribution of that budget;
- Market solutions are disavowed;
- Corporates (including state owned) do not have the free run of the place; and
- Corporates see FoEI (or Climate Justice) inside the negotiations as a real threat.

This is how groundWork seeks to judge Paris. We believe it failed on all these levels.

Let us view the fact that no country stood up, as in Cancun when Bolivia was the only one and “found itself alone against the world”, saying no to the “Cancun accord”. Bolivia warned then that it is not a step in the right direction but rather “it is a giant step backward. The text replaces binding mechanisms for reducing greenhouse gas emissions with voluntary pledges that are wholly insufficient. These pledges contradict the stated goal of capping the rise in temperature at 2°C, instead guiding us

to 4°C or more. The text is full of loopholes for polluters and opportunities for expanding carbon markets and similar mechanisms – like the forestry scheme Redd – that reduce the obligation of developed countries to act.”

All of this materialized in Paris. We are closer to 4° than to 2°, let alone 1.5°. Market mechanisms have been fully embraced. The voluntary pledges are totally inadequate, and the current Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) represent substantially less than half of the reduction in emissions required by 2030, according to the analysis within the Fair Shares Report. The term fair share is presented in the report as a commitment to keep within the limited carbon budget – how much more greenhouse gas we can put into the atmosphere before we exceed 1.5°C that “will entail unacceptable impacts for billions of people and risk crossing irreversible tipping points.”

Many BINGOs (Big International NGOs) signed onto the Fair Share document – a few being Action Aid International, Pan African Climate Justice Alliance, WWF International, Climate Action Network Latin America, Third World Network, the International Trade Union Confederation and FoEI. Another convergence of BINGOs – in this case Oilwatch, Greenpeace, 350.org, FoEI – also occurred in the development of the People’s Test. A document that states: “Nothing less than a systemic transformation of our societies, our economies, and our world will suffice to solve the climate crisis and close the ever-increasing inequality gap.” It goes on further to say that for Paris to be a success it must:

- Catalyze immediate, urgent and drastic emission reductions;
- Provide adequate support for transformation;
- Deliver justice for impacted people; and
- Focus on transformational action, i.e. disavow false solutions such as carbon markets.



Paris did none of this.

groundWork's criteria (2012), the Fair Shares document (2015) and People's Test (2015) clearly laid the foundation for how to assess Paris. And based upon these three documents, Paris has to be considered a failure. To add insult to injury, even before Paris happened, in the pre-negotiations in Bonn in October 2015, the writing was on the wall that the political elite wanted to push through a deal which would not be scrutinized heavily. Here BINGOs were kicked out as observers. This lack of democracy was aptly articulated by the call of Hideaki Mizukoshi, of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs who stated: "We have a very short time left for serious negotiations. Diplomats know real negotiations cannot happen in front of the public. If we open spin offs to observers, we will need another group to do the real negotiations. This is not the time for such show, but for real negotiations."

So what now. Sadly, none of the BINGOs thought about what happens when their criteria, when the expectations, would not be met. Critically, the convergence of BINGOs under these processes – Fair Share and People's Test – was not as strong as the glue that held governments together, as no government vetoed Paris and those that wanted to no doubt were presented with the illusive promise of climate funding and increased aid. Yet, while as BINGOs Paris did not meet our criteria, we did not manage unity to denounce it as governments did to pronounce a positive win.

FoEI called it for what it is. The ship is going down, and the poor are being denied places on the lifeboats. The Asian Peoples Movement on Debt and Development indicated that the words being spoken were nice but carried no substance. On Loss and Damage Watch were concerned that the harshness in the Paris agreement has remained the same, despite Loss and Damage now being in the decision making process of the agreement. Friends

of the Earth (United States) was clear that the agreement failed the People's Test.

However there was no convergence. Greenpeace claimed that "we are in with a serious chance to succeed". I agree, but not at the international level, but very much at the local level, where people are stopping coal mines, fracking and new oil wells. WWF international claimed that governments were committed to being in line with climate science. Oxfam indicated that there is a global power shift in climate action in that most ambition came from developing countries.

I have to go back to the fact that we have been negotiating since 1992, and in all this time pollution has increased, greenhouse gas emissions have increased, the temperatures have risen and more deaths through extreme weather conditions continue to occur. Do we now fight in this same space to try and convince those who are to implement a weak agreement that they must do so militantly and without meaning? It will mean that the rich and elite will continue extracting the most from the remaining carbon budget. We need a different approach – one that lies in recognizing the struggles of all people as they resist the expansion of the carbon industry. It lies in the local, not even the national. Unless there is a serious reversal of practice by those making decisions on behalf of all of us, and our criteria are seriously considered and aimed for, Paris will be the place where as BINGOs we were close, but no cigar. In response to Third World Network (TWN), the reality is that the real failure is that Paris has not collapsed and it has given the poor globally the false belief that the elite are trying to save them. ✕





# Farewell, Strike

by Bobby Peek

*Strike Matshepe at Iscor protest march, WSSD, September 2002.*

*Credit: groundWork*



On the 27<sup>th</sup> of December, as 2015 was nearing its end, long time community activist "Strike"

Matshepe peacefully said farewell to this world. Strike spent his last thirty years fighting for the freedom that apartheid did not afford him.

Two weeks after his death we gathered for Strike's memorial service, adjacent to his house in Steel Valley. The freedom that ArcelorMittal stole from him was that they refused to clean up or compensate the families whose lands had been damaged. The apartheid state afforded ArcelorMittal – at that time the parastatal Iscor – the impunity to offload their toxic waste onto people and the environment. The democratic state failed to deal honestly with the legacy of the corporate and apartheid collusion, and rather facilitated the furtherance of this.

