



GROUNDWORK



Mantashe versus Environmental Justice

In this issue

groundWork is a non-profit environmental justice 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.

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

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groundWork is affiliated to the following international organizations:
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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From the Smoke Stack

by groundWork Director, Bobby Peek

groundWork is always a 'crazy' busy place and 2018 was no different. It has been an exciting year with a new strategy developed for the next three years to challenge for environmental justice, under the themes of Open Democracy and a Just Transition. We have chosen these thematic framing areas as we are bearing witness to violence against civil society by government and corporations – the use of "divide and rule" by corporate power. Undemocracy presently rules. In this context, the transition is happening now, as workers and families lose their livelihoods and the elite make off with the profits of a decaying coal industry. We have to fight to make it a Just Transition!

We had two key events that will shape our 2019 and beyond. Our internal opportunities review has led to exciting internal restructuring to accommodate growing opportunities for environmental justice action. Our strategic planning meeting in September led to formalising our team approach to our campaigns. The result is that various campaigns and campaigners are working collectively as teams and the Highveld is the first focus area for this collective work.

We have exciting staff and trustee changes with Tsepang Molefe joining us as our new Media, Information and Publications Campaigner. We would like to thank Sandile Ndawonde and Thuli Makama who supported us for many years and we welcome on board Mawande Mazibuko, Relebohile Moletsane and Judy Bell. We are privileged to have them share their time with us.

The year of Just Transition is what 2018 will be remembered as, as these two words took to the airwaves. A transition is happening as we speak, and it is not just! We heard in December that the Hendrina power station will be closing in April. The last thing I did before I signed off on the year was to write to President Ramaphosa and enquire about this bit of news. I stated that for many years, and in particular over the past twelve months, there has been a vigorous debate in the public about a Just Transition for workers and communities who rely on the coal economy. The transition from coal is already happening in a variety of unplanned ways that are resulting in workers and community people being betrayed and robbed of an equitable and just future.

With the closure of Eskom power stations now on the immediate horizon, it is critical that the president responds to the public on how he is going to deal with the workers, community and the municipality who have all in one way or the other become reliant on the Eskom power stations. Starting with Hendrina. It is not only about the restructuring of Eskom, it is about the restructuring of society so that people can have a life after coal that is one of dignity.

Importantly, the president must also be clear about what plans government has put in place to safely dismantle these coal-fired power stations so that they do not have negative environmental and health legacy impacts like the more than 6 000 abandoned asbestos, coal and other mines across South Africa. How is government going to repair



Officials (don't) waste exchange

by Musa Chamane

Municipal Officials take advantage of the opportunity to learn and benchmark from each other

the land and river systems damaged as a result coal extraction and burning throughout the province of Mpumalanga and elsewhere in South Africa? How will the president set in place a system to repair the health of people who have been damaged by coal?

There has been a deathly silence from the Presidency on this issue. The silence sends shivers down my back for it brings out a deeply held fear that government will not listen to the people, and that in this crisis – the political crisis of the ANC (and of politics in general) – there will be no meaningful response to the real issues of the day.

The Department of Environmental Affairs continues to proceed with a strategy of governance that seeks to make legal that which will kill people. The chair of Portfolio Committee on Environmental Affairs was “annoyed” that the Department has doubled the allowance of SO₂ pollution which will lead to a increase in health impacts. In this era of environmental regulation, where it is recognized that pollution (and GHG emissions) must be reduced as speedily as possible, the Department seeks to take the contrary position. It feels like we’re living in Trump and Bolsonaro land. The department is of the opinion that having consulted with Eskom and Sasol is sufficient and that by weakening standards there will be more likelihood that plants will meet compliance. So, simply put, to meet the law you make what is essentially illegal and against the constitution, legal. Together with CER and Earthlife, as the campaign Life after Coal, we have sought an audience with the Ministry and a response from the Department, but needless to say nothing has been forthcoming.

This corporate-led politic, where corporate agendas align to the “politics of the weird” is a phenomenon even amongst those we would have considered allies before. Amazon Watch has warned us of “an outrageous move akin to something the Trump administration would pull ... Ecuador’s president appointed a former oil executive to head up the country’s Environmental Ministry. The previous minister was removed after refusing to grant a

license to drill for oil in one of the most biodiverse regions of the planet – Yasuní National Park. Minister Mata is now poised to greenlight this destructive plan, which would likely send even more Amazonian crude to be refined right here in California.”

