

LOSS OF LIVELIHOODS
RESOURCE CONFLICT
TIME IS RUNNING OUT
FLOODING & DESERTIFICATION
LOSS OF LIFE
350ppm
LOSS OF LAND
400ppm
LOSS OF ECO-SYSTEMS
450ppm
TIME IS RUNNING OUT

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, Air Quality, Waste and Environmental Health.

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Climate change has become a living reality as we reached the 400 ppm CO₂ threshold level in May.

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From the Smoke Stack



Photo by FoE

by groundWork Director, Bobby Peek

Dear Friends

We have crossed the 400 ppm CO₂ level threshold and we are living in the reality! It is not in the future – it is now!

I spent the last week before my sabbatical in Germany, with the Committee on Southern Africa – which was the old anti-apartheid movement – trying to make sense of how Germany's decision to stop mining coal in 2018 is going to impact on the extraction of coal from the global South. Coal is synonymous with climate change, and the month of June was catastrophic for the world, as Germany's transport system ground to a halt and then ran perpetually late because of flooding, which resulted in more than 45 000 people being asked to leave their homes – and some being forcefully evacuated by the authorities. The photos streaming from the world media resembled a flooded Mozambique – you just saw water. The only difference was that at times you saw the roofs of large submerged mansions. Just across the border, in Switzerland, extreme weather dumped huge amounts of hail – resembling a winter snow – on Geneva, with winds in excess of 130 kilometres per hour, which is associated with hurricanes. In Alberta, Canada, storms in June displaced more than 100 000 people as people here experienced the worst flooding ever.

The global South also suffered from flooding during this period. Unlike the few deaths that occurred in Canada, suffering was more intense in India where they experienced their heaviest rainfall to date. With their disaster management response teams not expecting this, more than 800 people have died, with authorities indicating that the death

toll could rise beyond 10 000 people as they find bodies in rivers and under landslides in the state of Uttarakhand. It is clear that, in the South, the ravages of climate change are going to be very much more painful than in the North.

It is clear from the evidence at hand, that the world's governments are failing their citizens as they continue to shift the chairs on the Titanic at the UN negotiations on climate change. Even one of South Africa's key negotiators at the UN, Dr Debra Roberts, has laughed off the negotiations as she recently pronounced that it is a system of spin more than anything else. Coming from one of the chief negotiators on the South Africa delegation, this is a wake-up call for all of us. Dr Roberts is never one to mince her words.

Based upon this reality, Megan's involvement in the Global Power Shift, where more than 500 people from around the world met in June in Istanbul to work on local strategies to resist climate change, is important because it is at the local level that effective resistance to climate change is going to take place. Stopping the mining of coal and coal-fired power stations in Germany, halting exports from the mines in South Africa, stopping the drilling of oil in the Niger and the fracking of gas in the Karoo – this is where real, meaningful action is taking place, not in the global fancy halls of power, where all is talk and no action.

But taking action against coal is not going to be easy.

Eskom, in its arrogance, has decided to ask to be exempt from meeting air pollution emission standards for power plants, including the new



Medupi. This is strange, for Medupi was to be a world-class facility, funded by the World Bank, meeting the best standards. Yet here we are, faced with a situation where even Eskom's new stations cannot meet the very weak South African standards. In this case it is clear that government understands coal to be more important than peoples' health; coal that benefits multi-nationals, rather than the people who need electricity to ensure their lives are healthy. This announcement came after they ignored a multi-stakeholder negotiation on how to work on new air pollution standards for South Africa, a negotiation that was called for by the Portfolio Committee on Water and Environmental Affairs, after the Section 21 emission standards came to parliament and the Committee saw that it was poorly negotiated and constructed.

Government will place, and is already placing, barriers in society's way to make sure that their grip on coal is not loosened. In April, parliament passed the Protection of State Information Bill (aka The Secrecy Bill) which will limit the information people will be able to access. This Bill, if signed into law, will no doubt result in information on coal developments being withheld by government. Couple this with Minister of State Enterprises, Gigabe's, "Strategic Infrastructure Projects", and much is going to be for the "national good" and local community people are going to be shafted. Will the Bill stand the rigours of the Constitutional Court? This is yet to be decided upon. As Zapiro so eloquently put in one of his May cartoons, we would not have known of C.A.R. Gate, Nkandlagate and Guptagate if the Secrecy Bill had been in place. We would probably not have known of Marikana if the Bill was in place. The Bill takes us back to a place many of us dreaded, a place we should not venture back to.

Talking of Gupta! If the Gupta family was allowed to take over places of national security, what does this mean for South Africa, as many other foreign companies seek to exploit the resources of Africa? Will they also be given the red carpet treatment to come in and take what they want? No doubt they would and if concern is shown by the public and it becomes uncomfortable for government they will blame some lowly officer in government – or use the Secrecy Bill to block out any information.

Sadly, during these last few months, the South African government was caught up in a political faux pas, when, back in mid-April, the South African government wanted to posthumously honour Forbes Burnham with the prestigious Oliver Tambo Award. Controversially, Burnham was fingered in the murder of Dr Walter Rodney, renowned historian and political activist who strengthened the narrative of the under-development of Africa by Europe. The 13th of June was the 33rd anniversary of his death. The South African government backed down after international pressure – and deferred the award to a future date. It is unconceivable that the South African government would consider honouring Burnham, for Rodney is key in ensuring that Africans themselves fight their way out of years of imperialism. Something that is ever so critical as we challenge the BRICS.

The heat is on in terms of fracking in the Karoo. Jonathan Deal of the Treasure the Karoo Action Group received the Goldman Award for his work on highlighting the plight of the Karoo. The Southern Cape Land Committee (SCLC) has, with its extensive network of farm workers, small farmers and the very many unemployed people in the Karoo, taken on the challenge of fracking to ensure that local people have a clear understanding of the realities around fracking and what it would mean for the people of the Karoo. A small gathering in Steytlerville, called by SCLC, brought together social justice activists from across South Africa with local people from the Karoo and over two days people spoke about what they understand of and fear from fracking in the Karoo.

We have a great battle ahead of us – coal, fracking, off-shore oil and gas drilling and new coal-to-liquid facilities are all issues with which we have to do battle. Will Obama's Power Africa mean decentralised energy for the people of Africa, or will it be big energy for multinationals for northern needs?

Finally, the 1st of June was groundWork's fourteenth birthday. A big thank you to all of you out there who have supported our work for so long!

Till next time! ✂



2018 and beyond

by Bobby Peek

It is all very well for Germany to have decided that there will be no more coal mining in that country after 2018, but are they merely transferring the burdens elsewhere?

The year 2018 will mark a milestone for one of the world's largest economies. This economy is Germany. Reliant on coal since the beginning of the industrial revolution, the German government has taken a decision that it will not mine coal after 2018. Whatever the reasons, be they political pressure, costs, environmental or health challenges, Germany has made this decision. Sadly, however, this does not mean Germany will not use coal. After 2018 it will seek to import all its coal. Already, Germany is a large importer of coal from Columbia, South Africa and Russia. The United States is also a source for their coal, which comes from the mountain tops of West Virginia. The US coal is available because community people and NGOs in the US have stymied coal as a fuel source for the power stations – alongside a growing gas fracking industry, which is also being challenged.

It was with this as the background that groundWork was invited to Germany by the German association Koordination Südliches Afrika (KOSA), a nationwide affiliation of organizations, groups and individuals involved in development policy, working in Germany on Southern Africa. Since the end of August 2001, KOSA has also been the successor to the association Afrika-Süd Aktionsbündnis (Alliance for action on Southern Africa), the former anti-apartheid movement in Germany. Recently, KOSA has focused on the economic relations between the region of Southern Africa and the European Union, with a focus on the "Economic Partnership Agreements" between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States. It is within this context that KOSA views the challenges of coal. While 2018 might to some extent be celebrated in Germany, it will mean further suffering



Meeting in Germany to discuss the coal and energy links between South Africa and Germany.

From left: Silke Hemke, Monika Niemeyer, Jochen Henke, Bobby Peek and Sabine Washof.

Credit: Silke Hemke



for the people living next to the coal mines in the countries they source their coal from.