In the early 1990s, with the demise of apartheid and the advent of real democracy in sight, Strike bought a piece of land in the emerging free South Africa; a piece of land on which he believed he would spend the rest of his life. In a cruel twist of fate, he bought a piece of the old polluted South Africa, which would never be cleaned up in the new South Africa. Strike, however, chose to challenge this reality. He refused compensation to buy him out and silence him. So Iscor (which was to become ArcelorMittal) tried to silence him in court. He refused to remain silent. He wanted justice and, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, he led a protest against Iscor calling for

justice. This protest and his struggle were the poster for human rights defenders who challenged for environmental justice in Cartagena, Columbia in 2000.

Strike's resistance gave birth to the struggle around Steel Valley, and the emergence of the Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance in 2005, which celebrated its tenth year of existence in the year of Strike's death. The alliance, as with Strike's battle, faces immense challenges as it seeks to strive for environmental justice in a system that is politically charged to continue producing environmental injustices.

This local formation of peoples' organizations led to the establishment of the Global Action on ArcelorMittal (GAAM), which brought together community people and NGOs resisting the environmental injustices of ArcelorMittal globally. GAAM, through its four years of existence, has forced ArcelorMittal to come face-to-face with the nature of its business. Strike indeed left a legacy beyond his local resistance to ArcelorMittal. This global struggle against ArcelorMittal has roots in the very lands and with the very people they polluted. This struggle has gained recognition and justice globally.

The sad reality of Strike's life and the struggle for justice in the Vaal Triangle is that they knew that South Africa has not delivered the environmental justice it promised. Today, people still face the violence of environmental injustice and it is people like Strike who make us remember this. This reality of non-delivery by a new political order was a concern of many of the politically wise at the dawn of democracy in the 1990s. Indeed, Albie Sachs, one of the first democratic judges at the Constitutional Court, warned of this when he pointedly stated, "When we breathe the air of freedom, we do not wish to choke on hidden fumes".

Let us remember Strike and ensure that there are no "hidden fumes" in our democracy.

A Luta Continua! ✕



## With love from Parys

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*The People's Climate Camp was held in Parys, Free State, in December 2015. The camp was organized by the Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance and the South African Waste Pickers' Association. The Highveld Environmental Justice Alliance met up with the about 15 organizations at the camp after holding a Climate Caravan in various towns in the Highveld. This is the statement that came out of the Camp.*

We are people's organizations from the polluted heart of South Africa, from the frontlines of the struggle to prevent dangerous climate change. We are from the hotspots of fossil fuel pollution in the Vaal Triangle, the Highveld and south Durban, from lands threatened by new coal mines and fracking from the Cape to KwaZulu-Natal to Mpumalanga, from the lands wasted by gold mining in eGoli, and from the dumps that are monuments to an economy of waste.

We are fighting for survival now, for clean air to breathe and clean water to drink, for good land to make our homes and for our livelihoods. We are also fighting for the future survival of everybody's children and grandchildren. We are already feeling the impacts of climate change. Last year it was floods across the north of the country and drought in KZN. Now it is drought and heat waves across the land.

We have made the 2015 People's Climate Camp in Parys, Free State, on the banks of the Vaal River. Here the Vaal runs dirty. It is polluted by the heavy energy, chemical and minerals industries just upstream, by acid drainage from the mines and mine dumps and by leaking municipal sewage works. We stand in solidarity with the people of Tumahole, Parys, who are poorly supplied with dirty water.

We know that those who are called the world's leaders, meeting for the annual climate negotiations in Paris, France, will not take meaningful action. They will offer only false solutions.

We meet knowing that the fight for real solutions and a liveable future is in the hands of ordinary people. It is in our hands. We commit ourselves to creating awareness of the causes and impacts of climate change within our communities and to building a powerful people's movement of resistance to the ruin of our world, a movement for environmental and climate justice.

As we struggle against the dirty production and waste of the fossil fuel age we are also building alternatives. We are waste pickers who are doing the real business of recycling and fighting for zero waste, we are agro-ecologists fighting to restore the land and for a world where people have control of their food system, and we are together fighting for a future in which clean energy is produced under democratic control.

Government says it supports the African position of limiting global warming to under 1.5°C above pre-industrial temperatures. We call on government to act as if they mean it. It is urgently necessary that greenhouse gas emissions peak early and that they decline steeply – globally and in South Africa. The climate crisis does not admit of a late peak and



a decade-long plateau before real reductions as proposed by government. The climate crisis does not admit of any further development of coal, oil or gas resources or of burning resources and livelihoods in waste incinerators.

The economy shaped by the use of cheap and dirty energy and cheap labour has made South Africa the most unequal society in the world. Nearly 60% of people live in poverty according to official statistics. In many of our townships, no-one has formal employment. There is more work in clean production and repairing the damage done by corporate polluters to our health, our homes and our environment. The corporations that profited from destroying the country should now pay for restoring it.

We cannot afford a government that is not fully convinced even by its own inadequate proposals on responding to climate change. Government must take responsibility. That means all government departments, provinces and municipalities. It means the departments responsible for minerals, energy, trade, industry and economic development as well as those responsible for environment, water and sanitation. It means the departments responsible for health, education, land and human settlements. It means the treasuries.

All are responsible for serving and protecting people and the environment that we depend on. We did not put them there to protect corporate interests and promote a way of development that is destroying us. We did not put them there to outsource community development to big corporations in the pretence that this "offsets" the damage corporates are allowed to do. This only divides the people.