The year was full of gains and strengthened mobilization against corporate impunity and poor governance. But it did not end well for community struggles in south Durban and Somkhele. Both the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance and Mfolozi Community Environmental Justice Organization lost their legal cases against companies seeking to take their land and environment. To add insult to injury, both these community based organizations were awarded costs against them. Painful, unjust and undemocratic.

Further to this, despite the victory against waste incineration throughout South Africa, the Department of Environmental Affairs, the Pietermaritzburg Municipality and various private interests, such as Interwaste, still seek to undermine the livelihoods of waste pickers by proposing waste to energy plans. We have kept South Africa free of municipal waste incineration, but the powers that be will not stop pushing the idea and technology. With a compromised and weak Department of Environmental Affairs, we must forever remain vigilant.

Finally a big thank you to the very many community groups and partners we work with, which are scattered throughout South Africa and Africa. We have had a big presence in Africa in 2018 and we hope that our work across Africa brings a unity amongst African civil society voices from governance to campaigning against extractives.

We hope that you all have a good rest over this holiday season and that we come back refreshed and ready to get into the trenches to fight for environmental justice, democracy and a just transition. ✌

On the 21st and 22nd of November, five municipalities convened in the Vaal Triangle to share information amongst themselves. Metsimaholo, Emfuleni, Mtjhabeng, Big 5 and Drakenstein local municipalities shared experiences and knowledge on waste management. It was breathtaking to see waste scattered all over in the town of Vanderbijlpark. The town last received service six months ago. It was also interesting to see the state of landfills for both Vanderbijlpark and Sasolburg. Dumping sites are always horrible, but I doubt there is any licence condition that is being complied with at these sites.

The officials shared their frustrations, such as the failure to ringfence services that are included in rates collection money. Officials were saying that they bring the revenue to the municipality and they contribute to their budget, but that the budget from the municipality does not prioritise waste service, which is a shame and is the primary cause of poor service provision.

The other issue is that there are very few people who are really committed to paying rates, especially in the townships. This is as a result of the past system when politicians advised communities not to pay rates. Now the system has changed to a democratic one, but the politicians have not gone back to people to reverse their advice about not paying rates. This is the main problem for municipalities and most municipalities owe the likes of ESKOM as well as Rand Water a lot of money, which has resulted in sanctions being imposed upon them by these service providers.

Waste management has been a challenge for most municipalities in South Africa. Some municipalities have tried to seriously deal with the problem by implementing projects that encourage recycling. As a result of those projects, air space is saved on

the landfill and the recycling rate increases, which is actually a requirement of every municipality due to the waste hierarchy stipulated in the Waste Act 2008. The Municipal Systems Act has not been updated to be in line with the Waste Act because it still requires municipalities to collect and dispose of waste without emphasizing the importance of waste recycling, so that as a country we can reach an objective of 70% waste diversion from landfill by 2022.

The main aim of the learning exchange was to link government officials who are critical role players in waste management. Various municipalities have started recycling – or what are also known as Zero Waste – projects. These projects are at various stages. Officials shared strategies, knowledge, challenges and victories in implementing waste management projects in local municipalities to give meaning to Zero Waste. The involvement of the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) in the exchange brought a glimmer of hope for those five municipalities.

Two projects were visited and all agreed that recycling/zero waste projects are the best way of dealing with municipal waste. VaalPark Recycling centre – which is a collaboration between waste pickers and municipality, industry, and NGOs – is a perfect demonstration of a big success that most municipalities can learn from. This project has proven that, if stakeholders work together, results are fruitful for everyone. Capacitating municipalities is needed because some municipalities are doing well in terms of dealing with issues of waste and therefore they should share the information and knowledge, and we hope to host more of such activities.

The other advice that they shared was that everyone has to reapply for landfill licences so that



Beauty and the hazardous beast

by Rico Euripidou

How skin lightening creams in South Africa are dumbing us down!

the licence can accommodate waste recovery. Even new landfill applications should be in conjunction with Materials Recovery Facility (MRF). They have also agreed that they have to create an enabling environment for waste pickers/recyclers.

Funding came as a big challenge because waste not being managed properly is due to a lack of funding. SALGA did inform them there are a few possible

funding opportunities such as the Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG).

It was agreed that it is very uncommon for municipalities to get such a platform for sharing expertise and challenges, and it was requested that such exchanges should take place more often in order that they may assist each other. ✂

The excessive use of skin bleaching products is a manifestation of historical colonial notions and definitions of beauty. Its use, especially among the previously oppressed groups – Blacks and Indians – draws a pattern that illustrates the impact of colonial stereotypes. Previously, this resulted in it being impossible for a dark-skinned person to fit into the social construct of beauty. Be it television, magazines, billboards or the like, the natural traits of blackness were made to seem defective.