The main aim of the invitation was to participate in a two-day gathering, together with fellow organisations from South Africa – 90 by 2030 and the University of the Western Cape's Department of Women and Gender Studies – and the German organisations of Urgewald, BUND (Friends of the Earth Germany), Klima Allianz, Bread for the World and Misereor, to mention a few. We gathered to consider the South African and German experience of coal, under the theme "Coal into the Future: South Africa, climate change and Germany". Sadly, the South African Embassy was to participate in the meeting, but the week before the meeting they decided to withdraw, because the German representing the South African Consulate – a fossil fuel gas businessman – was uncomfortable with the questions on coal's future. If this is disrespect government and industry is showing in dealing with the immense challenge of coal and climate change, as society we are clear that their commitment to coal is an agenda that is leading us down a one-way dead-end road.

The two-day conference was preceded by a funders' meeting, a public meeting in Berlin. But the most exciting part of the week was visiting one of the BUND local groups in the small town of Stade, outside Hamburg, where local people are challenging the development of a coal-fired power station to provide power to the local Dow plant, which is the main employer in the small town. Here I was hosted by Silke. The local people do not want the plant, and believe that there are alternative ways for Dow to get energy. Riding on a bicycle to the local council, to the meeting, where there were about thirty people, with the vast majority of them over the age of sixty, was indeed an experience. The participants in the meeting were clear about their understanding of the challenge of coal from a perspective of social impact and consumerism. The debate was in line with those we have back in South Africa with people in coal-affected communities. Here in Stade, people understood the global context, and it was not a debate about "not in my backyard". A great solidarity between the struggles against coal-fired power stations in the North and those living next to coal mines in the

South potentially exists through this. So, post-2018 could spell a change for all – both in Germany and in South Africa – if this solidarity is fostered.

But it is not going to be all smooth sailing. Strangely, in Germany's coal heartland, in North Rhine-Westphalia, the regional government, together with some business and NGOs, are starting to develop a relationship with the Mpumalanga province, under the title of the Mpumalanga Forum. It is still not 100% clear what the aim of this relationship is – not only to us, but also to those involved. Will this relationship foster the continual exploitation of coal, and secure coal after 2018? Or will this relationship steer Mpumalanga in the direction of where Germany is now, where the old Zollverein coal mine, closed only in 1986, has already been declared a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) site. Clearly, there are no burning coal shafts or coal ash waste sites, nor continual water pollution, nor air pollution that make the essential process of breathing a deadly pursuit. Germany has managed to change, but will the Mpumalanga Forum get to foster a change for the better in Mpumalanga? We met with the State Chancellery of North Rhine-Westphalia, and it seemed positive. I also met with the German Green Party national member, Ute Koczy, spokeswoman for Development Politics, to try to understand how Germany could move to a society dependent on 100% renewable energy, and this alternative voice in government does allow for some possibility in the future.

Finally, while I was in Germany there was clear evidence of what the chaos of a climate-impacted situation could be. Floods, a disrupted public transport system and soaring temperatures on the other side of 30 degrees Celsius. The need to take action is more evident daily. After the two-day conference, KOSA, together with various NGOs from Germany, adopted a resolution to work further on the challenges of coal, climate, South Africa and Germany.

What will happen after 2018 is unclear as yet. But indeed there is a potential to make a difference! Whether the German government will be bold enough to make a difference and set the pace for the rest of the world, is left to be seen. ✕



Walking on caves of fire

by Nnimmo Bassey

On a recent tour of mines in Mpumalanga, the terrible realities of coal mining came as a shock to even a hardened activist

Mining always leaves its footprints on both the sands of time and the lives of people. You may think you have seen it all – especially if you have seen or have lived in the horrors of oil activities in the Niger Delta. I thought so too, particularly because I have devoted at least two decades of my life in persistent pursuit of polluted lands (at home and abroad), searching for ways to comprehend the great harm generated by extractive activities.

Some of the places that have left deep impressions in my heart are documented in my book *Oilwatching in South America - or, Guana Guara, Mudfish out of Water: A pollution tour Of Venezuela, Curaçao, Peru and Ecuador*. This book is more or less the diary of a pollution tour of these countries carried out in 1997 under the auspices of Oilwatch International. Others can be found in *To Cook a Continent: Destructive Extraction and Climate Impacts on Africa*.

After many years of following the heavy pollution of communities in south Durban in South Africa, and with keen ears for developments related to proposed fracking in the Karoo, I was still not prepared for the level of impacts from mining in Witbank, Old Coronation mine and other Highveld communities, which I visited recently. This field trip was organised by groundWork as a prelude to the Oilwatch Africa conference that was held in Midrand in mid-May 2013. In the group were activists from eleven African countries.

The field trip was in Mpumalanga Province, where visiting the mines has literally turned into walking in minefields! No, we did not rush to the mines. Our first port of call was the offices of the South African Green Revolutionary Council (SAGRC) in Witbank. It was early in the morning, but the comrades were already waiting to receive us. Led



A mound of waste from a nearby coal mine in the Highveld
Credit: Nnimmo Bassey

by Matthews Hlabane, we were quickly given a short introduction to Witbank.

Mining started here in 1896 and with it began a reign of land grabbing and pollution. From the 1950s, the environmental problems began to intensify and were glaring and undeniable. Acid mine drainage polluted the water and coal dust took over the air. With these contaminants it was not a surprise that the locals began to suffer from headaches, dizziness, kidney failures and other diseases.

We were informed that there are eight coal-fired plants in Witbank and up to 700 mines from where coal and platinum are dug. But that is not all as there is a pile of 5 000 applications for mining permits,



with many of them “linked to the ruling party”, we were told. Overall, there are 6 000 abandoned mines in the country and among these are the many abandoned coal mines of the Highveld.

Regrettably, there have been no direct gains to the community, even though so much “wealth” has been excavated from beneath their feet. The coal extracted here is used for electricity generation and for export. The level of contamination here is so high that an estimated 30 billion Rand will be needed for environmental rehabilitation. We were told of sinkholes, unstable ground and the impacts on biodiversity.

Our visit took us to the abandoned Transvaal and Delagoa Bay Mine. On arrival, we were greeted by a mountain range of various wastes and polluted water seeping from the tremendous pile. Walking in this field requires extreme caution. We had to go in single file, trusting that our guide knew upon which spot to tread and what could be considered as safe ground. We were bemused and some thought it was preposterous for anyone to insist that we could not walk where we pleased. Soon enough we all saw why rebellion was not a good option here. There were cracks in the ground best picked out by trained eyes.

We soon knew we were on the devil’s territory when we began to smell sulphur. And then we saw heat waves simmering from holes ahead of us. The smell got stronger as we moved nearer. We were walking over caves of fire. A once luscious land was now 880 hectares of hell!

We were told of, and were shown, sinkholes scattered in the fields. Any place could crack up at any time, and a yelp may be the only goodbye to be heard before the victim disappeared into the netherworld. These mines are located between two townships and kids and others traverse these burning mines daily, either to school or to work. Some kids are said to have fallen into these sinkholes. And someone hazarded that criminals may also have used these burning pits as convenient places to bury their crimes.

Spontaneous fires started in the mines in the 1930s and they were eventually closed in the 1950s. Interesting. It is said that the fires in the mines were burning both the roof-supporting pillars and

the roofs themselves. We guess that before the mines were closed, perhaps while one portion of the mine was burning, miners were pressed to keep digging at other parts. That can be understood in an apartheid context. But why are the flames not extinguished and the land remediated today?

Our friends told us that, because of a lack of adequate public response to their complaints about the air quality and other pollutants, they have had to train themselves on how to do this for themselves. In fact, we were told of occasions when officials brought testing equipment and the community folks were the ones who showed the officials how the equipment was operated. Talk about community empowerment! Tests show that some of the water bodies here are either very acidic or highly alkaline.

Leaving the field of horror, we passed by the VANCHEM Ltd factory. Our comrades asked us to look up at the sky. Thick smoke bellowed from the stacks. That was not surprising. But they asked us to note that no birds were flying in the area. Well, that was true. “They simply die if they try,” we were told. Okay. Get me out of here!

We were told that to keep healthy, workers in this factory are compelled to drink milk every day. I could not laugh. I have personally heard, at an environmental health workers’ workshop for oil company workers (machine operators) in Nigeria, that workers are urged to drink milk as a way of keeping their bodies purified of pollutants. This myth has also been heard of in India. Workers are kept in the dark hope that milk eliminates the impacts of pollution. See my 2010 article titled *The ‘Milking’ of Oil Workers* for more about this and other cynical actions of corporations.