We did not put them there to negotiate false solutions to the climate and environment crisis. These false solutions work for corporate control and against democratic control. They include nuclear power, carbon capture and storage and other projects misnamed as "clean coal", and all offsets and market mechanisms.

We call on all government departments and institutions to work with us to create awareness of climate change. We call on them to build resources at the local level and to work with us in creating a transition to clean energy and production, in restoring the land damaged by dirty production based on fossil fuels and by industrial agribusiness and plantations, and in building well-made homes and settlements. We call on them to do their work in the full awareness of the climate and environmental crisis.

At all levels, our government is evading its responsibilities. This stems from the collusion of political and corporate elites that have captured the state for private gain. Government claims to act on the authority of the people. We commit ourselves to holding them accountable for what they do.

At our first climate camp in Durban, November 2013, we set out our positions in the People's Climate Camp Declaration. We reaffirm that agenda for climate and energy justice, for environmental, social and economic justice. We reaffirm the conclusion that we can all live well with each other and with the earth. Where no-one grabs a surfeit, everyone can have enough. ✎





# The chief and the mine

by Robby Mokgalaka

## *Democracy destroyed!*

As I write this, the good news is that the Fuleni Community has been successful in resisting Ibutho Coal digging up their land. This comes with relief and victorious joy. Yet the struggle toward this victory has been complex and difficult. I revisit the struggle rather than focus on the success, for it is the struggle that must be remembered so that we learn from it for future resistance.

The Somkhele and Fuleni communities are situated in Northern KwaZulu-Natal, where the local people face challenges of coal mines in their respective areas. These are rural communities depending on livestock and farming for their livelihood and therefore the availability of sufficient land is crucial for these purposes. The Somkhele people are facing the impact of the Somkhele coal mine while the Fuleni community is fighting against the proposed Ibutho coal mine in their area.

In the Somkhele situation, it has been alleged that the traditional leader was involved in ensuring that the Somkhele coal mine was started in 2007 and that this was facilitated by the chief having side dealings with the mining officials. The community suspected this after the chief was seen driving flashy cars.

The mine relocated approximately twenty-two families from the land that they were using for farming and grazing, to a smaller piece of land that was equivalent to the land of three families when compared to the previous land owned. The people now do not have land to farm and were not employed by the mine as promised before relocation, so they are left in a desperate position. Small houses of low quality were built for them by the mine. The houses have flushing toilets without running water.

The community always depended on the Umfolozi River for water and the river has seldom been short

of water. The river started drying out after the Somkhele mine installed its pipes to draw water to use to wash coal. According to researchers, a coal mine uses an average of 500 000 litres of water per day to wash coal, for dust suppression and on other mining activities. This clearly suggests that the mine contributed immensely to the shortage of water in the Umfolozi River.

The area is also hard-hit by the current national drought and as a result livestock is dying. The community can't even harvest rain water because of the coal dust problem. The coal dust settles on the roofs of their houses and the harvested rain water comes out very dark in colour. The failure by the mine to control the dust is clearly in violation of the conditions of their operational licences.

One of the families targeted for relocation to make way for the mine was enclosed in the mine yard after refusing to move out when the mine could not meet the family's demands. The family is now situated less than 300 metres from the open pit mine. When the blasting occurs in the mines the family inhales the dust first as it runs across their houses. But besides the health challenges their houses also crack because of the blasting.

The mine removed graves of the community to rebury them elsewhere. As part of the relocation package the mine promised to provide financial assistance, erect tomb stones and give a cow to each family for the traditional ceremonies for removal of the grave site. According to the African tradition, graves are not allowed to be exhumed. It is believed to be frustrating and infuriating to the spirits of the ancestors. After exhuming the grave, the family needs to perform an appeasing ancestral function for relocating the dead. This is necessary for the spiritual connection as it is believed that the ancestors have an influence on daily life. The mine



only provided goats and small amounts of money to a few of the affected families. Some graves were not marked as there were no tomb stones erected and so families are battling to identify their deceased to perform the necessary ceremonial functions. Affected community members believe that the ancestors are unhappy about the situation and that's why they are not succeeding in their lives after what has happened. They are saying that normally they are required to perform ancestral functions to resolve personal situations such as unemployment by appeasing the ancestors, but they are unable to do so because they cannot identify their own family graves. This is tragic to them because their lives are standing still and problems are piling up in their families.

On the other hand, the Fuleni community is fighting a war with the mine management, government and their own traditional council which supports the mine.

The community elected members to form a task team to deal with the proposed Ibutho coal mine proposal. The mine is strongly opposed by the six joined villages of the Fuleni area. The task team also faces the challenge of not being given an opportunity to address their issues to the chief. Every time the task team has attended the meeting at the chief's place, the traditional council has easily prevented them from talking out against the mine.

The Fuleni people have a traditional council led by the son of the chief, who supports the mine. This council is made up of *indunas* from each Fuleni village. After the traditional council realized that the task team was making things impossible for them to realise their own interests in regard to financial dealings with the mining officials, they decided to disband the team and appointed the *indunas* to deal with the issues.

The chief once summoned members of the team to come and explain the statement they'd made in a newspaper. This was one of the intimidation tactics used against the team. A representative made a statement saying that the Fuleni community feel like they don't have a leader because the chief has been called three times to address the concerns of the community about the proposed mine but did not pitch up. The community got frustrated because the consultant doing work for the mine

moved into the area and marked some houses without explaining to the community first. This frightened them and the chief was called to ease their concerns by addressing them but he did not come so this angered the community to the extent that they felt as if they don't have a leader to care for their interests and protect them.