Every day in South Africa skin lightening creams are used extensively by people who want to improve their looks and make their complexion fairer. Evidence and research shows that these are very popular, not just in South Africa but also in Africa and all over the world. There are a number of products and chemicals available off the shelves, but mercury is popularly used because it inhibits melanin production and this is what makes skin lighter. In many instances users do not know of the health risks. Mercury, commonly used in these creams, is a potent neurotoxic metal that is easily absorbed by the body and is known to cause severe health impacts. The World Health Organization has issued many warning about skin lightening products, highlighting that mercury is often used in skin lightening soaps and creams. According to the WHO, the main adverse effects of mercury contained in skin lightening soaps and creams are kidney damage, skin rashes, skin discolouration and scarring, as well as a reduction in the skin's

resistance to bacterial and fungal infections. Other effects include anxiety, depression or psychosis, and peripheral neuropathy.

Less expensive creams may contain large doses of mercury and other hazardous substances which pose severe health risk. Depending on the country and location, risky unregulated products can often be found in the marketplace. Inexpensive informal market products with powerful but illegal mercuric bleaching agents sell briskly throughout the poorer parts of Africa. In Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa and Togo, 25%, 77%, 27%, 35% and 59% of women respectively are reported to use skin lightening products on a regular basis. At a recent global meeting, we tested a skin lightening cream that was purchased in Phoenix, Durban, and the concentration of mercury was 8 800 times greater than the acceptable limit for mercury in cosmetics.

groundWork is working with national and international governments to protect consumers and the general public from this health injustice. We have worked to have these mercury-containing skin lightening creams banned for use in beauty products in many countries, including South Africa, but they are still sold on the informal market. Increasing public awareness and monitoring can reduce use of hazardous creams. The use of skin lightening product should not only be viewed as a step back in the decolonisation discourse, but also as a dangerous health hazard. ✂

Officials attending the Municipal Exchange during a site bench-marking session.

Credit groundWork



The DMR national tour

by Robby Mokgalaka

Minister Gwede Mantashe and the DMR undertake a national public relations field trip

Community members demanding to ask Minister Gwede Mantashe questions are confronted by police in Somkhele.

Credit: groundWork



When Minister of Mineral Resources, Gwede Mantashe, and his team from the Department of Mineral Resources announced their roadshow to visit coal mine affected communities, a sense of false hope was created and communities began to believe that government was finally starting to listen to them by sending its officials to the ground. Little did the communities realize that the Department of Mineral Resources was up to its usual shenanigans by falsely leading the general public to believe that it cares for their well-being and livelihood, and is willing to listen to them.

It all started with the roadshow around the country in the middle of the year when the minister finally visited mining hot spots, where there are disputes between communities and mining companies. During the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Mining Indaba in Newcastle, he responded with a promising attitude to the Newcastle community protesting outside the venue, disgruntled by the proposed Ikwezi Coal Mine which forcefully relocated the Kliprand farm community in order to start its mining activity. He promised to get to the bottom of the problem and make sure that all their grievances are sorted out. Little has been done to make any difference.

The snub: The Zululand Community

On Friday the 21st of September 2018 the minister and his team made their stop in Ulundi in northern KZN, where they met with representatives of the Zululand Anthracite Colliery and KwaMlaba community. One of the main objectives of the meeting was to defuse the tension in the area which had led to arson attacks on coal trucks and a mine shaft.

According to community members, rivers have dried up and this has had a negative effect on their livestock, and mining in the area has yielded negative outcomes on their livelihood. The residents in the area had put all their trust in the minister to assist them in finding a practical solution to their issues in relation to mining in the area. But it was not to be. There were no tangible solutions to the problems and the community was not given a chance to express their concerns.

The Confrontation: The Somkhele Community

On Saturday the 22nd of September 2018, Minister Gwede Mantashe finally faced the community of Somkhele/Mpukunyoni. The community, has for years suffered a number of injustices under the hands of ruthless mining bullies. The minister and his team started the day with a morning session at the Tendele Mine premises.

The main gathering was at an open field in Somkhele, where a huge marquee was erected. Tensions went through the roof when the session was declared closed after the Minister's address, a move that must have been inspired by the possession of power and which clearly undermined the communities' grievances. Police were called inside the venue to calm the situation down. Leaders of the Mfolozi Community Environmental Justice Organization (MCEJO) managed to save

the day by confronting the minister and his team to allow people to be heard.