Our next port of call was the Old Coronation Township sitting on Old Coronation coal mines. The ground here is very unstable. We were taken to a huge pit into which a preschool disappeared after the ground gave way in 2012. Sinkholes started happening here more than five decades ago.

Many residents of this township “mine” coal in huge waste heaps in the neighbourhood. Stories abound of kids and women who have met their death here, when the pile of waste collapsed on



them as they dug for the carbon needed for cooking and for heating their shacks.

It was one story of woe after another. We saw women and kids digging for the occasional lump of coal. We heard of resource and job opportunity conflicts with migrant workers from the SADC (Southern Africa Development Community) region. We saw extensive acid/water ponds – devoid of life, as expected.

"The graves in the Highveld are full," one comrade tells us. "If you live here and drink the water, there is a 70% chance you will end up with liver problems." Sadly, kids sometimes swim in the warm ponds and there is a chance that they gulp in the lethal water. There is a high incidence of sinus, asthma, tuberculosis and other diseases.

"The doctors work with the mines and the mines work with the government. The people are left to fall through the cracks. The Highveld is a compost heap," another comrade insists.

We were thoroughly depressed at this point. Getting to watch a youth drama perform was hopefully going to be a relief. Soon we were gathered in a community hall built and donated by a mining company! Speeches and tales of woe from various cities, townships and communities over,

the Mpumalanga Youth Against Climate Change drama group took centre stage.

The acting was excellent and the story line and message were clear and direct. Global warming was better termed "global burning" and humans were shown as anointed to be the most foolish species on earth. The youngsters declared, "our governments have failed us, but we will not fail ourselves".

As we left these heavily polluted communities, Comrade Matthew declared that Witbank is the most polluted city in the world. A Nigerian comrade retorted that the Niger Delta was the most polluted region on earth. An argument ensued, but it was happily settled that one was a city and the other a region. But really, it would be better to be arguing about which is the cleanest and safest place to be in, not which is most debased by capital. Will either of these places ever return to health? ✕

This article was first published on the 21st of May 2013 on the blog Nnimmo's Reflections (Oil Politics) www.nnimmo.blogspot.com.

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Operations at a coal mine in the Highveld

*Credit:
<http://www.southafrica.to/provinces/Mpumalanga/economy.php>*



Reflections on EJ politics in Africa

by Friends of the Earth Africa

Friends of the Earth Africa (FoEA), is the collective voice of the African members of Friends of the Earth International (FoEI), the world's largest grassroots environmental network, uniting seventy-four national member groups, with over two million members and supporters around the world. We campaign on today's most urgent environmental and social issues, challenging the current model of economic and corporate globalization, and promoting solutions that will help to create environmentally sustainable and socially just societies.

We, the representatives of FoEA from fourteen member groups, met in Midrand, South Africa, from the 7th to the 10th of May 2013.

We discussed, interrogated and agreed that the political context in which we operate is one where:

- African governments are interested in money from large transnational corporations and not in their people;
- Transnational corporations have colonial roots and still replicate the same tendencies of the colonial and imperialist past;
- Our governments are serving transnational corporations while closing down the space for civil society to engage democratically with the political representatives;
- Civil society faces accusations of being anti-development or seeking to destabilise their countries when they call for alternative development approaches embedded in democratic practice;
- Our solidarity with our fellow Africans is made illegal by our governments when we want to work with and support those communities suffering in places where resources are extracted, such as in Mozambique and Uganda;
- Peoples' revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt have been interrupted by a new elite and there is essentially no change, the struggle that has led to the revolutions having been "managed" and

*Friends of the
Earth Africa
AGM in
Midrand, South
Africa*

*Credit: Friends
of the Earth
AFrica*



weakened by the new elite, who continue their relationship with transnational corporations to exhaust Africa's natural resources, and make African people poorer;

- We, as African civil society, need to vigorously question and contest the concept of development and what it means to Africans; and
- Brazil, Russia, India and China, which stood up and supported our liberation struggles against colonialism and apartheid, are engaging with African development using the same paradigm as those of the colonialists, which was based on extracting Africa's resources for development elsewhere. This new global political alignment, joined by South Africa – known as the BRICS – must be challenged.

Further,

- Noting the unfortunate situation whereby rich industrialised nations devise programmes such as REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation), through which they seek to buy the right to keep polluting while locking up forests in Africa as carbon sinks;
- Recognising that REDD promotes land grabs and constitutes a new form of colonialism, and does not reduce emissions but defers or relocates deforestation; and
- Keeping in mind that African governments have a duty to protect our forests from degradation and deforestation, as well as protect the rights of forest communities to land and resource ownership/management rights;

FoE Africa resolves to engage with the NO REDD in Africa Network (NRAN) – a platform of African civil society organizations, movements, activists and individuals that opposes all kinds of REDD and which was founded during the World Social Forum held in Tunis, Tunisia, in March 2013 as a mechanism to oppose continued operations of polluting industries in developed countries. FoE Africa also resolves to support communities to protect and manage their forests as part of sound environmental management.

Further,

- Keeping in mind that much of the mining going on in Africa is not only promoted by the huge demand for minerals but also by speculation by large scale miners;
- Taking note of the harmful impacts of mining in Africa and the large-scale displacement of communities and the attending pollutions and violence against our peoples; and
- Noting the disregard that mining has for sacred and protected lands on our continent;

FoE Africa believes that the time is right to demand a swift and just transition from large-scale and needless mining and resolves to engage with the Yes to Life – No to Mining Network.

We agreed that what is required is to change the system by:

- Recognising and articulating that capitalism equals endless consumption, endless growth, and the market is a tool for this, re-inventing itself to continue accumulating by establishing different ways of ensuring accumulation for the elite, and impoverishment for the people;
- Recognising and demonstrating that people can live well outside of a system of elite accumulation and over consumption;
- Promoting nature's intrinsic value and opposing the placing of a monetary value on nature which is equal to commodification. Monetary value as incentive for environmental protection locks in the market mindset and promotes rapacious consumption and destruction;
- Promoting community land ownership and noting that it is a disadvantage for communities to have no ownership rights over the land they occupy; and
- Acknowledging that reform is the agenda of the oppressor and exploiter and that we reject concepts like sustainable mining and corporate social responsibility which do not challenge the system, but rather the symptoms of the system.

In light of this, we will continue to deepen our organising, resistance, mobilising and our work towards transforming society. ✕



Don't frack with the Karoo

by Angela Conway, Director of Southern Cape Land Committee

The 19th of June 2013 marks the centenary of the promulgation of the infamous Native Land Act which resulted in 20% of the population owning 80% of the land. One hundred years later and nearly twenty years into democracy, skewed patterns of ownership and insecure tenure continue, compounding the high levels of poverty, unemployment and food insecurity in rural areas. The conversation of agricultural land for elite developments and extractive industry flies in the face of agrarian transformation.

Against this background, a group of concerned citizens, academics, civil society organizations and local farm workers and small-scale farmers took part in a dialogue on fracking held in the Karoo town of Steylerville on the 22nd and 23rd of May and issued the following statement:

Several transnational corporations, including Shell, Falcon and Bundu, propose using hydraulic fracturing (or fracking) to extract methane gas from shale rock deep beneath the Karoo. Commercial-scale fracking has so far proved viable only in the USA, where it has polluted the land, the groundwater and the air and so damaged people's health and their existing livelihoods.

Mindful of this destruction, we gathered in Steylerville for a dialogue of people who live in the Karoo and concerned organizations from throughout South Africa on a transformative agenda in response to the proposals for fracking. The objectives of the discussions were:

- To strengthen the voice of local communities who will bear the brunt of the impact of fracking on their health and environments (especially the Karoo's precious water), and will face job losses, social dislocation, further food insecurity and a destruction of the sense of place which the people of the Karoo value.
- To develop a co-ordinated fracking response with a transformative agenda, raising issues

of economic, social and environmental transformation.

- To link with other national and international initiatives aimed at mobilizing and strengthening the voice of people whose lives are impacted upon by mining, oil and gas.

We believe struggle has to be led and organized by those who are suffering the negative consequences of neo-liberal policies and practices. Those that are in solidarity and support the struggle for a Karoo that provides for the poor must recognize that the organizing starts where people are.