At one stage a representative was made to pay three goats to the chief for arguing with the ward councillor, who also supports the mine, in his village. Their altercation was regarded as disrespectful to the chief, although it did not happen before him. The ward councillor was also instructed to pay the goats but has refused to do so and no further action has been taken against him.

After disbanding the team, the members were left frustrated as their hands are tied by the traditional leader's action. The traditional leader is taking away people's democratic rights as guaranteed in the Constitution. The team is even afraid to hold meetings publicly as they may be reprimanded by the chief for disobeying his instructions. Traditional leadership has destroyed constitutional democracy!

After the chief closed down the space for meaningful debate, he called the task team to assist in a proposed meeting arranged by the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (DEDTEA) for the community. The call from the chief came after the *indunas* confessed to the chief that they had no idea how to handle the meeting as they don't understand the issues. The *indunas* suggested to the chief that the task team should be responsible for the meeting as they know better about environmental issues.

I am not surprised by the confusion in these communities or the leadership problems, because this is how the mines operate in all the different communities we work with.

They adopt the same "divide and rule" approach applied by the old apartheid government. These mining companies use money to lure the leaders of the targeted area into supporting their activities. They succeed because money talks.

The only recipe for success in these situations is for communities to stand firm against their misleading leaders and demand democratic practice by the traditional authorities. ✕



# War declared on municipality

by Musa Chamane

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of November 2015 about 150 waste pickers protested at the gates of the New England Road Landfill in Pietermaritzburg. The protest was mainly in response to the mayor's statement, proclaimed through *The Witness* newspaper dated the 6<sup>th</sup> of November, that the new security system that is being introduced by the city will lock out waste pickers and those who trespass will be shot at by pellet guns. *The Witness* further reported that CCTV cameras will be installed. Waste pickers were shocked by this statement and they needed the mayor and his municipal manager to come and explain how they are planning to do this.

Apart from the new security, waste pickers have been involved in a fierce fight with the City since 2008. Waste pickers were locked out of the site in 2008 and that resulted in a protest to city hall. Although the memorandum was handed over, the council never formally responded. In 2014, waste pickers marched to the city hall in protest over the delay in construction of the materials recovery facility (MRF). Again, as is usual, there was no response from the City.

In 2011, the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs gave UMgungundlovu District Municipality R21-million to construct an MRF, which has never been built. Msunduzi Local Municipality and UMgungundlovu District Municipality are not on good terms and this manifested in them failing to reach consensus regarding the MRF project. The standoff between these municipalities has resulted in waste pickers' deaths due to truck accidents on the landfill site.

In 2009, one of the waste pickers was run over by the compactor on this site and today she is sitting permanently in a wheelchair. Poverty and unemployment drives people to waste recovery as they try to make a living out of recycling waste from landfills and exchanging it for money. Waste pickers are found on more than fifty dumping sites in all the provinces of the country. They are not only based on landfills; some are based on different cities' streets.

In Brazil, India, Columbia and Egypt, waste pickers are recognised by their governments and they are receiving assistance because these governments understand the importance of waste reduction and diversion from the landfill. In Brazil, for example, the waste pickers have received tremendous support from government and the waste pickers' union has hundreds of members and these people have permanent jobs from waste picking.

The protest at New England Road was a lockout of all the municipal trucks, preventing them from disposing of waste on the landfill, and the demand was that the high ranking officials from Msunduzi should come and answer a long list of grievances from waste pickers. The media, NGOs and the public supported the cause of the waste pickers. The protest was not formally arranged because the waste pickers felt that applying for the protest would weaken their objective of forcing the two officials to come and address them.

The protest started at 5AM, when two entrances to the site were chained and then locked by the waste pickers and fires were set up using old wood, waste and tyres. There was no landfill access from 5AM until midday. Even the municipal employees were locked out and they became spectators. Waste pickers were singing struggle songs, dancing and calling on the mayor to come and address them. The protest was very peaceful until the police came and the waste pickers kept singing. The police demanded the permit for the protest and it was clear that there was no permit. They ordered everyone to disperse. No one responded positively to their request; instead the singing and *toyi toying* became louder and more energetic. The fire department was also called on to contain the strong blaze at the main gate of the dumping site.

A fire department truck approached and attempted to drive through the mob of protesters. The majority of the waste pickers started picking up rocks and they warned the truck driver to reverse, but he was stubborn and he proceeded towards the protesters. The protesters were also drawing closer to the





truck, protecting the fire that was behind them and in front of the municipal landfill gate. The truck driver noticed that if he proceeded, waste pickers would stone the truck and then the police would retaliate and he decided to reverse and parked ten metres away. The waste pickers continued with their business of the day.

The police were very angry and they were not sure what to do to deal with the situation. As they took out guns from their cars, protesters started shouting "Marikana!". The police took back the big guns that were in their possession and they became an audience. After fifteen minutes they brought back the guns again and started preparing to fire. The waste pickers looked brave and they asserted that they would not move until the mayor came. At this stage, a big police van that can take up to thirty criminals had arrived. They started shooting at unarmed protesters and three women were injured as a result of the shots. The waste pickers dispersed for five minutes but then they came back and the protest continued. During the second round of protest, after more gunfire, twenty-one waste pickers were arrested, along with one groundWork staff member.

