

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2019

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF ACTIVISM

We celebrate 20 years of environmental justice action this year. Who would have thought that arising from the messiness of the Environmental Justice Networking Forum collapse in 1999, groundWork would arise to continue carrying the environmental justice flag for another 20 years. We are proud to be groundWorkers and proud of the goals we have reached in the past two decades. We thank our board members, the community people, the fellow NGOs we work with, and the funders who have supported our vision for environmental justice in South Africa and beyond.

It has been a very eventful year. We have made great strides in pushing the boundaries and making well calculated strategic interventions in various spaces, from acting with local community and legal partners to take civil action against the President for not protecting people from air pollution to supporting health departments and facilities to improve their operations to lessen their environmental footprint. We have protested against African environmental ministers for their lack of courage to defend community people and activists protecting the earth, to supporting African ministers' endeavours for improved chemical regulation in Africa.

We work in all corners of this amazing country, and we have expanded our support across Africa by assisting community activists and fellow NGOs in calling for an end to plastic production, waste incineration and working towards Zero Waste societies. We have partnered with fellow NGOs on an African Coal Strategy to challenge coal production and use in Africa and to call for socially owned renewables and a Just Transition.

Finally, we have made the Just Transition a real day- to-day issue in the lives and debates of people across the country. Even our electricity plan for 2019 included this as a needed reality, however misplaced the Minister was in asking the renewable industry to develop this. From as far back as 2005, we have called for a Just Transition, and in 2020 working with community people, the National Planning Commission, unions and workers we accelerated our campaign and it has finally been recognised.

In the past year we sadly lost two longtime supporters of groundWork. Jon White, our founding trustee, and Denny Larson, the Bucket Brigade man. We will miss their wit and energy.

It has also been a very disturbing year for groundWorkers. Our offices were burgled on 3 occasions in October, thus forcing us to move to new premises. Unfortunately, one of our staff member's car was stolen from outside the new premises within a week of us moving there.

However, we leave this year, as we do every year, exhausted but always excited by the prospects in the New Year. We will have exciting staff additions and changes in 2020. groundWork is growing.

Peace to all in 2020!
Bobby Peek



COURT RULES AGAINST MINING IN PROTECTED AREA

On the 18 November 2019 - The Constitutional Court has had the final say on the approvals for a coal mine inside a Mpumalanga Protected Area and Strategic Water Source Area. Earlier this month, the Constitutional Court refused the mining company's final challenge of a 2018 High Court decision to set aside Ministerial approvals for the proposal coal mine. However, Atha has not given up and want to start mining outside the area ASAP. So we remain vigilant.

You can [read more about this here](#).



HEALTH SECTOR BUILDING A CLIMATE CHANGE RESPONSE



Health care institutions from across the continent gathered in Durban for the first regional Global Green and Healthy Hospitals (GGHH) and Sustainable Health in Procurement (SHiP) conference in Africa. This hosted by groundWork, and our international partner – Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) brought together GGHH members, health care leaders and experts from across the continent and beyond to discuss, innovate and collaborate on strategies to foster climate-smart and sustainable health care practices.

[Read more about it here](#).

AIR POLLUTION GOES TO COURT



In June 2019, after many years of advocacy, groundWork, and the Vukani Environmental Movement, represented by the Centre for Environmental Rights, launched Constitutional litigation to request the court to declare that the poor ambient air quality in the Highveld Priority Area constitutes a violation of the right to an environment not harmful to health or well-being, and to order the government to promulgate regulations to enforce the Highveld Air Quality Management Plan (HPA AQMP).

[Follow the case here.](#)

SA RATIFIES THE MINAMATA CONVENTION



Credit: The GEF

On the 29 April 2019 the government of South Africa deposited its instrument of ratification for the Minamata Convention on Mercury. In doing so SA became the 108th Party to the Convention.

WASTE PICKERS - A DECADE OF SUCCESSFUL STRUGGLE



One hundred and thirteen (113) waste pickers from 42 towns across all provinces in South Africa convened in Kempton Park, Johannesburg, from the 19th - 22nd August for the 2019 Biennial General Meeting (BGM) of South African Waste Pickers Association (SAWPA). We celebrated and reviewed a decade of work since the 2009 launch of SAWPA, a movement of and for all waste pickers working in South Africa. This BGM 2019, was preceded by BGMs in 2015 and a gathering alongside the 2011 UN climate summit in Durban, South Africa.