All the testimonies that were presented in the minister's presence spoke of how the mining company had violated people's basic rights. A fifty-six-year-old man broke down on stage as he narrated how he had come out worse off post the forced relocation. One woman had with her a bottle of polluted water from her tank at home.

The Boiling Point: The Xolobeni Community

On Sunday the 23rd of September 2018, as part of the roadshow and in a false pretence of consultation with the aggrieved and mine-affected communities, the Minister went to the Xolobeni community where the Australian mining company Mineral Commodity Limited (MRC) is having a rough ride with the community as it destroys the land used by the community for farming and other forms of livelihood. The conflict between the mine and the community has lasted for more than ten years and resulted in Bazooka Rhadebe, an activist opposing the mine, being murdered by gunshots on the 22nd of March 2016 – in front of his seven-year-old son and in his own house.

In April 2018 there was a court battle between the community and the mining company, whereby the community demanded the right to consent to mining in terms of the Interim Protection of

Informal Rights to Land Act (IPILRA), and not only to be consulted, as is provided by the Mineral and Petroleum Resource Development Act (MPRDA).

The Minister of Mineral Resources arrived in the area as if he were consulting with the community. Physical battle ensued between the community and the minister. Things went to the extent that the community's lawyer Richard Spoor was arrested for disrupting the meeting by asking hard questions. The police fired teargas canisters into the protesting crowd. Although there were no injuries reported, some community members had to get medical treatment, including community activist Nonhle Mbuthuma.

There have been ongoing calls for mines to protect the environment and conduct business in a manner where profit is not made at the expense of the poor and marginalised.

Prior to the meeting, the minister made mention in the news that people who oppose any mine will be engaged with until they agree to that particular mine. According to the Department of Mineral Resources, the minister's engagements were part of "ongoing frank and open discussions", as they put it, "to rebuild relationships and levels of trust". The developments on the three-day visit allow one to reach an informed conclusion about the veracity of these statements. You be the judge. ✂



People from the community of Somkhele filled the venue to full capacity as they waited for their opportunity to engage the minister and the DMR team.

Credit: groundWork



GGHH and Tekano Cape Town Gathering

by Lukman Yesufu

Intersectoral collaboration to improve environmental health practices at local clinics in the city of Cape Town.

Mohamed Motala, Chief Executive Officer of Tekano.
Credit: groundWork



Environmental health professionals are public health practitioners who carry out inspections, enforce health protection regulations, and provide environmental health education and training. They are critical in addressing the social determinants of health (SDH) and health equity related issues that

may present barriers to compliance with public health protection regulations. In South Africa, this cadre of professionals have been mandated to not only ensure compliance with regulations, but to monitor and enforce the safe and adequate management of healthcare waste. To achieve this, environmental health practitioners need to undergo regular continuous professional development to improve their knowledge and skills, according to the Health Professional Council of South Africa (HPCSA). This is necessary to ensure that they are regularly updated and reskilled to better perform in their role as auditors and environmental health advocates.

On the basis of this, groundWork, through the Global Green and Healthy Hospital campaign, facilitated a two-day training session (on the 10th and 11th of October) in collaboration with the City of Cape Town, to train thirty environmental health professionals on best available practices. The training covered issues of environmental deficiencies in health facilities which reduce the quality and range of service provision. This ultimately exacerbates fundamental inequities in access to critical health services among poor populations and vulnerable groups, including women and children. In addition, the training also highlighted the fact that the health worker groups are particularly at risk from poor environmental health practices, including: inappropriate use, management or disposal of drugs, anaesthesia, cleaning materials, medical devices and building materials; ergonomic hazards; and use of protective gear such as latex gloves, as described in the section on chemical, biological and radiological exposures.

The two-day training was quite intense as we had a lot of group discussion and feedback sessions,

which encouraged interaction and learning. During our end of workshop evaluation, many of the participants expressed that the training was extremely beneficial to them as they highlighted that it was informative, interactive and very practical. One of the participants – Zanele Figlan, who is an environmental Health practitioner from Khayelitsha District Municipality – actually said, “In my five years of working for the City of Cape Town, this was the best training I have ever attended”. This was very inspiring and we all agreed that we needed to continue this activity and mainstream it into the activities for the City of Cape Town every year. In addition to this was the take home message that many of the participants agreed upon and which was great to see: they agreed that they were going to engage in safe and adequate disposal of medical waste as well as promote recycling projects in community and clinics in their respective districts.