The arrested waste pickers were transported to Alexandra police station but there were not enough cells to accommodate all the arrested

waste pickers. The police van roamed the streets of Pietermaritzburg and after an hour came back to the landfill site with all those who had been arrested; the fellow protesters were jubilant and the protest continued more strongly than before. There were about twenty police cars on the scene and about thirty police officers waiting to see what the final outcome of the protest would be.

The mayor and municipal manager were called to address waste pickers, but the mayor refused to come and meet with protesters. The municipal manager reported that he was out of town but had alerted all his managers about this. No one from the municipality came to address the waste pickers.

The municipal private security decided not to allow waste pickers to come back and work on the landfill, fearful of damage to municipal assets. The leadership started negotiations and they agreed in principle that nothing sinister would happen if they were allowed back at their place of work. Considering that the protest did not deliver the desired outcome, the waste pickers agreed that they should summon both the mayor and municipal manager to come and formally meet with them. Should they fail to honour the waste pickers' plea, they have made it clear that they will plan more activities, until their issues are addressed by high ranking municipal officials. A letter has therefore

been sent to both the municipal manager and the mayor. Response is still pending. ✂

*Waste pickers protest outside the New England landfill site in Pietermaritzburg after the municipality proposed to shoot them with pellet guns.*  
Credit: groundWork



# Life cycle of energy and health impacts

by Rico Euripidou

*"Climate change is the biggest **global health threat** of the 21st century... We call for a public health movement that frames the threat of climate change for humankind as a health issue"*

– The Lancet and University College London Commission on Climate change, 2009

*"Tackling climate change could be the **greatest global health opportunity** of the 21st century"— The Lancet and University College London commissions on climate change, 2015*

Nearly all aspects of modern life, in all parts of the world, benefit from access to energy. From powering equipment to provision of medical care, to prolonging daylight hours to enable studying, energy access can support and enhance health in myriad ways. However, there are important health considerations in the generation, distribution and consumption of various energy sources such as coal (used primarily for electricity in South Africa), arising from their impact on social, environmental and economic systems. Leading medical journals and health professional organizations have begun to endorse the evidence and amplify the message that massive air pollution associated with coal-fired power stations that also drive climate change poses serious challenges to global public health and therefore must be addressed as public health issues.

This was the topic of our workshop at the October 2015 annual Public Health Association of South Africa (PHASA) congress workshops, as well as the opening PHASA plenary presentation executed in partnership with our Healthy Energy Initiative<sup>1</sup> partners.

<sup>1</sup> The Healthy Energy Initiative ([www.healthyenergyinitiative.org](http://www.healthyenergyinitiative.org)) is a global collaboration of health professionals, health organizations, and health researchers engaging in science-based advocacy for a move away from fossil fuel-based power generation – particularly coal – and toward clean, renewable, healthy energy options. The Initiative is led by Health Care Without Harm ([www.noharm.org](http://www.noharm.org)), with a network of partners that coordinate strategic campaigns in

Our presentations highlighted the global evidence base that demonstrates that the exploitation of fossil fuels for energy generation has serious implications for human health through its contribution to both local pollution and global climate change. These health impacts also accrue into a heavy and largely unaccounted-for economic burden borne by communities, governments, and health systems. Health and climate co-benefits can be achieved by reducing dependence on fossil fuels and transitioning to clean, renewable energy. The health sector can thus play an important role in improving public understanding of the health impacts of energy choices and strengthening policy responses.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), approximately seven million premature deaths per year result from exposure to air pollution, making it the world's largest environmental health risk<sup>2</sup>. Approximately half of the burden is attributable to outdoor air pollution, which comes from the combustion of fossil fuels and contributes to deaths due to ischaemic heart disease, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, lung cancer and respiratory infections. The burning of fossil fuels is also responsible for the majority of greenhouse

key countries and regions around the world.

<sup>2</sup> Seven million premature deaths annually are linked to air pollution: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2014/air-pollution/en/>



gas emissions that contribute to climate change. By causing or intensifying extreme weather events, food and water insecurity and the migration of infectious diseases, climate change exacerbates global health challenges.

The global public health community has a unique opportunity to serve as an interlocutor between the scientific evidence on the harmful effects of fossil fuel-based energy generation and the health benefits of policies that mitigate air pollution by transitioning to clean, renewable energy. Around the world, public health professionals are beginning to engage on the health impacts of air pollution and climate change by advocating for health impacts to be considered in energy decision making, and promoting the health cost savings afforded by healthier energy choices. In countries ranging from India to South Africa, Poland to the Philippines, Australia, the United States, and China, health professionals are increasingly documenting the negative health impacts of the dirtiest forms of energy such as coal, and the health benefits of clean, renewable energy such as solar and wind.

Public health associations and other health institutions in many of these countries are taking positions that advocate for a move away from fossil fuels and toward a healthy energy future. The following are broad elements of discussions and actions from the PHASA workshops.

The public health sector should:

- Provide support to communities affected by coal and other extractive energy industries.
- Advocate for health impact assessment and health economic evaluations to be integrated in decision-making on energy projects and energy policy – with considerations for worker safety and health; environmental impacts; air, soil and water pollution; displacement of communities; economic and social disruption; health equity concerns; and contribution to climate change.
- Engage a broad cross section of health sector actors in developing and advocating for healthy energy policy.

- Build capacity for a larger and more diverse group of health sector voices to articulate for the energy transition.
- Seek out partnerships with complementary global health movements, (for example non-communicable diseases, social determinants of health, and health systems strengthening).
- Lead by example by investing in clean energy solutions for our workplaces, health centres, hospitals and health systems, and using our purchasing power to decarbonize the health care systems and supply chain.