We believe that our concerns about fracking for gas in the Karoo are similar to the concerns that give rise to the struggles of local people in the Karoo relating to: agrarian transformation; unemployment and decent jobs; the lack of decent levels of affordable basic services and infrastructure; and the inability of local people to access, at minimum, the basic goods of human life, starting with the most basic levels of goods like nutritious food and safe and comfortable accommodation.

We recognise that, as people of the Karoo, we are connected to the world by the global crisis we face on the destruction of nature, the failing economic system and an ever more ruthless system of capital accumulation that dehumanises peoples' labour.

Our struggle in the Karoo is embedded in responding to three challenges: ensuring an agro-ecology based on agrarian reform and food sovereignty; securing the Karoo's scarce water resources; and ensuring that people have a direct say in how energy is produced and used in the Karoo through the approach of energy sovereignty.

We believe the above approach will allow us as the people of the Karoo to develop a meaningful and locally based response to the proposed fracking for gas in the Karoo, and will ensure that we have a clean healthy environment – where people live and work, nurtured by the very way in which people live and work. ✕



R12 million+ invested in SAWPA

by Musa Chamane

Supported by groundWork and Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO), most main cities and many small towns in South Africa have been visited by leaders from the South African Waste Pickers' Association (SAWPA). The purpose of the visits was to make sure that SAWPA is known by every waste picker in South Africa and to emphasize the importance of organizing towards cooperatives.

SAWPA's draft constitution, code of conduct for members and an organizing toolkit were given to waste pickers on each landfill, to encourage waste pickers to organize. Visiting waste landfills was the main focus, but there are a few street waste pickers that we have met with in places such as Khayelitsha. This article is about our visits to the very many waste landfill sites that we undertook from January to May, and the conversations we had with waste pickers.

Sixty-two landfills have been visited during the visits and we have met with approximately 15 000 waste pickers in both landfills and on the streets. The Gauteng province has the most waste pickers on both landfills and streets. This is due to economic activities in Gauteng; recycling industries are mostly based in this province. Northern Cape is the province with the smallest number of waste pickers. The province is mainly rural and it is far away from the markets. As a result, there are few opportunities for waste pickers who work on waste landfills.

Western Cape Province has the highest domestic waste recycling rates in South Africa, with a number of functional recycling depots. This province is dominated by buy-back centres, with mega materials recovery facilities (MRF) such as Kraaifontein and Athlone. This makes it a leader in terms of waste management in the country. There are few landfills in the country that are managed better than those in the Western Cape. Western Cape has the highest number of highly educated people in South Africa, so it therefore makes sense that they are leading in terms of waste management in the country. Other provinces have got a lot to learn from this province.

There are challenges which the Western Cape, as a province, faces, just as in other provinces, but initiatives such as MRF and buy-back centres make waste management much easier.

Eastern Cape is far behind in comparison to other provinces. The waste landfill sites are more like dumping sites. They are waste landfills that are regularly on fire. Minimum requirements for waste landfill management are contravened because there is no daily compacting or covering of waste materials at most waste landfills in this province. The waste landfill in King Williams Town was on fire for weeks during the month of March 2013. This was due to methane gas that comes from the decomposition of waste. The town has been struggling to stop the fires that started as a result of poor waste management practices.

Despite all the negatives mentioned above, there are nevertheless positives that are coming from landfills. In places such as Mooi River, a labour intensive MRF is in existence and a cooperative with ten members is in operation. In Pietermaritzburg too, a cooperative with seventy-four members is in existence. Gauteng, Mooi River, Amathole District (Eastern Cape, near Butterworth) and Garankuwa have functional MRFs operated by waste pickers. Pietermaritzburg and Sasolburg both are about to start MRF construction to be operated by waste pickers. A total of more than twelve million Rand has been invested in SAWPA projects in different regions by government, NGO and industry.

Provinces with limited economic activities, such as North West, Mpumalanga and Limpopo, have a smaller number of waste pickers. The smaller number is influenced by a lack of market access. The recyclables have less value. What we have learned is that the smaller the town is, the more likely it is that a dumping site exists to dispose of all waste types without considering the legislation. In these provinces, which are mostly rural with limited economic activity, waste recovery is not yet practised enough. This is a shame, as formalised waste recycling in South Africa has a huge potential to create thousands of jobs for people. ✎



The high cost of coal

by Rico Euripidou and James Irlam

Witbank lies in the heart of the Highveld where much of South Africa's electricity is generated through the combustion of coal. It is also the place where some of the highest atmospheric concentrations of poisonous metals and gases in South Africa have been measured by an EU team of scientists over the past two years. The concentrations of chromium and barium were so high that their instruments could not take accurate measurements, and one of the scientists was of the opinion that the levels of heavy metals they recorded are among the highest in the world.

As we commemorated World Environment Day, these alarming findings led us to consider the true costs to our environment and health of our energy policy and practices.

Each step in the coal life cycle generates pollution. Mining coal produces hazardous substances in excess soil and slurry which contaminate water supplies. The transport of coal results in significant cancer-causing diesel emissions and local air pollution. Coal ash landfills leak fly ash waste and pollute water sources. Most importantly, coal combustion releases numerous air-borne pollutants, including particulate matter (PM), sulfur dioxide, carbon dioxide, mercury, arsenic, chromium, nickel, uranium and thorium, all of which were measured by the EU team in Witbank. These pollutants can have profound effects on the health of local communities, especially children, the elderly, pregnant women and those suffering from asthma and lung disease in urban areas. Coal emissions can travel long distances and affect even people living far away from power plants.

In 2007 the Lancet, one of the world's leading medical journals, summarized the disease burden of generating electricity from coal. It was estimated that 24.5 deaths, 225 serious illnesses, and 13 288 minor illnesses are associated with every Terawatt-hour of electricity from coal in Europe. Using these figures, the worldwide health toll from air pollution alone due to coal combustion may be up to 210 000 deaths, almost two million serious illnesses, and

over 151 million minor illnesses per year. In South Africa and similar developing countries, where pollution standards are not as protective, the health toll is likely to be even greater.

The Centre for Health and the Global Environment at Harvard Medical School has estimated the annual cost to the United States of coal "externalities" – which are the hidden costs to society arising from coal, such as healthcare and the treatment of polluted water – as a third to a half a trillion dollars. In another study, US economists found that coal-fired power costs the US economy more than it earns. If the costs from damage to the climate and to health were included, the price of electricity from coal would rise even further, making it more expensive than electricity from renewable sources.

Coal combustion contributes significantly to climate change, with growing impacts on health. The Lancet in 2008 identified climate change as the "biggest global health threat of the 21st century" and called for a public health movement that considers the threat of climate change as a health issue and not just a "green" issue. Reducing our high dependence on fossil fuels, especially coal, will therefore mitigate not only the direct adverse health impacts from the coal life cycle, but also the less direct impacts on global climate change and health.

Raising awareness about these adverse impacts and about the health benefits of renewable energy and climate action among the public, health professionals, policy makers and the media is important. But raising awareness is not enough. Public health professionals and health system managers need to lead in transforming hospitals and health systems to achieve greater sustainability and improved public environmental health. There is a growing convergence of solutions arising from, among others, a worldwide movement called the Global Green and Healthy Hospitals Network, which recognises the huge carbon footprint of the health system itself and the huge potential for improved



energy efficiency, water saving, procurement and waste disposal in our health institutions.