It is worthy to note here that a recent report by the World Health Organization revealed that environmental factors contribute to 25% of the global burden of disease and, if these factors are controlled, then we can actually reduce the global burden of disease by one quarter. Environmental health practitioners are at the centre of this transformation process and what better way to achieve this than by continuously training and equipping them with the skills necessary for them to do their job. Therefore, it was great to see the inter-sectoral collaboration between groundWork and City of Cape Town working towards achieving a sustainable and safe health sector environment, important not only for improving patient and community well-being, but also for reducing the risks to workers engaged in health-related activities.

Finally, all environmental health practitioners who attended the training obtained five continuing professional development points (CPDs) and one ethical unit point. This was aimed at helping them in their professional development as required by the Health Professionals Council of South Africa (HPCSA).

What they said:

Some of these challenges are a reflection of our everyday habits. Those behaviours are a reflection of how we act outside of those institutions. Everything needs to start at the home level; we are the same people at home and at work. The successes that were shared, we need to take and internalise them.

We have to change our lifestyle and the way we interact with the environment, and to continue to bash those who still refuse to come to the party because climate change is not waiting for us.

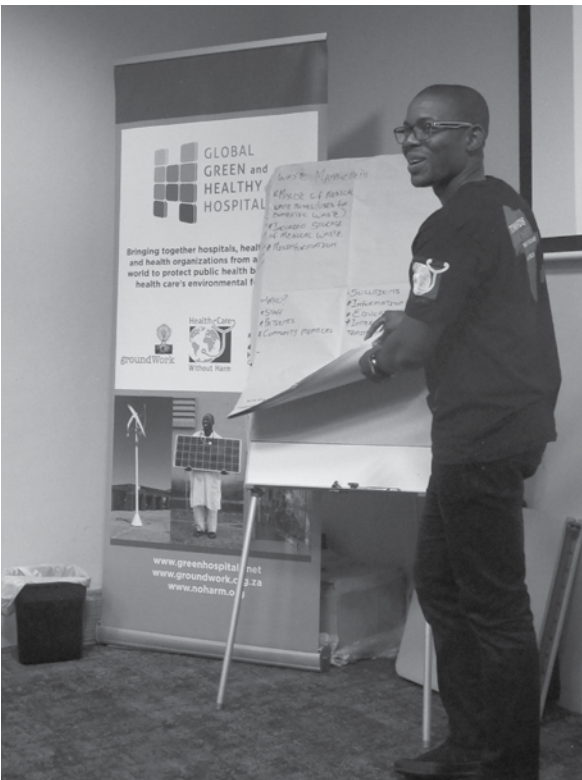
Dr. Mary Hlalele

It has given me a broader picture of how important my job is. Now I have a bigger view of why I have to do what I do in a way that is stipulated for the benefit of the community and myself.

Londeka Duma

The time that people spend sitting at queues with their files, should be used to educate them.

Sister Nofemela



groundWork health campaigner Lukman Yesufu presenting at the intersectoral exchange in Cape Town.
Credit: groundWork



Global Brand Audits

by Niven Reddy

Beach cleanups double up as brand audits

In 2018, individuals and organizations across the globe took local action to hold corporations accountable for the plastic pollution they force into the marketplace through unnecessary, problematic and excessive throwaway packaging and materials. Break Free From Plastic member organizations engaged nearly 10 000 volunteers in 239 cleanups in forty-two countries on six continents, collecting a great deal of plastic pollution.

Unnecessary, problematic and excessive single-use packaging is one of the most offensive and damaging applications of plastic. Despite calls for a “circular economy” (closed loop) approach to plastic packaging, thousands of brands and corporations insist on wrapping their food, household and personal care products in this polluting and toxic material. Plastic is rarely designed from the start to be reused or recycled back into the original product. As growing global plastic production has topped

320 million metric tons per year, many millions of tons of plastic pollution enter and clog our rivers, oceans and landfills each year, defiling nature and overwhelming local waste management systems.

Our society is inundated with industry-sponsored messages about “litter” and “cleanups” that leave individual consumers feeling guilty that they are the cause of the plastic pollution crisis. Many of the solutions put forward by these brands and corporations focus on collection and recycling, despite years of persistently low and falling plastic recycling rates worldwide.

Moreover, individual consumers are burdened with inequitable and impossible choices, and plastic is unavoidable in modern life. As this conception of “modernity” and “progress”, embodied by a throwaway lifestyle, extends from the Global North to the Global South, so do conventional disposal-oriented waste management systems which are aggressively being pushed and promoted in developing countries. Consumers are made to feel guilty for their own choices and constraints, while corporations are rarely, if ever, meaningfully held responsible for the full costs of the harmful impact of their packaging.