In a parallel initiative leading up to the 2015 UN Climate Change Conference in Paris, the Paris Platform for Healthy Energy<sup>3</sup> makes an urgent health sector-based appeal to the world's governments to achieve a strong, binding international climate agreement. Organizations representing the health sector in over eighty countries including South Africa are calling for a shift from fossil fuels to renewables, citing health and financial benefits.

The Paris Platform for Healthy Energy reflects a growing consensus among health professionals and organizations across the globe that shifting to clean, renewable energy will protect public health from both global climate change and the impacts of local pollution.

In doing so the health sector is making it very clear that urgent global action is needed to limit greenhouse gas emissions. This would not only reduce health risks from climate change but also yield large health benefits and cost savings from prevented illness and premature death due to air pollution.

The lead endorsers of the Paris Platform for Healthy Energy are: the World Federation of Public Health Associations (which includes PHASA), Health Care Without Harm, Europe's Health and Environment Alliance, and Australia's Climate and Health Alliance. <sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The text of the Paris Platform for Healthy Energy, along with the full list of endorsements and testimonials, is available at <http://www.healthyenergyinitiative.org/platform>.





# GGHH reaches 500-member milestone

by Luqman Yesufu

Over the past four years, the Global Green and Healthy Hospital (GGHH) network has continued to grow steadily in number and status. Leading health authorities from around the world are beginning to add their voice to climate issues through sustainable actions and activities in their operations and policy, which are all aimed at reducing their own environmental footprint. During the month of May this year we reported a huge milestone for GGHH: our 500<sup>th</sup> member. In the months since then, we have reached another landmark: GGHH member representation surpassing 20 000 hospitals and health centres. As of the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 2015, the GGHH network consists of 582 members from thirty-four countries, representing 20 412 hospitals and health centres. In Africa, we have two hospitals in Kenya and Morocco, and two health systems representing the interests of over a hundred hospitals and an academic institution in South Africa.

Climate change is a global health emergency and it's very important that health professionals respond to this emergency. In April 2015, nine leading health care institutions from across the globe pledged to take meaningful action on climate change, kicking off a worldwide campaign to mobilize hospitals and health systems to address one of humanity's most pressing problems.

As the GGHH, members from around the world will be there to add our voice to this fight by showcasing their achievements and the commitments they have made through the 2020 Health Care Climate Challenge. The 2020 Health Care Climate Challenge currently has thirty-seven participants, representing more than 7 800 hospitals and health centres in thirteen countries. The list of participants can be viewed at <http://greenhospitals.net/en/2020-participants/>

## **Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Stellenbosch University Strategic Progress and Plan towards a Sustainable Future**

Established in 1956, The Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences at Stellenbosch University is responsible for developing future health professionals who, through innovation and leadership, will promote health, prevent disease and provide optimal healthcare. This is their motivation, and therefore the Faculty's decision to join the GGHH Network came as no surprise to us.

Recently, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August, the Faculty held a strategic planning meeting organized by the Green Committee, which was aimed at outlining some of its achievement as members of the GGHH initiative and developing a strategic vision for the next five years. The Green Committee, which is chaired by Professor Bob Mash, has ensured best practices in line with the green principles in six key areas: leadership, water, waste, food, transport and land use. Other members of the Green Committee include Ms Christine Groenewald, Professor Wolfgang Preiser, Mr David Wiles, Mr Johan Groenewald, Mr John de Wet, Dr Kate Joyner, Ms Megan Pittaway and Mr Shaahid Kaje.

### **Leadership**

In order to create a long term organizational culture change that will mobilize and engage faculty members, there needed to be a clear commitment from the leadership within the Faculty. The aim was to set the tone for a sustainable future within and outside the faculty, such that future health workers, while receiving their training, will be equipped to tackle issues relating to sustainable health care and will also contribute to the evidence-based information through research. The Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences has achieved this through participation in the GGHH network online platform, sponsoring of student leadership to participate in national and international conferences, playing leadership roles in editing and contributing to the CME Journal on Health and Climate Change



and also the publication of an opinion piece in the *Cape Times*.

The general vision for the Faculty in 2020 will be to integrate sustainable development into the curricula of all professional groups educated at the Faculty, which will also yield significant research output that will encourage sustainable practices within and outside the Faculty. Future plans on leadership include recruiting more green champions in each department and division, increasing the visibility of the Green Committee on campus using social media, and disseminating monthly tips on green living through seminars and meetings.

### **Waste**

The faculty produces large amounts of general waste that is often sent to the landfill for disposal. At the landfill, extremely high amounts of greenhouse gases are released into the atmosphere. The faculty had to develop a sustainable strategy for dealing with this waste stream. Therefore a waste management plan was developed which included the following step by step procedure: separation at the source, where waste is placed in three different bins labelled recyclables, non-recyclables and compost waste; an awareness campaign within the faculty that also included further training of cleaners on how to separate the different waste streams; all the food waste from the main restaurant is composted via a large scale worm farm and the *bokashi* (fermented organic matter) system. This campaign has greatly encouraged recycling within the division and our plan moving forward is to extend this throughout the Faculty, seeking support from staff, students and other support services.