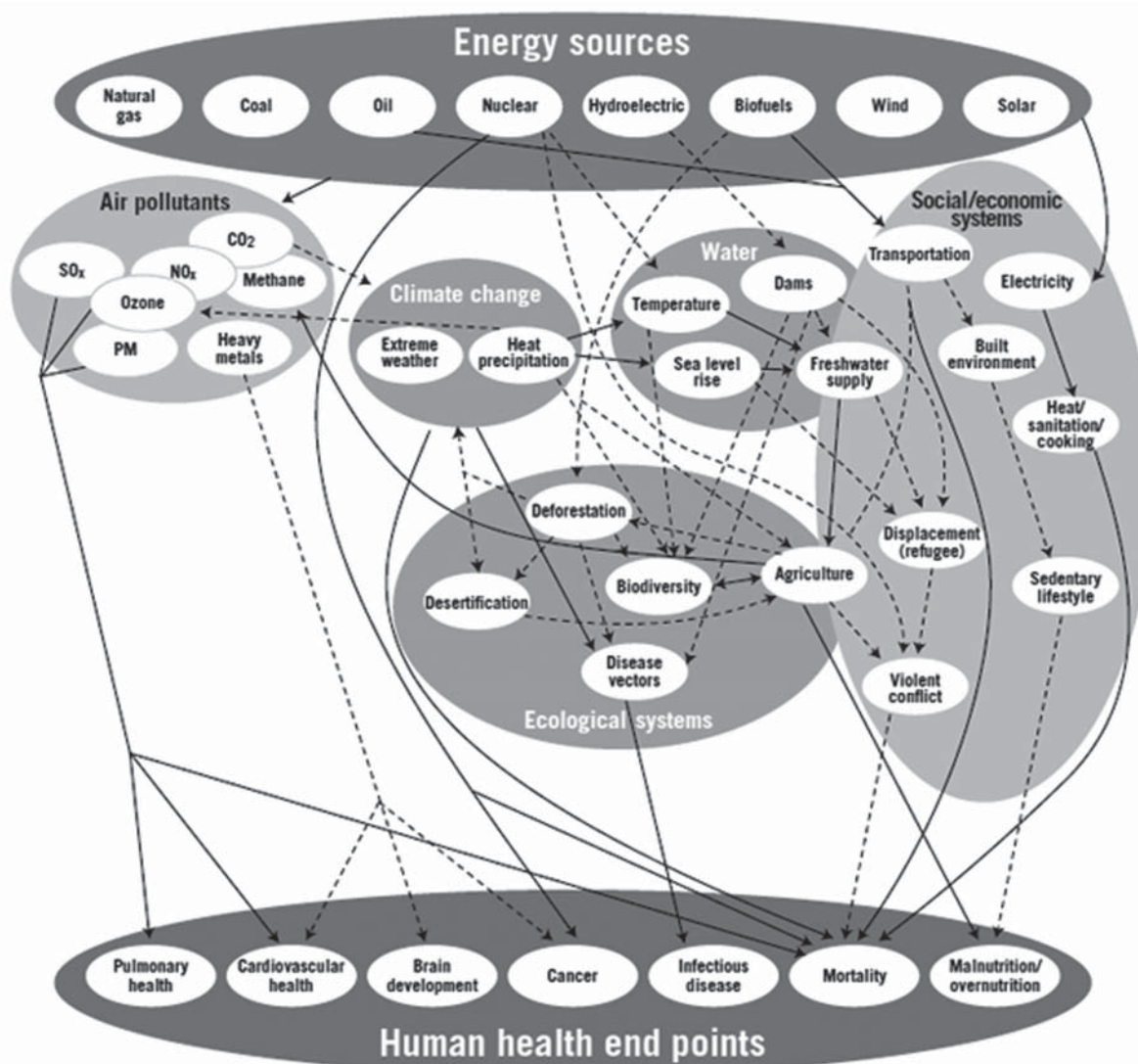
The health sector also needs to lend its voice to calls for a healthier national energy policy in South Africa. A recent series of consultations with experts and role players in the climate, health and energy sectors in South Africa made a number of recommendations for mobilizing the health sector. They include better access to air quality monitoring and industry emissions data for research into the health impacts of air pollution, representation in the process of developing the Integrated Energy Plan (IEP), and advocacy during the NHI planning phase for a green health care agenda.

In short, there are many imperatives and opportunities for the health sector to better understand the high costs of our heavy energy dependence on coal, to develop a more sustainable national energy policy, and to reduce the high carbon footprint of our health system and institutions.

That will surely be good news for Witbank and many others this Environment Day. ✖

James Irlam is a senior lecturer at the Primary Health Care Directorate at the University of Cape Town's faculty of health sciences.

This article was first published for World Environment Day on the 5th of June 2013 in The Mercury



Direct and indirect routes by which energy sources may affect human health

Note: Decisions in other sectors, such as energy, have multiple important effects on health, which have not been fully investigated.

CO₂ = carbon dioxide; NO_x = Nitrogen oxide; PM = particulate matter, SO_x = sulphur oxide.

Solid lines indicate health impacts that have been quantified, and dashed lines indicate qualitative evidence.

Source: Gohike et al.



Joining a network of friends

by Megan Lewis

Opportunities have recently been opening up for me to explore the world beyond South Africa and really diversify my experience and understanding of what the environmental justice movement looks like in other parts of the world. If only there were a less carbon intensive way of getting around!

In April, Young Friends of the Earth Europe (YFoEE) held their annual Network Gathering, and I and two other international participants from the Latin American (ATALC) and Asian (APAC) regions were invited to the event held in Croatia. Croatia is a beautiful country with warm, friendly people. Not only this, we were exposed to a wider experience of Europe and the world through the different people coming from the FoE Europe member groups and the international participants from FoE Mexico and South Korea.

As regional coordinator, groundWork recently hosted FoE Africa in Johannesburg for the AGM and for a special parallel meeting which aimed at strengthening the media work and developing a platform for communication between the group's Climate Justice and Energy (CJE) campaigners and communicators. This was a really positive and productive working space, and the prospects are exciting for increasing communication between FoE Africa groups and for stronger discussion in the media about the impacts of extractive industry and related resource conflict in the region.

Coming up at the end of June, I will be joining 500 activists from around the world in the Global Power Shift (GPS) being hosted by 350.org in Turkey. This week-long workshop aims to connect people at all levels – nationally, regionally and internationally – around issues of climate change and dirty energy, and to build skills and knowledge to mobilise communities to start taking action against the forces creating climate change and towards finding solutions to our current energy challenge in their countries back home..

YFoEE in Croatia

The week spent with YFoEE and my fellow international participants in Croatia has inspired and motivated me about our collective work towards realising a beautiful and sustainable future for our generation and those after us. The lovely setting and welcoming people of Zelena Akcija/Friends of the Earth Croatia and Sunny Village in Jagnedovec really aided the learning process for all of us, and it was impossible to not take away at least a handful of new information, experience and ideas to both broaden our own work in South Africa and to continue to build solidarity on an international scale.

This meeting went a long way in illustrating the importance of making connections between individuals and groups, and the potential this has to improve the future support of our national and international campaigns and challenges. By building solidarity between the groups, our goal of creating a movement of people working across the globe for the common goal of people living healthily in their environments becomes an ever more realisable dream. It gave meaning to the FoE mantra of resist, mobilise and transform!

Climate change messaging in Africa

Our CJE Campaigners and Communicators Meeting was aimed at providing a space for campaigners and communicators to begin working together in creating messaging and communications strategies (previously, these two groups of people have, in some cases, worked in isolation) and to begin working towards strengthening the FoE Africa national groups and the region. We – FoE groups from Mozambique, Cameroon, Uganda, Nigeria and South Africa – were joined by the Programme Coordinators and FoE Secretariat who, with their experience, guided us to begin making headway towards achieving these goals, but in the context of our national, as well as regional, struggles. Hearing about the struggles that some of the African groups





Young Friends of the Earth Europe Network Gathering in Jagnjedovec, Croatia

Credit: Young Friends of the Earth Europe

are campaigning around made me feel closer to the rest of continent. Albeit a generalisation, the difference between the groups from Europe and Africa, in terms of what people are facing and their approach, is evident. Nevertheless, the passion and belief in justice is the same.

This was by no means a once off meeting of this new grouping of campaigners and communicators. The possibilities of strengthening the region in this way are exciting and realistic, the latter being a critical part in getting people's buy-in and making sure that groups' work on a national level is not negatively impacted upon by having to coordinate communications regionally. While we were a small group in this meeting, we hope to reach out and pull in other communicators and CJE campaigners from the region in order to expand this work and begin speaking as a unified FoE Africa.

350.org GPS in Turkey

At the time of writing, the first phase of the GPS is but a month away and the South African team – made up of seven individuals from a variety of

backgrounds and environmental organizations – is rearing to go! This first phase will see national teams from across the world meeting here for international engagement and a positive space in which to be able to work towards launching a new year of strategy and action for the movement challenging climate change. After Turkey, the second phase will kick in and this is where what we've learnt gets put into action back in our national context. The Global Power Shift is a really critical push forward towards connecting and consolidating power on the ground, and to making a significant impact in fighting climate change and changing the current energy system.