[Read more about it here.](#)

THE LIFE AFTER COAL CAMPAIGN TURNS 5



groundWork, Earthlife Africa and the Centre for Environmental Rights entered the 5th year of the Life After Coal/Impilo Ngaphandle Kwamalahle campaign. This joint campaign aims to: discourage the development of new coal-fired power stations and mines; reduce emissions from existing coal infrastructure and encourage a coal phase-out; and enable a just transition to sustainable energy systems for the people. Once again in 2019, no new coal fired power stations were built.

Visit the website: www.lifeaftercoal.org.za

ADVANCING ZERO WASTE IN AFRICA



This year we met with members from around the African continent to discuss environmental issues the region is faced with. This included the emerging threat of incineration, plastic affecting our oceans and our health and to our strategy to implement zero waste solutions. We came together to share our views and ideas on how we can attempt to address these problems, and how different organisations can work together to fight these giants that are rapidly coming with more problems than solutions.

#GoForZeroWaste #BreakFreeFromPlastic #NoToIncineration

Check out what Zero Waste looks like around the world: www.zerowasteworld.org

ENVIRONMENT MINISTER WITHDRAWS ILLEGALLY-DOUBLED SO₂ POLLUTION STANDARDS

Following groundWork's litigation instituted in April 2019 to set aside government's unlawful plan to double the amount of the harmful pollutant sulphur dioxide (SO₂) polluters are allowed to emit, the Environmental Affairs Minister withdrew this provision.

The doubling had been published for implementation on 31 October 2018 without inviting public comment on it as the Air Quality Act requires – which made it unlawful.

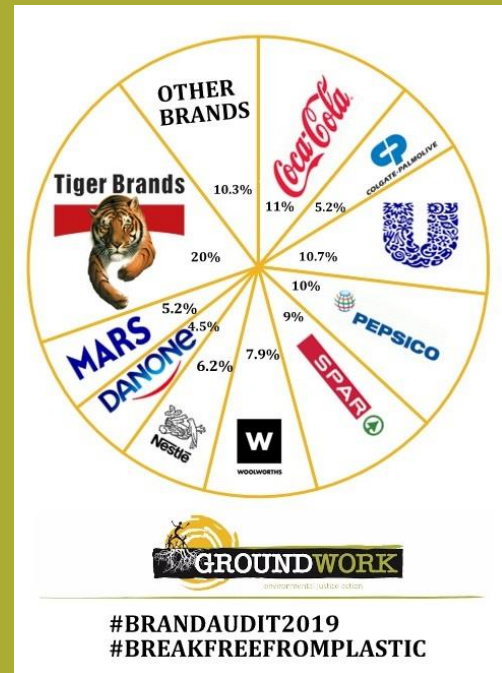
[Read more about it here.](#)



WE DID A BRAND AUDIT

We participated in the global brand audit activities to determine the biggest polluters among major household products. Break Free From Plastic is calling on the top polluters to lead the way in revealing how much single-use plastic they use, setting clear, public, measurable targets on how they will reduce the quantity of single-use plastic items they produce, and finally to completely reinvent their product delivery systems in order to avoid creating more plastic pollution.

Read [the full report here](#).



LOCAL COMMUNITIES CONFRONT CLIMATE MAFIA



People from grassroots environmental justice organisations in three toxic hotspots around the country protested against government and corporates responsible for local climate change impacts such as health, air, water and land destruction. On 23 September, the communities of the Highveld (eMalahleni, Ermelo, Middelburg, Doornkop, Ogies and Phola), Sasolburg and Newcastle simultaneously confronted ArcelorMittal, Sasol, Eskom, government and municipalities, demanding they immediately address all health, social and economic impacts in their communities.

Read [more about it here](#).

DEMANDING PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS



On 14 November 2019, Ministers of Environment from across Africa attended the Seventeenth Regular Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN). This being during the week of the 24th Anniversary of the murder of Ken Saro-Wiwa and friends. They, and many others on the African continent have given up their lives to defend the land, ocean and peoples' livelihoods which we made sure our Ministers of Environment were reminded of.

Read [more about it here](#)

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE SCHOOL 2019



We held our 5th Environmental Justice School in 2019, where 20 students representing 10 organisations and environmental justice struggles spent four weeks of intense learning with groundWork. During the EJS they offered their solidarity to those that were displaced and suffered during cyclones Idai and Kenneth

2020 HERE WE COME!



PEOPLE POWER NOW!



groundWork