### **Energy**

The Faculty also uses an enormous amount of energy that is derived from coal-fired power stations. These power stations release large amounts of greenhouse gases that cause climate change into the atmosphere. The goal here was to reduce the total amount of energy consumed by 20% over a five year period, which in turn will reduce the carbon footprint of the faculty. A preliminary energy audit was conducted in 2008 and it was found that the annual consumption was 17 258 000kWh and the average maximum demand 3 409.2kVA/month. In 2008 this resulted in a bill of R5 237 808 for electricity. The Faculty embarked on

replacing old equipment and installing new systems that consume less energy for water heating, air conditioning, lighting and lifts. The capital outlay will be recovered through savings on the electricity bill over three years. Future plans include the introduction of alternative energy sources such as PV panels, biogas and pressure flooring. In addition, a campaign to create awareness on energy usage will be launched to educate people on how they can reduce their energy consumption.

### **Transportation**

In order to reduce the pollution from transportation, which is a major contributor to greenhouse gas in the atmosphere, the Green Committee decided to introduce a small levy on all tickets for air travel – about R100 per ticket. This money will be used to offset carbon emissions through the planting of trees, employing a green coordinator on a part-time basis and supporting other small scale projects within campus. Future plans will include extending this to students by raising awareness among them and conducting a survey to find out their travel patterns. This will help develop active participation on campus to encourage carpooling and thus reduce the amount of air pollution from cars on campus. In addition, the use of teleconferencing will be encouraged for meetings on campus.

Other projects in which the Faculty is involved include a biodiversity project, where about a quarter of all 644 trees on campus have been planted by the Green Committee. This was embarked upon due to green spaces being threatened by the construction of parking lots. A *fynbos* walk and adult swing have been installed, as well as a significant number of indigenous plants. A running track was created and an owl box installed to encourage raptors and discourage the poisoning of rats. There are also vegetable gardens on campus where vegetables for students and staff use are grown, as well as gardens that grow medicinal plants for educational or research purposes.

The Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences has made progress and kept true to its commitment to the GGHH initiative. With the role it plays in training health professionals, we hope that it will also influence them and create an army of health professionals who will uphold the green principles in every facet of hospital operation. ✕



# #FeesMustFall

by Megan Lewis

*Although the #FeesMustFall campaign was broadly supported by the general public, the media did not cover themselves in glory through the way in which the protests were covered*

In October, the country witnessed the uprising of students in the #FeesMustFall campaign in which students from tertiary institutions across South Africa, along with other demands, primarily called for free education. Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr. Blade Nzimande, soon became the main target of the three-week-long protests as it was widely known that he had withheld a significant report from 2012.

According to the *Mail and Guardian*<sup>1</sup>, the government report “found that introduction of free university education for the poor in South Africa was feasible”. After the government was pressurised to release the report, the students were granted a 0% increase for tuition fees in 2016 and the year came to an end with quiet campuses.

What it showed, however, and what it will continue to show, is the strengthening of student activism across racial, class and gender lines. Two young women of colour led the Witwatersrand protests and white students were seen barricading their black students in against the police. From the students, the lines of battle were articulated clearly and cohesively across the country, despite some government officials jeopardising the struggle with talk of party interference.

Critically, while many South Africans kept up to date with the student actions through the media, it has been criticised for the way it portrayed students as violent in protests. According to student Jodi Williams, black students’ bodies have become a space upon which “media capitalises on... pain and vulnerable moments to sell papers and make money”<sup>2</sup>. And rather than help the struggle, the media often made things worse for students.

In her report, as well as others captured by students and commentators, the media were a sterile and disconnected lot that came to get the next juicy picture and leave. The truth of what students were really feeling and struggling with were sometimes, perhaps often, not really listened to and captured. It was often portrayed in a very distinct manner, whereas the truth often lies in the nuances and the behind-the-scene moments.

Nevertheless, it was through this strengthened will of young people that an important document that was held secret for three years was pushed out from under government. One wonders what other secrets are lurking behind government’s closed doors. ✕

<sup>1</sup> Mail and Guardian, 23 October 2015, “Ndzimande withheld ‘free varsity’ report” <http://mg.co.za/article/2015-10-22-nzimande-withheld-free-varsity-report>

<sup>2</sup> The Daily Vox, 12 November 2015, “The media sells black pain: A woman’s experience from #FeesMustFall <http://www.thedailyvox.co.za/the-media-sells-black-pain-a-womans-experience-from-feesmustfall/>





# Scrap the Cybercrimes Bill!

by Megan Lewis

*#HandsOffOurInternet!*

*Statement by the Right to Know (R2K) Campaign,  
issued on the 30<sup>th</sup> of November 2015.*

R2K rejects the draft Cybercrimes and Cybersecurity Bill, gazetted for public comment by the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development. While we accept the need to combat genuine cybercrimes and protect national security, this Bill is so broad and open to abuse that it threatens the fundamental democratic spirit of the internet.

R2K believes that a free and open internet is crucial to the full realisation of our constitutionally enshrined right to freedom of expression, which includes, but is not limited to, the freedom to impart or receive information or ideas, freedom of the press, freedom of artistic creativity, academic freedom, and freedom of scientific research.

The internet has the potential to democratise knowledge in unprecedented ways. In South Africa, we are witnessing the blossoming of the internet on a variety of ever-improving platforms. The rapid development of internet technology and increasing internet access create new opportunities for ordinary South Africans to access and share information and engage critically with the world around them.

We believe the draft Bill is fatally flawed and should be scrapped in its entirety. A Cybercrime Law is necessary, but not in this form.

In particular, it tries to sneak in the worst clauses of the “Secrecy Bill” by the back door, and hands the keys to the internet to the Minister of State Security.

## **What's wrong with the Cybercrimes Bill? It:**

- Hands over control of the internet to the Ministry of State Security!
- Gives the state security structures the power to effectively declare “national key points” of

the internet – and potentially grants backdoor access to any network!