We cannot recycle our way out of this plastic pollution crisis. We must recognize the responsibility of corporations and plastic producers to innovate and implement whole-system redesign to make the use of plastic packaging unnecessary. ✖

*Much of this article has been adapted from the #breakfreefromplastic report titled “Branded: In search of the world’s top corporate polluters”.

A diagram illustrating the results from the brand audit. Credit Break Free From Plastic



Hell in the winelands

by Musa Chamane

Will the wines of the Western Cape Winelands become known for their smoky nose?

The Cape Winelands district is dominated by wine producing farms and it is one of the most pristine part of the country. It has a beautiful chain of mountains with the most attractive vegetation. This is likely to be tainted as a result of Drakenstein Local Municipality opening the door for an incinerator to be erected in the region. The negotiations around the proposal, followed by a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the council and Interwaste, took place behind closed doors and the community was never consulted. In 2017, the Wellington community protested against the proposed project. The community staged a huge protest walk which convinced the municipal executive committee to scrap the incinerator application.

Interwaste was going to have a binding contract with the municipality to take their waste and burn it in the incinerator and create energy from it, and failure to produce the needed waste tonnage would have resulted in fines to the municipality. This was going to be of huge financial benefit to Interwaste, to the detriment of the environment, the municipality, as well as the people. The council decision to scrap the incinerator took place while the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) application was already in the hands of the Department of Environmental Affairs. The EIA was later approved.

According to the council officials, they are adamant that they will not erect an incinerator despite the

approval by the department. However, the Cape Winelands District Municipality intends to take over the plan to have an incinerator in the district, since landfills such as Stellenbosch are nearly full. The approval by the department has set a precedent and when other municipalities in the region apply to have an incinerator, it is more likely to be approved.

Incinerators are known as contributors to CO₂ (carbon dioxide) into the atmosphere, which fuels climate change. They are also notorious for polluting the air and as a result people end up suffering from respiratory problems. Incinerators are known to trigger cancer due to the chemicals that are emitted. They also compete with Zero Waste/recycling projects because they are hungry machines that require that a high level of heat – and therefore lots of waste – be maintained for proper functioning. Communities have battled incinerators in various countries.

The winelands district needs to stand up and protect their future, otherwise the incinerator will not only steal their future but also that of future generations. This has been resisted in places like Tshwane, where an incinerator was also proposed by a private company.

South Africa will be municipal waste incinerator free because people know their rights and they will not just go down without a fight. ✖



Gasdown Frackdown

by Samara Govender

My internship experience in helping groundWork as it hosted the 4th National Gasdown Frackdown Gathering

In September 2012, the South African government lifted the moratorium on fracking in the country. The decision meant that energy companies now have the liberty to proceed with oil and gas exploration. Every year for the past six years, an average of four to six whales have washed up along KZN's coastline. Studies show that one of the leading causes of death were seismic surveys done during oil and gas exploration.

Exactly what is fracking? From a long, miserable semester of Geology 101, I have learned that fracking is a process of drilling and injecting fluids or even gas into the ground at high pressure in

order to fracture rocks to release the gas inside. As a student at university, learning the definition was easy; understanding the definition was avoided. I did not know the severe impacts that fracking has on the environment and human life, or that various community groups, NGOs, faith leaders, traditional leaders and private individuals from across the world have been fighting an ongoing battle against fracking for years now. I would soon learn this at groundWork.

My internship at groundWork began on the 1st of September 2018. The main reason I came on as

an intern was to assist with the planning of the National Gasdown Frackdown Gathering (NGFG).

The NGFG was the 4th national gathering that has been held so far. The objective of these gatherings is to build on the resistance to fracking that already exists.

The three-day agenda was packed with strategic group discussions, informative presentations, open dialogues, protest action – and let's not forget the delicious Durban cuisine.

Day One : The National Gasdown Frackdown Gathering clashes with the Public Participation Meeting hosted by ENI and Sasol.

It was mere coincidence that ENI and Sasol decided to host their public participation meeting for the proposed offshore oil and gas exploration drilling off the East Coast of South Africa on the same day as the National Gasdown Frackdown Gathering. This offered an opportunity to attend as a crowd and voice our opinions: opinions that were clearly stated on the t-shirts that we wore – 'NO OIL & GAS', 'STOP ENI' and 'STOP SASOL'. Although it was one of the most liberating experiences in my life, I walked out of the meeting despondent and angry at the lack of interest and acknowledgement ENI and Sasol showed to the people whose land they wanted to drill for oil and gas.

Days Two and Three

Day two and three were designated for strategic planning. As a collective, we reflected on issues and topics that will help us determine the way forward regarding the current and future proposed applications for oil and gas exploration.

We reflected on the fracking ban victories achieved across the world and it was evident that we were not alone. People across the world have joined together to fight against oil and gas exploration. We tackled topics such as Operation Phakisa, the Blue Economy, Export Credit Agency and lastly the possibilities of changing to renewable energy.

Conclusion

As a collaboration we decided that, in order to achieve an egalitarian society, we will have to live in harmony with each other and the earth. We will have to continue the fight for an open democracy and move to a just transition. And lastly we say, "No more," to fossil fuel exploration; coal mines, oil wells and gas wells; and associated development such as pipelines, refineries and coal power stations. ✕

Community activists attending the national Gasdown Frackdown gathering in Durban.
Credit groundWork



Parliamentary Hearings on IRP

by Tsepang Molefe

"It cannot be that the public hearings on the draft Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) 2018 are held in Cape Town. These hearings need to go to priority areas, where communities are affected by coal mining." – Zethu Hlatshwayo

Introduction

I have not an inch of doubt in my mind that the late Zulu raconteur Dr. Thokozani Nene would have long ago coined a Zulu term for the Integrated Resource Plan given the great significance it represents in the lives of all who live within South Africa's borders. Dr Nene is credited with the invention of a number of Zulu words that form part of modern society today, including "Inculazi" (AIDS).

What is the IRP?

The Integrated Resource Plan is a tool and a roadmap. It is a plan that is supposed to map out the most effective and efficient way of providing

energy. Sometimes referred to as a 'Living Plan', it is the official government policy that guides our energy planning and decision making up until 2030.

How does it affect you and what does it mean for ordinary citizens?

The IRP speaks to how we as a nation source, produce and consume energy. It breaks down and divides all the sources that are planned to supply our energy needs. It also estimates the costs associated with each source of energy. This means it has direct socioeconomic impacts.

Integrated Resource Plan: Public Hearings

Along with other NGOs and community based organizations (CBOs), groundWork was invited to make oral submissions on the proposed draft IRP. The hearings were held in parliament, in Cape Town, on the 22nd of October 2018. There were a number of community organizations that were represented at the meeting. The Department of Energy (DOE) was led by its Director General, Mr Thabane Zulu. Energy expert, Professor Anton Eberhard from the University of Cape Town Business School, as well as representatives from Nersa and Eskom, were also present at the meeting.

In a fully-packed room, director of groundWork Bobby Peek presented groundWork's submission. He commenced by acknowledging the presence of, and congratulating, Liz McDaid and Makoma Lekalakala, who both received the prestigious international Goldman Environmental Prize. groundWork allocated some of its time to raise issues related to health impacts and Bobby introduced Mr James Irlam, UCT Environmental Health senior lecturer representing PHASA (Public Health Association of South Africa).

Groundwork said that another IRP was necessary for a just transition, and cited the following reasons:

- the upholding of people's constitutional rights
- clean up air pollution
- avoiding the catastrophic climate change implications
- avoiding (state) bankruptcy.

groundWork also used the opportunity to launch its report titled *Coal Kills*. The report is a consolidations of key pieces of research on the impact of coal and copies were distributed to all present.

groundWork was also joined at the IRP Hearings by community people who are affected by coal developments. Community members from Ermelo, representing the Khuthala Environmental Care Group; from south Durban, representing the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance; and from the Vaal Triangle, representing the Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance, presented their everyday struggles. The affected people testified about the impact of dirty energy to their health, their air, their lands, their water and the fact that coal-based energy is too expensive for the more than half of South Africans who live in poverty.

"The committee should come and visit Ermelo where I come from. It is an area which has Eskom's coal-fired power stations. Sasol is there. We also have a timber factory but the tallest building in our area is only three metres high. We are underdeveloped and poor but we are rich in minerals. We are not employable because we fail health tests because of environmental effects as a result of the coal in Ermelo, and the conditions we live in," said Zethu Hlatshwayo from the Khuthala Environmental Care Group.

A community member said that the public hearings should go to the various provinces in areas that are highly affected by carbon emissions. David from the Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance in Sebekong said he came to represent the four million people of his community, especially young people who are medically unfit because of carbon emissions. The public participation process should not take place in Cape Town where there is clean air, he said.



Sherelee Odayar from SDCEA comments in parliament during hearings on energy and the IRP. Credit groundWork

Conclusion

One of the low points of the hearings was that the MPs, those who chose to attend, showed little interest in engaging with the information that was delivered by civil society. Throughout the session concerns were raised about the process of engaging with ordinary citizens in terms of accessibility and the openness of the entire process.

There was a consistent thread of concern around the continued use of coal and other fossil fuels in the draft IRP and the impacts on the environment. Most asked that coal and nuclear options be removed from the IRP and that a new IRP be developed that excluded these. The preference was for renewable energy. There was also criticism over the lack of concern by government about the impact on the lives of ordinary people and communities that the draft IRP would cause in terms of physical health, accessibility to energy and the affordability of electricity. ✕

Neville van Rooy from the Support Center for Land Change speaks during Parliamentary hearings on the energy mix. Credit groundWork



My experience at groundWork

by Lusanda Majola

Fighting for and saving the environment is not a big and complicated thing to do. You do not have to have all the money in the world to make a difference because doing something as simple as educating people about why it is important to save our planet can make a huge difference.

After a long time applying for jobs, getting a call to come and join the groundWork team as one of their interns was the highlight of my year. Graduating and joining the real world as an independent adult is a dream when you are still a university student, but facing the reality of job hunting and unemployment can be depressing.

It is still hard to believe that I am an intern at one of the best environmental NGOs. My family is also still in disbelief.

My first day was the hardest day as I went to work expecting to be in a tense and serious environment, where it is all about work and meeting deadlines. groundWork is all about work and meeting deadlines, because people's lives depend on our work, but what I did not expect is the family I became part of from day one. The staff is welcoming and they are there to lead and guide me through the hardships and help me overcome the challenges, not only work related but in my personal life as well.

Securing a job that is related to your field of study is difficult in our country, given the high unemployment rate, and I am grateful for the opportunity I got. Working for groundWork reminded me why I chose to do environmental related studies in the first place. One of the reasons why I love what I do is because we are working towards giving people the life they deserve and the life that they were promised by our government. Environmental rights are overlooked, especially in the rural communities, so helping people

realize their rights and fighting for environmental justice makes waking up in the morning worth it. Environmental Justice is important, especially in developing countries like South Africa, as it ensures that the people's rights are not violated.

Working for groundWork made me realize that the environmental justice movement goes way beyond just the issues of inappropriate waste disposal, but is also about the issues of public health, worker safety, land use, transportation, resource allocation and community empowerment. When the South African government adopted the concept of environmental justice it was as a way of rectifying the past wrongs and injustices that were done in the past, but the NGOs like groundWork are here to make sure that what is written in the constitution is what is done when it comes to the environment.

Working for groundWork has exposed me to many different things. I once attended one of the meetings that was held in Johannesburg. In this meeting I had a chance to meet some of the people whom groundWork helps, the waste pickers, and this motivated me as I realized that the work I do in the office really helps the people in different communities around South Africa.

I also saw that it is not easy dealing with different people but the groundWork staff makes it look easy because they love what they do and they are all about fighting with the people and letting them know that they have a say in what needs to be done and also that they can voice what they do not feel works for them to their municipalities and also to the government.

At groundWork, being an intern is rewarding because you are treated as one of the team members and you get to do the work they do. This is very helpful as it will help me with relevant experience that I will take out and use in future.

One of the things I will take from this experience is that fighting for people's environmental rights is not only for their benefit but is for you as well, because you are helping people get a clean and healthy environment and are also saving the environment and preserving it for future generations. I have also learned that fighting for and saving the environment is not a big and complicated thing to do. You do not have to have all the money in the world to make

a difference because doing something as simple as educating people about why it is important to save our planet can make a huge difference.

I will miss waking up to work with a team that is driven and will do anything to help the communities get environmental justice. The life lesson that I got out of working for groundWork is that when you are given an opportunity you need to use it and make the best out of the situation.

groundWork also shifted my mindset. From now on I don't want to protect the environment. Instead, I want to create an environment that does not need to be protected. X



The
groundWork
team.
Credit
groundWork



Debunking the “clean coal” myth

The death of coal is unavoidable, but those with vested interest in the coal industry have conjured something they call “Clean Coal” to prolong governments’ dependence on coal for producing energy. However, the truth is there is no such thing as “clean coal”. A complete overview of the coal value chain – which includes mining, production, supply, and disposal – proves that “clean coal” is

impossible. There are no effective solutions to deal with the dire environmental, health and climate change impacts caused by coal.

Available now: <https://lifeaftercoal.org.za/media/new-report-why-there-is-no-such-thing-as-clean-coal>

