



Coal Campaign Community to Community Exchange 21 – 23 September 2016 Kwambonani, KwaZulu Natal

Organisational Biographies

Amadiba Crisis Committee – Xolobeni, Eastern Cape Province

Located in the pristine wilderness area of the Wild Coast found along South Africa's Eastern Cape Province, the Amadiba Crisis Committee (ACC) formed in 2007 in response to the proposal of a titanium mine by Australian corporation Mineral Resources Commodities (MRC). Set to be one of the largest mines of its kind in South Africa, it was its potential impact on the social fabric of the long-standing Xolobeni community as well as on the ecological diversity of the area that saw a protracted battle between the community and the mine. Following the assassination of the chairperson of the ACC, Sikhosiphi 'Bazooka' Rhadebe in March, MRC announced it would withdraw its operations from Xolobeni and in September, the Minister of Mineral Resources imposed an 18-month moratorium on mining in the Xolobeni area.

Earthlife Africa – Johannesburg, Gauteng Province

Founded in 1988, Earthlife Africa's (ELA) Johannesburg branch seeks to mobilise civil society around environmental issues and how they impact on people's lives. The organisation has since grown to include branches in Cape Town, eThekweni (formerly Durban) and Tshwane (formerly Pretoria), as well as in Windhoek, Namibia. While branches are autonomous, they are linked through ELA's Statement of Belief and common campaign activities. ELA is a largely volunteer-driven organisation, however, in recent years, funding has been acquired by some branches to staff and facilitate specific campaigns. ELA Johannesburg's largest campaign is the Sustainable Energy and Climate Change Project; other campaigns include acid mine drainage; biodiversity and toxics; fracking; and nuclear energy.

groundWork, Friends of the Earth South Africa – Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu Natal Province

Based in the town of Pietermaritzburg in the KwaZulu Natal Province, groundWork was established in 1999. It is an environmental justice organisation working with community people from around South Africa, and increasingly Southern Africa, on environmental justice and human rights issues focusing on the following campaigns: Coal, Climate and Energy Justice, Waste and Environmental Health. groundWork has also successfully run Environmental Justice Schools for three consecutive years, educating and motivating upcoming activists working in the social and environmental justice fields. groundWork is the South African member of Friends of the Earth International, which is the largest international environmental justice network made up of 70 organisations working on grassroots related issues.

Highveld Environmental Justice Network – Highveld region, Mpumalanga Province

The Highveld Environmental Justice Network (HEJN) is a voluntary association that was established in 2015 in the Highveld region located in the Mpumalanga Province, home to 12 of Eskom's coal-fired

power stations and hundreds of mines. The HEJN joins together various non-governmental movements and local community-based organisations within the Highveld Air Priority Area fighting for people's Constitutional right to a clean and healthy environment, in an area that is well-known for its high levels of air, water and soil pollution as a result of coal, steel and other industries.

Khwezumkhono Environmental Justice Network – Newcastle, KwaZulu Natal Province

This year witnessed the establishment of the Khwezumkhono Environmental Justice Network (KEJN) in the town and surrounding areas of Newcastle in the province of KwaZulu Natal. Australian mining corporate Continental Coal opened the Chelmsford coal mine in 2011 and like with many mining houses made many promises to the local community of employment and corporate social responsibility projects, which remained unfulfilled. Prior to the formation of KEJN, many protests by the community were held to air out their grievances about the lack of employment created and deaths of workers while on site. With the new proposals for fracking in the KwaZulu Natal Province and more specifically near to the town of Newcastle, the concerned community members realised that the formation of a strong, locally organised group was a necessity for the continuation of their struggle.

Mfolozi Community Environmental Justice Organisation – Fuleni, KwaZulu Natal Province

Joining the conservationist-based resistance to Ibutho Coal's proposed mine in the northern part of the KwaZulu Natal Province, the Mfolozi Community Environmental Justice Organisation (MCEJO) formed in 2015. When the proposed coal mine was announced in 2014 for the area bordering the Hluhluwe/Mfolozi Game Reserve – the oldest nature reserve in Africa – many organisations challenged the mine on the basis of conserving nature. MCEJO established itself to add the weight of the local community's voices to this struggle, as they were facing a threat to their agricultural livelihoods, lack of clean air and water, and possible displacement. In November of last year, Ibutho Coal announced its withdrawal from the site.

Mpukunyoni Community Property Association – Somkhele, KwaZulu Natal Province

The community of Somkhele have for over a decade been forced to live with the externalised costs of Petmin's coal mine located in the north of the KwaZulu Natal Province. The Mpukunyoni Community Property Association (MCPA) formed in 2013 to highlight the people's grievances in relation to the destruction the mine has caused to their environment and their health. Being a rural community, the livelihood of many families before the mine was agriculture; this has been jeopardised with the onslaught of pollution of the community's waterways by the mine. Many houses crack on a daily basis from the mine blasting nearby, resulting too in dust which people are forced to breathe in.

Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance – Vaal region, Gauteng Province

The Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance (VEJA) is an alliance of nine community-based organisations, was launched in 2005. The decision was informed by the organising of local people, and organisations, and various non-government organisations challenging for environmental justice in the Vaal Triangle. The VEJA ensure that people's Constitutional promise of an environment that is not harmful to one's health and well-being, and to ensure that people have the ability to participate democratically in environmental governance. Like the Highveld Air Priority Area, the Vaal Triangle Air Priority Area, was deemed as such by the Department of Environmental Affairs to highlight the region as a pollution hotspot to which government's regulatory and enforcement efforts were to be heightened.

Waterberg Environmental Justice Forum – Waterberg region, Limpopo Province

The most recently declared Air Priority Area, the Waterberg region is home to one of Eskom's new baseload coal-fired power stations, Medupi, and its related infrastructure. The Waterberg Environmental Justice Forum (WEJF) is a community-based organisation that focuses on environmental rights and education of the community around the impact of the newly established coal industry in the area.