Forming these connections with like-minded people who are doing the same work to us back home at groundWork is invaluable in promoting support for our local struggles and in increasing awareness of the task at hand on an international stage. I look forward to the new adventures and inspiring people that I will meet while doing meaningful work for the planet and its people. ✎



The mystery of the government space

by Greenfly

This month, Detective Greenfly is on the trail of the mysterious and illusive government space...

The energy boffins at UCT recently put out a paper saying that the Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) for electricity is a tad dated and needs to be reviewed. In particular, they say the IRP's demand projections through to 2030 are not holding up so we really don't need to build more coal power stations nor do we need a 9,600 MW fleet of nuclear plants which, at a trillion Rand or so, we can't afford.

The Department of Energy's Ompi Aphane responded with fury. The boffs, he said, did not know of things "in the government space" and so were not qualified to comment. That no doubt cuts out the rest of us mortals as well – but not the immortals from corporate South Africa's minerals-energy A-list.

The demand figure, said Aphane, was consulted with government and industry. Indeed it was. In 2010, he invited Eskom, Anglo American, BHP Billiton, Sasol, Xstrata, Exxaro and the Chamber of Mines to a secret "technical committee" where they told him what was wanted in the IRP. And what was wanted was a demand figure to match their desires for expansion. Who could argue with that?

Greenfly thinks the boffs were trying to be diplomatic when they said the IRP demand figure was dated. Already in 2010, it was the sum of corporate desires which adds up to a world-class industry fantasy. The corporates have since clarified one more detail: They do not expect to pay for the extra power supply but want it as a subsidy from the unconsulted. That is as it always has been and shall be evermore.

Aphane says the boffs rely on "an eighteen-month window of depressed demand" to challenge the IRP figure. Actually, they point out that electricity demand is still below 2007 levels. That makes a five year "window of depressed demand" – which makes some difference to the crock of compound growth at the end of Aphane's rainbow.

Meanwhile, the IMF and all the other hucksters of global finance tell us that recovery is just around the corner. In 2009, they said 2010, in 2010 deliverance in 2011 was certain, then 2012, 2013 ... and now it is confidently predicted in 2014. And they'll put Humpty Dumpty back together again.

Government of course wants a good, rotund demand figure. The fatter the better. Without it, they might have to stop pretending that 7% GDP growth and the mass alleviation of poverty is just around the corner. They might then have to think about real policies to end poverty – or find new ways to avoid such thoughts.

But most of all, it seems, government wants some new nukes. Why? It just does, alright? To go with the Blue Label, the iPhones, the ministerial Mercs, the grounded Grippens, the Key Points Act and the Secrecy Bill. And it needs a good demand figure to justify it – at least until the contracts are signed and sealed. After that, it can tell us sorrowfully that cancelling is just too expensive.

Is this the deep mystery of the government space of which the UCT boffins are unaware? Greenfly is tempted to suggest that Aphane share with the rest of us "a full view of what is happening in this space". Or is that just too wilfully democratic? ✕



Greedy capital wants it all

by Dale T. McKinley

Capital's drive for insatiable for profits is at the heart of South Africa's wage and employment crisis

If capital is to be believed, it is the worker who is the main source of South Africa's contemporary social and economic problems.

Every time the annual season of wage negotiations is about to begin, as it is now, representatives of capital unleash a tsunami of propaganda about workers' "high and unaffordable" wage demands. Dire warnings of destructive social unrest/conflict, high inflation rates, poor competitiveness and generalised economic devastation roll off their silver-lined tongues. The underlying message is neither subtle nor sanguine: the wage demands of workers are to blame for just about everything bad that is happening in our society.

Of course, propaganda is one thing, reality another, something even the most serious disciples of capitalism have always understood. Adam Smith, the author of what many consider to be the "Bible" of free-market capitalism ("The Wealth of Nations" published in 1776) noted that while "English businessmen frequently complain about the high level of wages" and argue that "this is the reason why they cannot sell their goods at prices that are as competitive as in other countries ... they remain quite silent about their high profits."

Such silence, Smith noted, was a conscious way of obscuring the fact that "in many cases, the high profits made by capital are much more to blame for price rises than are exorbitant wages". On this front, little has changed in the last 237 years. Indeed, if there is one essential constant in the capitalist production process it is, as Smith himself confirmed, that "labour is the true measure of value".

In the words of Belgian political scientist and historian Eric Toussaint, capitalists "have also forgotten (or never even bothered to understand)

that workers are not free not to sell their labour power." After all, the labour power of workers is the only thing they have to sell in a capitalist economy in order to make a living. Workers have no other means of access to the means of production, the very thing that defines class position and privilege under capitalism.

Today's capitalists, and no more so than in South Africa, are trying to airbrush their own capitalist history. They want us to naïvely believe that society can only progress by affirming their "freedom" to intensify and expand the exploitation of workers' labour power; that their endless, "by whatever means necessary" pursuit of profits is an enabler as opposed to a destroyer of socially and economically productive labour. This is one of the key reasons why Karl Marx's study of capitalism remains absolutely relevant today. As Toussaint points out, this is the case precisely because the contemporary reality of the capitalist system "remains one of a struggle over attempts by capital to increase, and attempts by the working class to resist increases in, the rate of profit".

When applied to South Africa's post-1994 developmental trajectory it should come as no surprise then that there is an inverse relationship between capitalist profits and workers' wages. According to economist Asghar Adelzadeh, the rate of profit in the economy from 1994-2012 has increased by almost 250%, while our own official Stats SA agency shows that from 1994-2010 the real wage share of South Africa's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has decreased by around 7%.

Such a huge gap, which symbolises nothing less than a massive transfer of wealth from the already poor majority to an ever increasing uber-rich minority, has been made possible because of a consistently



pro-capitalist, anti-worker macro-economic policy. The policy framework, which includes the current National Development Plan, and which capital has always selectively embraced, has catalysed reductions in real wages by prioritizing an export-led growth centrally based on wage suppression for workers. In turn, this has facilitated the consistent moves by capitalist employers to largely remove meaningful cost-of-living adjustment clauses in labour agreements and casualise labour so that the historic "social wage" accompanying permanent employment/job security has been thrown in the developmental rubbish bin.

This reality is made all the more tangible for that majority when the relevant rate of increase in prices (inflation) is factored into the equation, remembering that the generalised rate of inflation is an average (the latest average being 5.4%) and that our own Stats SA calculates inflation for five different expenditure groups. In this respect, as the Labour Research Service (LRS) shows, since mid-2012 the inflation rates for the "very low" and "low" expenditure groups (i.e. the unemployed and workers) have been almost 2% higher than those for the "very high" group (that is, the capitalists). When applied to specific items in the expenditure basket, on which the poor and workers spend a greater portion of their income, the average price increase for public transportation comes in at 16.1%, while food, housing and water/electricity prices are all far above the generalised inflation rate.

Specific wage data (for 2012) compiled by LRS only serves to further confirm the overall picture of Dickensian wage inequality. While the median minimum wage for workers was R2 300 per month across nine sectoral determinations and R3000 per month across all bargaining councils, the median wage for executives at 80 JSE-listed corporates was R483 000 per month and for CEOs, R758 000 per month (these exclude bonuses and Long-Term Incentives – LTIs – such as share equity schemes). Over the last two years, the average wage of workers stands at R114 per day while the average wage package (inclusive of bonuses/LTIs added) of corporate CEOs comes in at R32 204 per day.

Taking a closer look at the recent wage-profit nexus of one particular corporation – Anglo American

Platinum (Amplats) – reveals a consistent pattern of manipulation that proves the general "rule". Research by political economist Dick Forslund shows that, at the end of 2009, Amplats laid off 12 000 workers and announced an expected 99% decline in headline earnings per share (the general marker of corporate profitability). Yet, six months later a 532% rise in headline earnings was being proudly proclaimed.

The following year (2011), profits of R1.3 billion were reported but then, after a "tough" 2012, Amplats announced that they had taken a 562 cents per share loss from the 1365 cents profit per share in 2010/2011. And then, just last week, they revealed plans to cut another 6 000 jobs in order to "restore profits", a move which one Goldman Sachs analyst claimed did not go far enough to "implement the corrective measures for the benefit of the shareholders".