- Criminalises journalists and whistle blowers by sneaking in the worst parts of the “Secrecy Bill”.
- Increases the state's surveillance powers and is even more invasive than RICA.
- Undermines South Africans' civil liberties and particularly the constitutional right to privacy. It is contrary to global developments in balancing the powers of law enforcement and state security against the protection of personal information.
- Contains fifty-nine new criminal offences involving computer usage – many of which are so broad that they could ensnare ordinary computer users. The Bill considers suspects guilty until proven innocent.
- Contains anti-copyright provisions so harsh you could be criminalised for even posting a meme.

## **What's the solution?**

Scrap the Bill and start again – this time with the proper public participation and the need to protect and preserve the democratic spirit of the internet and ordinary users' right to privacy at the heart of any drafting. We do not believe it can be tweaked or salvaged – it should be withdrawn and redrafted in its entirety.

A fuller analysis of the Bill's problems can be found at [r2k.org.za/cybercrimesbill](http://r2k.org.za/cybercrimesbill).



# Not in Paris

by David Hallowes

The Paris climate negotiations have come and gone. Not so much a damp squib as a giant slug of an event, smothering all life beneath it and leaving a slime trail across the face of the planet. Greenfly enjoys a bit of slime but was not in Paris. Greenfly preferred the polluted waters of the Vaal River as it passes through Parys, Free State. The water carries the stench of smouldering coal from Sasol, Eskom, ArcelorMittal and AngloCoal upstream in the Vaal Triangle.

But all this is in the future. Paris will happen between Greenfly writing and the reader reading. So the reader will already know that the world's leaders proclaimed success. The negotiations went past time, through the nights and into the next days. If they do not have a treaty, they surely made progress and will have one next year, or the year after, or whenever. If they do have a treaty, trumpets will blast, flags will fly, guns will fire the salute, jet fighters will burn petroleum across the sky in victory rolls and loop-the-loops.

What kind of thing this treaty will be – if it is a treaty – is yet to be decided. In Durban they decided on “a protocol, another legal instrument or an agreed outcome with legal force under the Convention applicable to all Parties”. Neither fish nor fowl. That was 2011 and they haven't got further since. And that's the point.

The agreed outcome is by the by. There may be 'legal force' but only if it is without consequence. The world's powers have already agreed that the planet isn't really worth it.

Where the world powers lead, South Africa follows. It has the most carbon intensive economy of all G20 countries according to PwC, the transnational unprofessional services corporate formerly known as PricewaterhouseCoopers. That means that it produces more carbon per dollar of GDP than anyone else. Or rather, it means that Sasol, Eskom,

ArcelorMittal, Anglo, BHP Billiton (now South32), Glencore, Exxaro, Shanduka and all produce more carbon per dollar of GDP in South Africa than anywhere else.

But, says PwC, South Africa's Paris pledge is the most ambitious of them all. So, how does that square with Sasol, Eskom, Anglo *et al*?

That is where legal force with no consequence comes in. Whatever the pledge, the Departments of Mineral Resources and Energy feel no obligation. So it is that the offshore sea bed is parcelled out for oil and gas exploration. The country is to be fracked from end to end and never mind the water. Four waste incinerators are proposed. There are ten new BLIPPs (private coal fired power stations) lined up to burn coal. And the DMR is there to ensure that the last crumb of mineable coal will be shovelled out. Never mind the water.

And that's where fracking coal comes in. Otherwise known as “coal bed methane”, it gets the gas out of unmineable coal. Fracking for shale uses sophisticated horizontal drilling to track the shale layer several kilometres deep. Even so, groundwater a kilometre or more above the shale can be contaminated by the migration of fluids. Fracking coal uses relatively shallow wells drilled straight down and blasts the hell out of the coal right next to the water table. It is already happening. In Amersfoort, gas is bubbling up with water.

Just down the road, Eskom is piloting underground coal gasification for the Majuba power plant which sits atop a large bed of unmineable coal. The coal is burned underground to produce gas and leave a cavern of ash below ground. Eskom is doing it without an environmental license.

Never mind the water. Never mind the climate. Never mind the people. Never mind the planet! X



## Promises of Lavender



*Promises of Lavender* is a short documentary that explores the stories of individuals and communities affected by coal in India, Colombia, South Africa and Egypt, with a focus on the violations of their rights by the industry.

From the attempts against the life of a lawyer suing a coal company, the forced displacement of an Afro-Colombian community by a coal mine, the fears of an Egyptian activist about the unregulated entry of coal into his country, and the struggles of a Dalit woman regarding the health impacts of coal mining on her children, it shows the human face of coal development beyond the environment – including that of workers who supposedly benefit the most from the industry.

In Arbor, a community in Mpumalanga, South Africa, a coal company failed to deliver on its promises of water, electricity and livelihood programs, such as growing lavender crops to make perfume. Only five people out of the community were lucky enough to be hired as part of this livelihood initiative. Today, these lavender plants have all but died.

Is coal cheap? Has it fulfilled its promises of development to communities whose lives it has entered into? What has it cost already marginalized communities who can no longer dream in their homes?

*Promises of Lavender* speaks to those most impacted by the coal industry in order to answer these questions. It was launched in Paris, France, during the United Nations annual climate change negotiations (CoP21), together with other documentaries about coal and its impacts on human lives.

To watch *Promises of Lavender* and to learn more about the human rights impacts of coal in the Global South visit <http://www.coalinthesouth.org/>.