If there is any remaining sympathy for "poor", struggling capital, it must surely be blown away by the fact that the overall share of revenue accruing to workers in the platinum industry declined from 60% in 1998 to just 27% by 2010, a time period during which record profits for shareholders were being made and bonuses/LTIs for executives handed out.

It's not hard to figure out that what is really at stake for Amplats (and for all other corporate capitalists) is "restoring" and, when possible, surpassing previous levels of profits as opposed to just making a profit. Massive lay-offs of workers boost prices by (temporarily) cutting production which, in turn, ensures higher profits for shareholders. The wages, and indeed lives, of workers are peripheral. Intensified exploitation of their labour is, however, essential.

Workers are not the perpetrators of South Africa's wage and employment crisis, they are its fodder. All the while, it is capital that is feeding at the trough.

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This article was first published on 13 May 2013 on The South African Civil Society Information Service (SACSIS) website <http://www.sacsis.org.za/site/article/1657>

Dr. McKinley is an independent writer, researcher and lecturer as well as political activist.



No gate can stay locked forever

by Noluthando Mbeje, Projects Officer at SDCEA

The KwaZulu Natal Subsistence Fisherfolk's Forum (KZN SFF), an affiliate of the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA), hosted a public meeting on Sunday the 19th of May 2013 at the Clairwood Tamil Institute. Thousands of fisherfolk waited in long lines at the venue to get the permit application forms to gain access to the traditional fishing areas.

In 1860, when the Indian settlers arrived in Durban, there was a natural bay which was home to wildlife and marine life and has for decades been the means of subsistence and recreation for many people. Since 2001, the KZN SFF has been registering their grievances about the lack of access to the Durban harbour, beach front, piers and other fishing areas which were pronounced at that time by the Durban Port Authorities and Municipality officials as non-entry fishing areas. The KZN SFF members had to endure being locked out, arrested, and having their fishing equipment and catches taken away by the port security, South African Police Service and Metro. This action by the security forces in Durban was supported on the instruction of the port authorities and the eThekweni Municipality, despite the fact that since 1860 fisherfolks have lived around the bay and have fished at the harbour. It feels like apartheid has not gone!

Subsistence fisherfolks were banned while those with expensive fishing boats and yachts were allowed to fish unhindered in the harbour. The harbour master and port authorities used the International Ship and Port Security code (ISPS) to deny subsistence fisherfolk access to the Durban harbour. The KZN SFF are the poorest of the poor and their entire livelihood is being threatened, which has resulted in family life being disrupted – and they have now joined the growing band of unemployed and hungry people.

The subsistence fisherfolk have never been recognized by the authorities – the National Department of Fishery and Agriculture, the Provincial Ministry of Recreation and Culture, and

KZN Ezemvelo wildlife – who police all activities related to fishing, nor by the scientific community of the Sharks Board and Ushaka Marine World. These institutions have always played a role in developing policy that makes fishing for fisherfolk difficult, while allowing big, commercial fishing and international boats, which have sweetheart deals with our government, to get away with raping the ocean through huge catches of fish on their boats.



KZN fisherfolk meet to discuss the future of their livelihood.
Credit: SDCEA

The poor fisherfolk have had to endure limited bag catches and being arrested if they caught one extra fish as they were not recognized as subsistence fisherfolk in policy, practice and registration. These actions by unsympathetic government officials, scientists, and security personnel resulted in the birth of KZN SFF in 2004, with fisherfolks leading their own struggle, which is supported by like-minded organizations such as SDCEA, groundWork and local researchers. Through their effort, fisherfolk were able to contribute enormously to the subsistence fishing policy, to chart their own way in demand and access to traditional fishing grounds and to fight for individual and collective rights.

Finally, on the 19th of May, victory was marked when the Clairwood Tamil Institute was crammed with 4 000 fisherfolk who wanted to fill in the Permit Application Forms. The rights to these permits were finally granted after KZN SFF put



pressure on Minister of State Enterprises, Malusi Gigabe, in December 2012. The hall was filled with fishermen from all parts of south Durban. This was historical by nature in that the majority of fishermen previously either lived in Clairwood or their forefathers were from Clairwood and were also fisherfolk. Some fishermen from Phoenix and Chatsworth claimed to have been waiting since five o'clock in the morning for the meeting. According to these fishermen, it was important that they signed their Permit Application Forms as fishing is their livelihood.

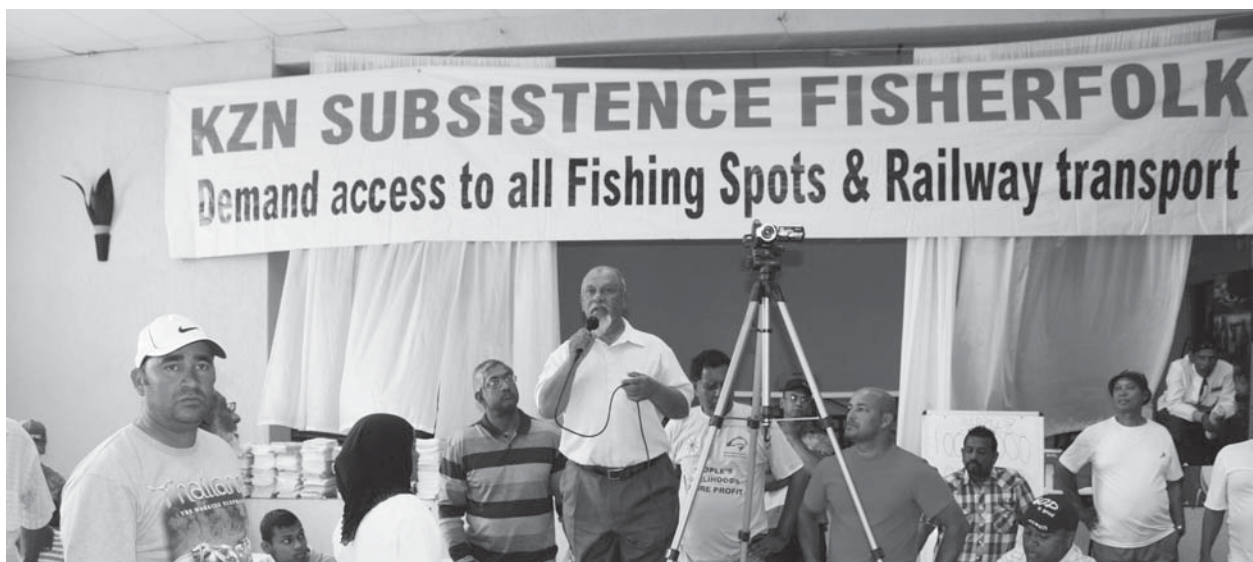
Unfortunately, only three thousand forms were made available and those who didn't fill in their forms were informed that another meeting will be arranged to accommodate them.

This meeting was a great success since over 4 000 fishermen were able to attend and many of them submitted their application forms. This brought hope for fishermen who fish for their livelihood, and let them hear first-hand about the Transnet application forms and the KZN SFF code of conduct, which was gladly filled in and handed back to the conveners.

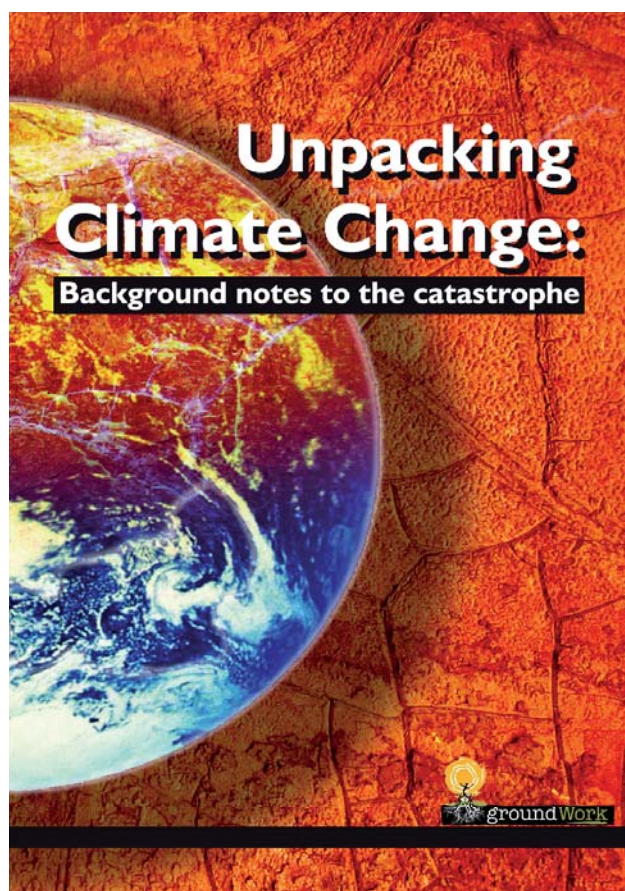
The next step will be to screen all the Permit Application Forms that will be handed over to Transnet with a covering letter by the KZN SFF. Further meetings to access Transnet application forms and the KZN Subsistence Fishermen code of conduct will be advertised on the SDCEA website

(<http://www.sdcea.co.za>). This meeting was the biggest gathering in the city since the "Shared Band" in the 1800s. The dedication showed by these fisherfolk calls for more fisherfolk meetings like this in various areas of KZN. Fisherfolk at the meeting echoed that the beach front and its piers, which were previously closed by the previous municipality manager, Mike Sutcliffe, must be opened to all users of the ocean and our beach. We believe the betrayal of excluding the fishing community, and only allowing the surf and swimming community entertainment and the right to walk on the piers, is contrary to the spirit that food is central to sustaining life and the right to life is guaranteed by the constitution. Fishing for food cannot be trumped by privileges such as swimming, surfing or walking. What a pity that the citizens of South Africa have to be faced with harassment for the usage of what belongs to everyone and what puts food on the table. It's shocking that subsistence fisherfolks are denied the opportunity to fish when the unemployment and crime rate is so high.

Supporting the KZN SFF, we insist, as a compromise, that all the beach front piers must be opened after six o'clock in the evening as a starting point. This fight will continue and will be taken up and progressed through our various meetings. This will bring more people together to unite and ensure the sea belongs to all the people of South Africa and the world. ✕



New reads



Unpacking Climate Change

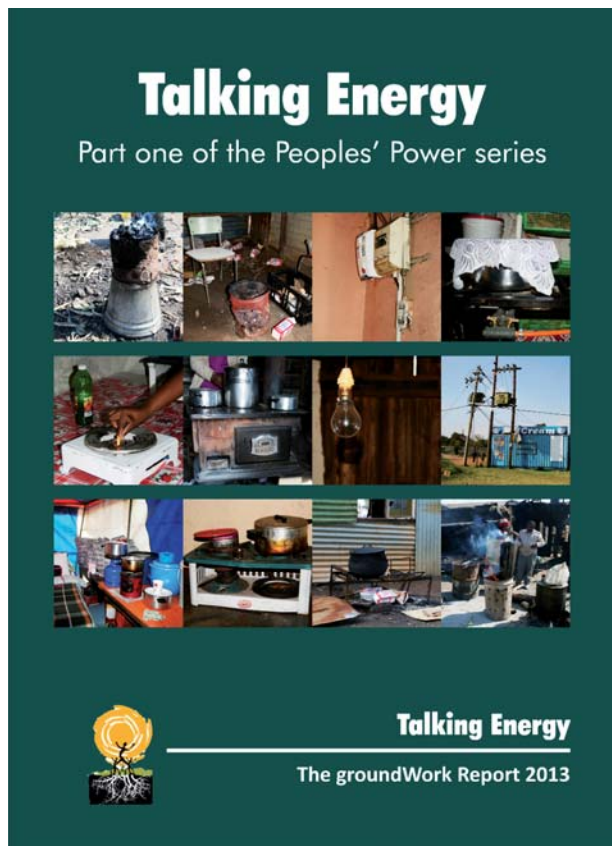
Climate change is just one dimension of global ecological change forced by the massive scale of industrialisation powered by the fossil fuels: coal, oil and gas. The scale of change is such that scientists are calling this the beginning of a new geological epoch – the Anthropocene. Almost as scary as climate change is the jargon that comes with it. This short guide is intended to let people know what is happening and to make the debate more accessible.

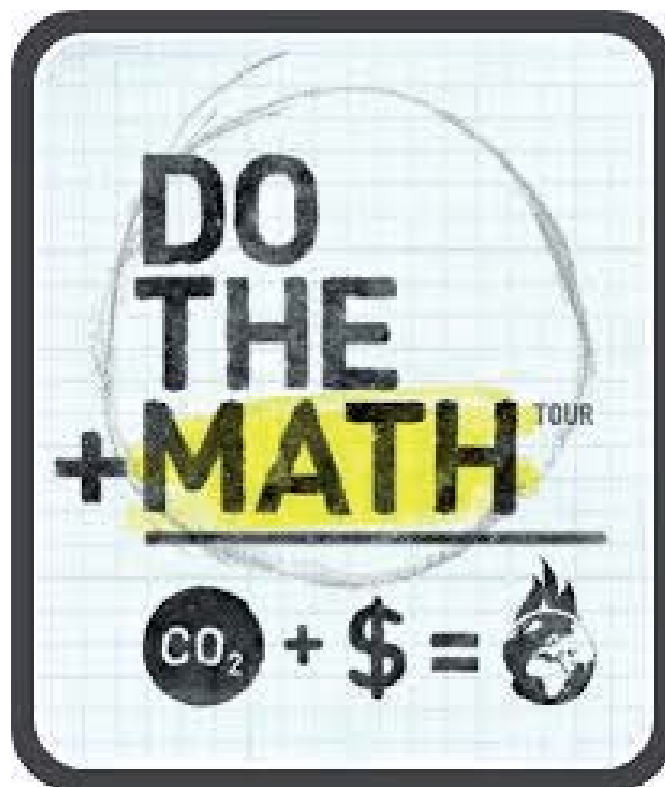
Both reports can be found on the groundWork website www.groundwork.org.za. Those interested in hard copies can contact Megan Lewis at megan@groundwork.org.za

Talking Energy

Talking Energy recounts conversations with people in the Vaal, the Highveld and south Durban. We talked about household energy use, the rising price of energy, what they thought of the energy system and the key actors within it, and whether they had any ideas about an alternative system. Energy is not isolated from the rest of people's lives and people also spoke of water, sanitation, waste, housing and the general state of the neighbourhood and its infrastructure.

The report is conceived within the larger project of working towards energy sovereignty. It is intended as a starting point to begin exploring the idea that renewable energy really can be people's energy. That is a long way from where we are at the moment and this report is in part about taking the measure of that distance.





In the face of the biggest global threat to the planet and civilisation, this movie makes it clear that there are people all over the world willing to fight for a better future. *Do the math* is 350.org's latest film on the fossil fuel industry and its speeding up of climate change, a topic all too pertinent to engage in as we reach the 400ppm of carbon dioxide (CO₂) threshold. "It's a terrible thing to take a world this beautiful and, for the sake of outsized profits for a few people for a little while, laying it to waste," said Bill McKibben, the organization's co-founder and president, in a speech to a packed church.

The "math" is scary and involves three important numbers: all governments agreed at CoP15 in Copenhagen that anything above 2°C in temperature is too hot for humans to survive; 565 gigatons of CO₂ can be emitted into the atmosphere before there is literally not enough space for more; and, finally and most shockingly, the fossil fuel industry has five times this in their reserves. If we maintain the status quo, we will undoubtedly push the boundary far beyond 2°C and the earth will become unliveable.

On one level, the short, forty minute film takes us through two journeys; one that is personal and another that is based in community. It's about ordinary citizens, not necessarily self-proclaimed environmental activists, mobilising to start whittling away at the power of the fossil fuel industry. And it's also about knowing that, in order for that to happen, we have to begin truly building a network of people who are working towards an energy system that makes sense for us, the people.

The film shows us the human faces of the climate change movement, focusing particularly on the US, but also touching on the globe and emphasising the need for this international movement. This is a call to action to all of us: for institutions to divest shares in big fossil fuel companies; for students at universities to mobilise; for communities to start movements and take to the streets to take on the fossil fuel industry directly. It is hopeful but realistic, simultaneously outlining the massive problem and main criminals, but also celebrating the power of people and the path of action that we can take. ✂

Do the math can be viewed on Youtube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IslfokifwSo>