

# GROUNDWORK

VOLUME 10 NO.4

DECEMBER 2008

groundwork



## Blood is Thicker than Oil

environmental justice action in Southern Africa

*groundWork is a non-profit environmental justice service and developmental organisation 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 project areas are: air quality, waste (including environmental health) and corporate accountability.*

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

#### **GROUNDWORK'S SOUTH AFRICAN STAFF ARE:**

*Director: Bobby Peek*

*Deputy Director: Gill Addison*

*Office Manager: Bathoko Sibisi*

*Air Quality Campaign Manager: Siziwe Khanyile*

*Waste Campaign Manager: Musa Chamane*

*Health Care Waste Manager: Nomcebo Mvelase*

*Research Manager: Rico Euripidou*

*Exec. Assistant to Director: Jane Harley*

#### **GROUNDWORK'S USA STAFF ARE:**

*Director: Heeten Kalan*

*Coordinator: Sunita Dubey*

#### **HOW TO CONTACT US:**

*6 Raven Street*

*Pietermaritzburg*

*P O Box 2375, Pietermaritzburg, 3200*

*Tel: 033-342-5662*

*Fax: 033-342-5665*

*e-mail: team@groundwork.org.za*

*Web: www.groundwork.org.za*

*555 Amory Street, Boston*

*MA 02130, USA*

*Tel: +1-617-522-0604*

*Fax: +1-617-522-5591*

*e-mail: info@groundwork-usa.org*

*Web: www.groundwork-usa.org*

## **In this issue**

3	From the Smokestack
5	Lead Story - Protesting against the Petrochemical Industry
7	Air Quality - East and Southern Africa unite against oil
9	Waste - Communities unite against Cement Kilns
12	Environmental Health - A healthy environment is the first step towards healthy people
14	Waste - KZN Waste Pickers cry for recognition
16	Air Quality - Newcastle Exchange
17	Community News - More environmental injustice in south Durban
19	Guest Article - Eskom eyes the Zambezi
22	In Brief
23	groundWork - Goodbye Jon, Hello Joy
24	Who is JA!

#### **AFFILIATIONS:**

*groundWork is affiliated to the following international organisations:*

*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*

#### **CREDITS:**

*Printed on recycled paper from Sappi Fine Papers*

*Printing by ArrowPrint*

Cover photo: Delegates to the East and Southern Africa Oil Meeting. Photograph by Justin Fong



## From the smoke stack

by groundWork Director, Bobby Peek

In November I had the privilege of spending ten days in the mountains near Tegucigalpa. You are asking yourself where is Tegu...what! Well, I asked myself this when I first heard the destination for the 2008 Friends of the Earth International BGM.

Tegu, as it is referred to, is the capital city of Honduras and is home to 'Movimiento Madre Tierra', the Mother Earth Movement. MMT is an organisation based in poor communities and ties together research on the health of communities near mines with the impacts that mining activities have on the environment and on health.

In a rustic union camp we spent ten days on finalising and endorsing the new FoEI strategy and workplans which lead us on a path of mobilisation, resistance and transformation. It is a strategy that is based upon sustainable societies and production processes that do not rape mother earth and result in people losing their livelihoods. It is a strategy where we will impress upon people that enough is better than more, and that solidarity is something that we have to live and not only give. When we came down from the mountains FoEI had a new chairperson, and its first African Chairperson, Nnimmo Bassey of Environmental Rights Action, Friends of the Earth Nigeria. Africa's time is now. We make it - not our politicians and corporations - we, the people of Africa and the world, are making Africa's time now.

As FoEI stepped into a new space with African leadership, Greenpeace opened their first African office in Johannesburg. We have to welcome this as people of Africa. Greenpeace is an action orientated public pressure group and we hope will complement the work of many social movement organisations

such as groundWork, South Durban Community Environmental Alliance and the Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance. It is my hope that Greenpeace will respect the spaces and positions that we have created and nurtured on environmental justice issues in South Africa, and will seek to engage in these spaces in a supportive manner that seeks to build and strengthen the environmental movement across Africa.

Well done to Africa.

Closer to home, the debate on Environmental Impact Assessments continues in various forums. Government held one of its 'hit and run' meetings to consider ten years of EIAs in South Africa. EIAs have opened up public spaces over the last decade for people to interact. But many people have seen these processes as nothing more than dissent management. Some key issues that continue to raise their head, no matter how much we question the logic of it, is having mining activities under the auspices of the Department of Minerals and Energy Affairs. "In terms of mining activities and EIAs, the Minister of Minerals and Energy will issue the environmental authorisation and the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism is the appeal authority<sup>1</sup>." While this is a shift from the previously unregulated manner in which mines sought permission to operate, the complexity of political power still exists. Will we ever have a case where an official in the DME will say no to a development proposal? No. So there are going to be many appeals to DEAT. Well, maybe not, because the appeal process in itself is so flawed and has another set of requirements that make it onerous to follow.

<sup>1</sup> Speech by Marthinus Van Schalkwyk, Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, delivered at the opening of The Conference: "10 Years Of EIAs In South Africa", Somerset West, 24 November 2008.

Then the other evergreen debate that emerged at the gathering was the 'other instruments' debate on finding ways to ensure development is fast tracked. These other instruments seek to 'explore mechanisms other than regulation to encourage environmentally responsible behaviour. This could include self- or co-regulation or voluntary systems.' Ah, the age old scenario of leaving the fox in charge of the hen house. Especially when you do not know how many chickens are in the hen house.

On the issue of managing public dissent, EIA consultants, together with government, are seeking to move EIAs away from public meetings to consultant appointed focus groups as a tool for public participation. This has cropped up in the past with Engen. Now the eThekweni Municipality is using the same strategy in finalising the Electron Road transfer station, which is to be situated near the Bisarsar Road landfill site. In a cabal of collusion WSP Environmental, the Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs and the developer, Durban Solid Waste representing the eThekweni Municipality wrote, in a letter to Interested and Affected Parties cancelling a public meeting, the following:

"This decision follows ongoing discussions with the Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs, in which concerns were raised regarding planned disruptions to the meeting by some members of the public. In order to ensure the integrity of the public consultation process, focus group meetings have been determined to be the most constructive way forward."

There are some key issues here that need to be interrogated. What and who defines the integrity of the public consultation process? Who decides on the focus groups? Are they going to specifically exclude those people who do not want the development and are prepared to make their voices heard?

For groundWork, Environmental Impact Assessments, and any other environmental management, should foster a dialogue and 'sharing of knowledge' (section

2.4.h of NEMA) between all stakeholders in order that this leads to decisions that are 'taken in an open and transparent manner' (section 2.4.k of NEMA). By not providing a platform for public meetings, consultants, corporations and government purposely prohibit public debate that seeks to democratically allow for people to engage with each other with the aim of consensus building. Here, focus groups will be decided upon by the consultants. What they are likely to do is entrench both the racial and class divides by calling for focus groups of like people, and thus manage dissent.

In managing dissent developers and government also take the tack of holding meetings and workshops with people, talking at people rather than listening to them. This is presently playing itself out in the eMacambini area where the KwaZulu Natal government, together with Durban developers, Ruwaad, want to relocate people to make way for the AmaZulu World Theme Park. In a statement from the eMacambini Anti-Removal Committee, they indicate that: "We will not be workshopped into accepting the loss of our land and our heritage. We will not be workshopped into accepting our own oppression." This is the reality of what EIAs and other 'environmental tools' have become: processes to get people to agree on their oppression. How many EIAs have been vetoed by government despite community opposition? You can count them on one hand.

Finally, it is shameful that the CSIR, together with government, has decided to silence scientist Dr. Anthony Turton by suspension for thoughts on the critical water issues we face in South Africa. If the CSIR and government can do this to one of their own, imagine what they think of our reports.

For now, do have a good break and we will see you next year as we prepare for groundWork's tenth year celebrations.

Bobby 

# Protesting against the Petrochemical Industry

By Siziwe Khanyile

## Sasol, Engen and SAPREF (Shell and BP) in the community spotlight

The month of November has been a busy one for environmental justice activism. Two of South Africa's oil refineries, Sapref and Engen, as well as petrochemical plant Sasol, have faced the wrath of communities in the past month.

All three have found themselves in the spotlight for various reasons - Sasol for pollution-causing health impacts to neighbouring communities, Engen for another massive fire at their refinery and Sapref, in collusion with DEAT, for lack of transparency and consultation on processes that are potentially risky to people and the environment.

Sasol has operations all over the world and the Secunda plant is said to be the largest synthetic fuels facility in the world. It is also the second-biggest emitter of carbon dioxide in South Africa, and counts among the top emitters in the world. The Secunda plant is multifaceted and comprises coal mining, refining of liquid fuels, production of synthetic fuels and other chemicals, a coal to liquid facility, as well as a power generation plant. In addition to these large volumes of carbon dioxide, other pollutants, including sulfur dioxide, particulate matter and volatile organic compounds, are emitted.

Supported by groundWork the neighbouring community of Embalenhle "took to the streets" to voice their concern over the health problems caused by this plant. In their memorandum to Sasol management the group of about 100 marchers, including environmental NGOs, church groups, traditional structures, ex-workers and other concerned community members, complained about experiencing a host of respiratory problems as a result of Sasol's operations.

As environmental justice NGOs in South Africa, working with communities, we need to tighten the

noose around Sasol. Currently, they are planning to build a new coal-to-liquids plant in Limpopo in spite of the environmental cost of the process of converting coal to liquid fuel.

eMbalenhle groups marching on Sasol promised the company that "we will be back" and demanded responses to their memorandum. Such action against a common enemy should become a regular sight as interest groups from all walks of life challenge and agitate for justice.

The Shell and BP Refinery (SAPREF) is one of Southern Africa's largest crude oil refineries. SAPREF is comprised of the refinery as well as a storage facility at the Durban Harbour. Historically, the refinery's record for public participation was not good until groundWork and the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA) fought for their space and gradually carved it out in legislation. The Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) have also started taking issues of public participation and consultation seriously (particularly as a result of progressive legislation on the matter).

It was therefore surprising to learn that DEAT granted SAPREF permission to decommission their Tetra-Lead tanks at their Island View Storage facility and refinery without public information or involvement through an EIA process. The concerns of the community that live near SAPREF are that such activity is likely to have a substantially detrimental effect on the environment and human health, and therefore such decisions should include all interested and affected parties.

As a result, the community, represented by SDCEA, has called in lawyers to question and to prevent the execution of the exemption as granted by the DEAT. They call into question reasons why local government, the community and other environmental groups were not consulted.



## Lead Story

This seems like a slap in the face for hard-fought-for civil society participation.

The Engen refinery is also at it again. A fire at the refinery, which started after midnight on November 13, adds to the list of four large fire events in the last two years. The fire occurred in the crude unit and has forced the refinery to close until mid-January, 2009.

Community groups in the area have also not rested. They have marched and picketed and, after the latest fire, called a community meeting to develop a strategy for dealing with the Engen refinery. At this community meeting, which took place in south Durban, sixteen 'truths' were exposed. These included: that Engen has a profit yield of R752 million per annum but are unwilling to improve technology and unwilling to relocate away from people; that Engen has a long history of fires, leaks, gassing incidents and accidents, as well as a history of poor maintenance of their plant; that Engen performs high risk activity or storage with no disaster management plan or an evacuation procedure that is known to the public; that

Engen fails to recognise and deal with all emissions, including the twenty six that community monitoring picked up using a bucket sample, many of which are cancer-causing; and that Engen continues to be harmful to people's health with several studies conducted to prove this.

In line with our constitutional rights, and considering that the refinery is so near to residential areas, the industry should shape up or ship out. Shaping up would involve adhering to stricter permits and standards particularly as a result of the historically poor record in terms of their environmental compliance.

The violations of environment and human health that's meted by these industries may be a drop in the ocean compared to all the other detrimental actions of industries all over the world. However, it takes one drop to create the wave of environmental degradation that we see today, and what is needed is a strategy that combines lobbying, advocacy, policy intervention, legislative change as well as "taking to the street".

Protestors march on Sasol.  
Picture by Siziwe Khanyile



# East and Southern Africa unite against oil

By Bobby Peek

## A workshop looking at oil results in a commitment to 'keep the oil in the soil'

On a visit to Justica Ambiental in the southern spring of 2006 I ran into a young student, Josh Dimon, who had just spent his first night on the African continent. Josh, a student out of Berkley, California, was not unlike any other young northern student, many of whom visit Africa yearly.

Josh was visiting Mozambique to prepare for a PhD, and to assist Justica Ambiental in their ever increasing work. After a good supper at Costa da Sol and an irate policeman pulling us over while he wielded an AK47 at us on a dark coastal dune road, one got a sense that Josh wanted to get intimately connected to Africa - this was different. He had done amazing research with his supervisor, Claudia Carr, to unpack the patchwork of oil and gas blocks in East and Southern Africa which have been carved up and sold, and resold, to various international corporations.

As in colonial times, where Africa was carved up in Europe and countries were created with straight lines where none existed, so is Africa presently being carved up – oil blocks in straight lines. All of this is being done in distant board rooms without speaking to the people who live on these lands and whose livelihoods will be threatened by these developments. After more discussion in a bustling yet laid back Maputo, Josh and myself, together with Justica Ambiental, agreed that we need to get this information to people on the ground so that people's actions can speak louder than some NGOs voice from the outside. We all agreed then, way back in 2006, that we would call a workshop of East and Southern African community people to share the information and to give people some space to consider a response to oil and gas in Africa.

Finally, in September 2008, groundWork, Justica Ambiental and the International Working Group on Oil hosted the East and Southern African workshop. 48 people, including both community representatives and NGOs from South Africa, Swaziland,

Mozambique, Tanzania, Malawi, Mauritius, Uganda, Angola, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea and west Africans from Nigeria, Chad, Mali and Congo Brazzaville, attended a five day workshop where information was shared on oil and gas and, critically, community people shared the experience of their present struggles and considered how these present struggles could be the platform for articulating the struggles in future. Participation was from a variety of sectors that had close links to the daily reality on the ground: fishermen in suits from Mauritius, Islamic clerics from rural Mozambique, community members from Lake Albert in Uganda and rural community folk from Ethiopia.

During the meeting a critical question emerged: can we make oil work in Africa? Can we have positive development from oil in Africa? We must not kid ourselves - we are not a staid bunch of homogenous communities in Africa. On the contrary, we are a vibrant and dynamic people. We have all lived through the scourge of colonialism, racism and now an economic elitism that is enforced by the 'comprador' nature of our elite in Africa. People grappled with the notion of whether they could engage with corporations and governments to get good deals with oil. Fortunately for the workshop, key participants from Oilwatch Africa and Oilwatch International were present, and the present experiences from West Africa and Latin America were placed on the table in all their naked and brutal reality.

Understanding the political context of each country and struggle was an important part of the workshop. Community people from the Niger Delta gave horrific accounts of the present situation in a war ravaged area. It was interesting to note that there are different levels of resistance to resource extraction, and the stories told and mulled over all resonated with the curse of extractives, i.e. environmental and livelihood destruction, the enclosure of the commons, the



## Air Quality

Delegates at the Oil Workshop involved in lively debate.  
Picture by Justin Fong



alarming practice of actively taking away peoples' rights, the failure of democratic decision making and the failure to allow people the right to meaningfully engage in the development debate.

Some participants, such as the fishermen of Mauritius, had never been exposed to the oil and gas debate and they were shocked to understand the potential impact of oil exploration on their critical resource of fish. Mozambican's were surprised to learn that just across the border in Tanzania they have colleagues who speak Swahili just like them and who are facing the same challenges of big oil. Malawi and Uganda, which share the African Rift Valley, also share the sad reality that companies want to exploit their natural lakes for oil. In Uganda, Tullow Oil is already in the advanced stages of getting approval to develop an oil refinery at the source of the Nile on Lake Albert.

There was a tension, as always in such workshops, between developing a network and getting some local stuff done on the ground. At the end of the

day, excitingly, people opted for a focus on cross border community work between people who are in close proximity to each other to develop nodes of action rather than just a network. As the local action develops, a broader network is the inevitable result.

Finally, through the intense debate of five days, it was clear that people were considering the very real campaign of 'keeping the oil in the soil', 'blocking the block' and 'keeping the coal in the hole'. As one of the Mauritian fisherman said in relation to oil drilling, "You do not want to disturb the devil's fire."

In the meantime, Josh Dimon is back in Mozambique, far from cell phones and the internet, where he is working and talking with rural community people to better understand how Africans will respond to the oil juggernaut, and to assist people in their response. Next year promises to be an exciting year of people doing local action, and groundWork is looking forward to getting involved in this with our Mozambican and Swaziland neighbours.



# Communities unite against Cement Kilns

By Rico Euripidou

**The first national civil society community exchange against cement kilns was held in Port Elizabeth in October**

On Monday, October 27<sup>th</sup>, 25 community representatives from throughout South Africa<sup>1</sup> met at the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro for the first national cement community exchange, hosted by groundWork, of people affected by cement operations nationally.

The idea of bringing together communities faced with similar environmental problems is mainly for them to share and exchange information about their local struggles. A key consideration, however, is also to build their ability to participate in democratic environmental governance with all key stakeholders including government, industry, labour and citizens. The ultimate goal of this is to ensure that communities participate in and enjoy equal power relations and effective participation in decision making, towards sustainable development and environmental justice.

Nelson Mandela Bay Metro was deliberately chosen as the ideal location to bring together communities because it is also the home of PPC New Brighton. This factory is bang in the middle of the New Brighton residential area and has long been a challenge for the community living on the fenceline. Annette Du Plessis from this community summarizes these universal community concerns affecting many communities around South Africa:

"I am a resident in the immediate PPC vicinity. Since living here over the past 20 years I increasingly began suffering more and more from chest problems. I am now a chronic asthma patient and am undergoing expensive medical treatment to be able to cope on a daily basis.

I have witnessed people dying and suffering from chest complaints in the area, many of whom were children - young people - or in the prime of their life. I live in the flats directly opposite PPC - the buildings have black saturation markings all over. Plants and trees look wilted and pale and are struggling to survive in the area. How much more the suffering of the people? PPC's pollution is of such a serious nature that I believe that PPC could be challenged constitutionally for the suffering and discomfort that they cause".

## **The trouble with cement kilns...**

The cement industry in South Africa is regulated using the outdated Air Pollution Prevention Act of 1965 (APPA), which ironically endorses pollution rather than calling on the cement industry to manage their pollution to an acceptable standard. Under the APPA the cement industry is only regulated for dust or particulates. They are not regulated for sulphur, nitrogen or any cancer causing chemicals such as volatile organic compounds or persistent organic pollutants such as dioxins and furans<sup>2</sup> or heavy metals such as mercury<sup>3</sup>. The production of dioxins and furans from the cement industry is exacerbated when the industry seeks to burn hazardous waste, tyres and other waste products.

It is a commonly accepted by the DEAT and the consolidated cement industry that government has failed to adequately regulate, monitor and enforce the cement industry effectively. Presently, all of the

<sup>1</sup> Community people are from Port Shepstone, Mafikeng, Pretoria, Lichtenberg and the Western Cape where PPC, Afrisam, Lafarge and Natal Portland Cement have their plants.

<sup>2</sup> Dioxins and Furans are inadvertently created through combustion and industrial activities and are considered to be persistent, bio-accumulative toxic compounds. Some are carcinogenic and are suspected to be neurological, developmental and reproductive toxicants or endocrine disruptors.

<sup>3</sup> Mercury is classified as a persistent, bioaccumulative toxic (PBT) chemical. It can cause neurological and developmental problems, particularly in children



cement industry permits include only dust emission standards, despite the fact that some of the kilns are already burning hazardous wastes such as sewage sludge and spent pot liners from the aluminum industry. The permission granted to the industry for burning this hazardous waste stream was given without public or local government consultation.

### **Community issues raised**

The two day meeting began with delegates providing report-backs from their own communities with summaries on the efforts that they are taking to minimise the impact of cement dust pollution in their areas.

Of great concern to delegates was the positive ROD which had already been granted to PPC Hercules in Pretoria to burn scrap tyres and hazardous waste, especially in light of the community opposition to this and previous assurances from PPC Hercules management that burning waste would not occur unless the community consented to it! In this regard delegates then agreed and signed the South African National Community Exchange Declaration petition calling on the GDACE to withdraw their record of decision for PPC Hercules Secondary Materials Co-Processing Program.

Furthermore, the Portfolio Committee Chair on Environmental Affairs and Tourism concluded the public participation process on The National Environmental Waste Management Bill by reassuring community and NGO representatives that no decision on incineration of waste in South Africa shall be undertaken without a prior review and approval by The Portfolio Committee Chair on Environmental Affairs and Tourism.

The Portfolio Committee Amendments to the National Environmental Management: Waste Bill [B 39—2007]; CLAUSE 69 stipulates the following criteria: "(6) Any regulation which pertains to the treatment of waste by means of incineration must be submitted to the National Assembly 30 days prior to publication."

While the Waste Bill is has yet to be assented to by the President of South Africa, the intention is clear and this ROD should not be considered until this process is dealt with.

More generally, communities expressed concerns about uncontrolled emissions, dust and smoke affecting adjacent communities, which universally experience high asthma rates (in New Brighton some houses in the vicinity of PPC are called *TB Huise* due to the prevalence of TB and aggravation of the TB Sufferers from the cement dust).

Most delegates agreed that existing community concerns are currently too grave to even consider burning waste. The existing community concerns need to be addressed first and in light of poor public relations between communities and cement factory management they feel that these serious issues need to be addressed urgently. A question that was asked by a delegate was "what makes the industry believe that they can safely burn hazardous waste onsite if they cannot adequately deal with current community concerns around air emissions?"

Many delegates stated that they do not trust the industry and they also expressed a wish that the cement industry relocate away from their residential areas! These concerns are further highlighted in the context that the local authorities and departments of health do not have the will or capacity to address these community concerns – many delegates stated that the "Health Departments do not address concerns adequately – we have never had a meaningful assessment by the health authorities."

### **Solidarity with the people who live near PPC New Brighton**

Following the meeting delegates worked in solidarity with the residents of New Brighton in their resistance to the pollution from PPC's New Brighton Plant. New Brighton folks have long complained of respiratory problems and eczema which they attribute to the PPC operations. The plant permanently bathes the community in fine cement dust.

A community meeting was arranged on Tuesday in Ferguson Road and attended by representatives from PPC and concerned community members. People were informed about the National community exchange and given an opportunity to raise their concerns.

Amongst these affected community members was Cricket CEO Gerald Majola's mother who stays



directly behind the PPC cement kiln. "Mrs. Majola is a house proud and extremely active octogenarian who takes exceptional pride in her garden. In July of this year a burst pipe on the PPC grounds released tons of water onto her property and killed all of her grass, vegetables and fruit trees that she has lovingly tended since moving into her home in 1963. PPC management has promised to look into and remedy the damage."

### Way forward

The community awareness and growing resistance to the cement industry in South Africa has increased over

the last year as community people become aware of the fact that the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) is collaborating with the cement industry to allow for the burning of waste, including hazardous waste. This despite community people living next to these plants asking the DEAT and the Portfolio Committee on Environment and Tourism in the National Assembly to veto these proposals. Members of the communities living near cement kilns visited Parliament a year ago in, November 2007, and requested that this practice be vetoed. 



The ruined garden and dying trees of Mrs Majola, who lives next to PPC's New Brighton cement plant. Picture by Alan Stratton



# A healthy environment is the first step towards healthy people

By Nomcebo Mvelase

groundWork takes the initiative to assist Pietermaritzburg nurses in exploring ways of making the health care system safer for the workforce and for patients treated within it.

Nurses are important to environmental health because they play key roles in protecting the health of all people and are in direct contact with patients, families and communities from many cultural and socio economic backgrounds.

After a long period of coordinating all the logistical arrangements for the workshop, the day finally came on 22 October, 2008, when 96 professional nurses

from all around uMgungundlovu District gathered at the City Royal Hotel in Pietermaritzburg. They were there, for the first time ever, not to discuss any advanced management of any particular disease but to revive the fundamental role of nurses: to prevent diseases. The theme of the day was "A healthy environment is a first step towards having healthy people".

This workshop was groundWork's initiative to support environmental health knowledge, skills and awareness among nurses who serve individuals and communities with the highest hope that eventually environmental health will be an integral component of nursing practice, education and even research. The nurses must have the credibility that enables them to provide scientifically sound information about environmental issues and toxic exposures.

Nurses estimate that 8-10% of all patients that report to their health institutions each month are suffering from some sort of chemical poisoning, but not even a single institution had proper guidelines for effective and up to date management of these cases. It is very obvious that there is not much being done to prevent these cases from occurring, let alone to adequately deal with them when they have occurred. This leads to inadequate care or even mismanagement of these critical cases. Amongst the cases that were discussed some reported that their patients (in most cases children) would come having ingested things like brake fluid, petrol, jeyes fluid, pit toilet cleaners and, most amazingly, even cattle dip chemicals!

Apart from chemicals being ingested mistakenly by children, we are exposed to a lot of chemicals,

Mr Siyananda Jikijela, from the Provincial Department of Health, gives the opening speech.  
Picture by Nomcebo Mvelase





Nurses engage in discussion at the workshop.  
Picture by Jesse Burton

radiation, and even polluted air and dust every day. As it is, we are faced with a global challenge of global warming and climate change. This triggers a lot of illnesses such as cancers and respiratory tract infections, including asthma. All these illnesses add to the burden faced by nurses everyday, placing more demands for human and material resources. According to the World Health Organisation report which was released in 2005, about three hundred million people world wide were estimated to be suffering from asthma. Asthma is a serious and yet chronic condition which needs an adequate and constant supply of effective but generally expensive medication. Asthmatics may experience frequent attacks, some of which might result in admission to hospital. This leaves the question of how much more overstretched should health services be, before we start going back to our pro-active roles of applying preventive measures. This reactive approach is not working and is simply not sustainable! We can't always wait for the illnesses to take their toll before we start making a noise out about them.

The other areas that appeared to have lots of gaps were the area of policies. The current policies for the management of health care waste do not cover the manner in which health care waste generated in the communities should be disposed of. As a result, nurses confirmed that waste such as sanitary

pads, insulin needles from patients who are giving themselves injections and soiled dressings and bandages from the outpatients are found everywhere in the communities. Such waste would be found being dragged around by dogs everywhere and sometimes the children would be playing with it where it is discarded in unauthorised dumpsites. Another area that needs special attention is that some nurses had an idea that it is safe for pharmaceutical waste to be flushed down the drain as water does get purified. Others were not sure what the best thing to do is, but again there is no coverage in the KwaZulu-Natal Health Care Waste Management Policy.

Health care workers need to have a unified voice to use when giving education and information to their patients rather than contrasting statements. They need to give scientifically sound information that is proven to be correct and safe. This workshop was a platform to identify the gaps and hopefully get them addressed in the near future in order that health care is given in its totality and in order that the fundamental human right of having people live in a safe environment is realised. I very much believe that following this workshop nurses will start working as change agents and advocate for a safer and healthier environment as, indeed, it is the first step towards having healthier people.



# KZN Waste Pickers cry for recognition

By Musa Chamane

Waste Pickers plan to work together in order to gain proper recognition for their work from government and from society

## Introduction

The 1<sup>st</sup> Provincial Waste Pickers or reclaimers' meeting was convened by groundWork in Pietermaritzburg on the 13<sup>th</sup> of November, 2008. The purpose of the meeting was to share experiences amongst waste pickers from various areas in the province. groundWork has been doing waste reclaiming research in three municipalities in South Africa - Msunduzi, Metshimaholo, and Emfuleni - and the findings were presented to the waste pickers. Solidarity amongst waste pickers was a crucial motivation for this meeting.

## Tripling the gain from recycling

Waste recycling, which encompasses waste reclaiming, is a very important activity for any country. It is clear that our country is still far away from properly practicing such a wonderful activity. Waste recycling has the potential of creating a win, win and win situation for everyone, including the environment, government, and people. Through recycling our natural resources are preserved. For instance, if paper was recycled maximally there would be fewer trees cut down and, as a result, more oxygen coming from the trees and a more attractive environment. Recycling will create employment opportunities and will also save space at the landfills.

## Law and reclaiming

Waste pickers were updated on the National Waste Bill Process and status. The Bill encourages salvaging but does not compel the municipalities to engage waste pickers on issues of waste reclaiming. It was clear that waste pickers have to engage with government nationally, provincially and locally for their own benefit on issues of waste recycling. Waste pickers regard landfills as their place of employment

and they are more than willing to take over any waste recycling initiatives that might be proposed by municipalities. They also feel that it is unfair not to be considered by municipalities when planning for waste recycling.

## Millions spent to protect waste

Emfuleni Municipality in the Vaal triangle set a very good example for waste recycling. The landfill manager committed himself to working with waste pickers. He helped them to organise themselves and arranges transport for them to go and sell to the highest bidder. Waste pickers in the Vaal are working at various landfill sites without any challenges or fear from being harassed by security and municipal officials. In contrast, Msunduzi appeared to be the most brutal municipality in dealing with waste pickers. The conflict between security and waste pickers resulted in assault and abuse of waste pickers. One of the waste pickers was even shot in the hip by security personnel. It appears foolish to spend millions of Rand on fencing the landfill and to hire extra security just to protect waste!

The Pietermaritzburg group expressed anger at the municipality because they feel that it does not make sense for them to be locked out of the landfill. The reason provided by the municipality for not letting them in is the issue of safety. Waste pickers in Pietermaritzburg are really angry and they expressed a desire to meet municipal top officials soon. If the municipal officials fail to listen they are planning to do a protest to the mayor's office before the end of the year.

There were various comments and issues raised by waste pickers.



### A justified livelihood denied

One of the issues raised by a reclamer from Pietermaritzburg was to question why municipalities refuse them access to the landfill. He further explained that he normally comes to town to look for piece jobs daily and, if he is not successful that day, he goes to reclaim at the landfill site. At the end of the day he will go and sell to the recyclers and next day he will have the money for a taxi to come back to town to look for a job.

### An association of waste pickers is looming

Amongst the issues raised were issues around the establishment of an association of waste pickers in South Africa. One of the waste pickers raised the issue of working with community structures to strengthen awareness of waste recycling and its importance. It was mentioned also that municipal officials need to be capacitated in issues of waste recycling because clearly they cannot see the contribution made by waste pickers.

The KZN Provincial Minister of Transport launched the Waste for Food "Siyanzenzela Waste Collection" project early this year. Fifty waste pickers from the Jika Joe (Ashe Road) informal settlement were promised that they would receive food parcels twice a month in exchange for collecting the waste. Concerns were raised as pickers now only get one parcel a month, which has a value of less than R400. The pickers believe that the project is not sustainable, and that there is corruption within the project.

### Resolutions taken at the meeting

- Pietermaritzburg waste pickers asked groundWork to call the designated municipal official to a meeting on the 18th of November 2008. Should he fail to come or not give a positive answer they will engage in a mass action to the mayor's office.
- Mooi River has been asked to develop a business plan and submit it to the municipality. They can, however, work at the landfill in the meantime.
- Stanger pickers intend engaging with the municipality to make sure that they are part of the proposed waste transfer station.



Melanie Samson presents the findings of the research done into waste reclaimers around the country. Her report will be published by groundWork in December.

Picture by groundWork

- Durban pickers pledged their support. They stated that they had had their chances, but had made mistakes. They urged the other pickers to learn from these mistakes.

### Conclusion

In KwaZulu-Natal currently we have registered 110 informal waste pickers for our database. It was good seeing the waste pickers sharing experiences amongst themselves in their own language. It was clear that waste pickers suffer disrespect in our society, and they have vowed to work hard to restore their dignity. At the same time their priority is to be recognised by government. The other intention is to make people of this country aware of the fact that waste picking is a dignified profession in developed countries.

The research on waste reclaimers will shortly be available in a booklet from groundWork or as a pdf from [www.groundwork.org.za](http://www.groundwork.org.za).



# Newcastle Exchange

By Jesse Burton  
groundWork intern

## A national exchange of community activists aims to unite communities in their struggles against polluting industries

The groundWork Annual Air Quality National Community Exchange recently took place in Newcastle, with community representatives from all over South Africa attending. The purpose of the exchange, which takes place annually at a national level and biannually at an international level, is to unite community representatives in their different struggles against polluting industries.

Present at the exchange were Samson Mokoena from the Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance, Thami Mthiyane from Highveld Environmental Justice Alliance, Bongani Mthembu from South Durban Community Environmental Alliance, Solomon Mdluli, a former ArcelorMittal worker, and Mpho Selemela from Tsebo as well as Siziwe Khanyile and Jesse Burton from groundWork.

Over the two day exchange information was shared about how communities are struggling against poisoning by industry, a community meeting with Newcastle residents was held, and a Bucket Brigade workshop and a Toxic Tour (which required some stealthy snooping around the secretive Karbochem Industrial site) took place.

Samson and Bongani showed us photographs of the contamination caused by the industries around their homes – notably ArcelorMittal in the Vaal and Engen and Sapref in Durban. Thami explained how children play in the slag heaps that surround Embalenhle township in Secunda. Solomon told us how hundreds of people are crowded into a former Mittal hostel without electricity and water and wait for their pensions from the corporation. On a more upbeat note, Mpho outlined how they use drama and music to educate people about environmental problems and how his organisation designs clothes to raise money. After

reviewing what is happening in towns all over South Africa, plans were made for future cooperation and projects, including skills exchanges and simultaneous protests in the various towns.

As well as the exchange of information and planning for future joint projects amongst themselves, the community representatives also explained their struggles to Phyllis Kruger, who is concerned about the polluting industry in Newcastle. Bongani showed Phyllis (and Gothic Films, who are documenting everything) how to take a bucket sample so that they can test the emissions that companies such as ArcelorMittal, Karbochem, African Amines (a Sasol subsidiary) and NPC are exposing their community to. They have taken two samples already and are eagerly awaiting the results!

Phyllis also called a meeting of Newcastle residents to discuss the problems they are facing from air and water pollution. The 60 or so people who attended all agreed that, in their town, illnesses, cancer, coughing and burning eyes and throats were a common occurrence. Arcelor laudably sent three managers to the meeting and they agreed to work with the community to monitor their emissions. However, it is too soon to tell whether they were simply 'managing dissent' or if they really are committed to meaningful change. The problems with water in the town, which regularly faces streams of sewage and chemicals gushing into the Ncandu River, were also discussed at the meeting.

In all it was a very busy and highly rewarding weekend, which has forged links between community groups all over South Africa. Hopefully Newcastle residents will be able to use the experiences of other communities to obtain cleaner air and water in their city. 



# More Environmental Injustice in South Durban

by Michelle Soderstrom  
SDCEA intern

## Transnet's new multi products pipeline will destroy rather than benefit people

It is Transnet's intention to build a massive multi-products pipeline through the south Durban corridor into Gauteng province. If we allow this pipeline to be laid it will damage the culture, livelihoods, health and safety of vulnerable south Durban poor black communities. Once again the residents of forced removals during apartheid are faced with the challenge of fighting a development project from which they will not benefit. The South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA), through consulting with various communities, has raised a number of questions about the development of this pipeline and will do everything in its power to prevent it from being laid through south Durban. If that fails, we will work with the local communities to ensure that we develop an awareness of the dangers and hazards of this project and how they can deal responsibly with these impacts.

Although we find fault with many details of the pipeline project, we actually oppose it in its entirety because we think that it encourages the use of carbon emitting fuels that will worsen the effect of global climate change. South Africa is already one of the world's largest polluters and new infrastructure should be invested in reducing this trend, not increasing it. The rationale for the project is that the existing pipeline does not have sufficient capacity for the future and may soon exceed its lifespan. We believe that the existing pipeline should be renovated and upgraded rather than left to rot underground when a new one is built. While there is a need for these fuels, this pipeline will cause more problems than it solves and cannot be carried out as planned. Renewable energy and other sustainable technologies should be the focus of Transnet's and South Africa's projects.

If it must be built, however, SDCEA does not believe that this pipeline should be placed through south Durban and but should rather be re-routed. Other routes have been considered including one through north Durban, one along the railroad, and one along the existing pipeline route. While the pipeline's presence would be an inconvenience and a hazard to anyone who lives alongside it, the situation is even worse for the people of south Durban who already coexist with massive industries that create an unfit living environment. The National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) Section 2.4.c says:

"Environmental justice must be pursued so that there is no unfair discrimination in the way that negative environmental impacts are distributed."

The people of south Durban have had negative environmental impacts "distributed" on them for long enough. The placement of the pipeline through south Durban in areas that have many pipelines already, are heavily polluted, industrially congested, and environmentally sensitive, leads to unfair discrimination. This is not an example of serving people's interests equitably. The people of south Durban will not enjoy any benefit from the pipeline's presence and will not even be compensated for the inconvenience and health risks that it poses. In short, they have no reason to support it.

Transnet has made a mockery of the public participation process by failing to educate people who live along the pipeline route of what they will be living with. SDCEA has discovered numerous families living directly along the proposed path of the pipeline that had no idea that it would be installed in their backyards or what that would mean for them. After SDCEA brought this problem to light, Transnet



The south Durban communities are already overburdened by polluting and dangerous industry right on their door step.  
Picture by groundWork



attempted to improve their public participation but they have still managed to undermine this important process by holding meetings that few can attend rather than going to people's homes and by going to community leaders rather than the people themselves.

To make matters worse, Transnet's history of leak monitoring and maintenance reflects an inability to properly manage their dangerous pipelines and thus makes them undeserving of another one. They should not be rewarded by being allowed to make a new pipeline when they haven't managed their past ones properly. Historically, leaks have been detected by people living along the pipeline not by Transnet. Small leaks could be poisoning the air, soil and water long before anyone notices it and long before Transnet takes care of it.

SDCEA calls for a public hearing to be conducted by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism in affected areas in south Durban in order to hear

first hand the experiences and concerns of residents about this pipeline development. SDCEA demands that an independent social study be conducted in conjunction with local educational institutions to determine how the pipeline is (i) understood by rural people and (ii) how it will impact on their immediate and long term future.

This pipeline is yet another tragedy for the people of south Durban, who have been victimised over and over again by ruthless industries squeezing profit out of the last remnants of a once healthy environment. This problem is, however, greater than this small area. It is time now to stop unsustainable development for the benefit of the entire country and the world. While large industries carry on with outdated solutions to new and different problems, SDCEA will fight for what we know is best. The answer lies in treating all people equally and responsibly and by putting our money and efforts into programs that do not worsen environmental problems or diminish the quality of life for our people. 



# Eskom Eyes the Zambezi

by Anabela Lemos, Justiça Ambiental (Maputo, Mozambique)  
and Lori Pottinger, International Rivers

## Will power demand lead to another destructive dam on southern Africa's most heavily dammed river?

It's a long and often bumpy ride from Maputo to the quiet villages perched above the Zambezi near Mphanda Nkuwa, a gorge whose name means "the scream of the passing water". We drive through a lush valley awash with newly leafing spring-green trees and wildflowers on our way to Chinangwe. As we slow for villages, young girls come over to sell us mangoes, and boys to gawk at our big stack of camping gear. Finally, we arrive at the river and set up camp in the shade of a huge baobab tree. Here, where the government of Mozambique is pushing to build a large dam just downstream from the huge Cahora Bassa Dam, life is slow, hot and hard, but with a generous river running through it.

Our small posse of activists, hailing from Maputo, Cape Town, Lisbon, and California, are making a field visit so we can hear first-hand what local people think about the coming dam project. Despite the difficulties of daily life in this remote place with no modern services, no one we talk to says they welcome the huge project. They all know people who were displaced for Cahora Bassa, and they all know how badly that turned out for them.

"We're very poor people, but here we have the basics," one older man says. "We can't tell the government not to build the dam, but we do want to know where we'll be resettled. It's very important that we are given at least the same conditions as we have here. Without that guarantee, we will not leave here." Others were more blunt. "I do not agree with the building of this dam," a young man told us. "I don't believe we will see any benefits from it."

Africa's large dams have consistently been built at the expense of rural communities, who have been forced to sacrifice their lands and livelihoods to them yet have reaped few benefits. In southern Africa, large hydro dams from Angola to Zimbabwe have wreaked considerable social, environmental and economic damage, and have left a trail of "development-induced poverty" in their wake. Project benefits have been consistently overstated and inequitably shared. Large hydropower dams reinforce centralised power grids, which disproportionately benefit industry and higher income groups, and widen income disparities (and energy inequities) between the poor and the elite.

Mphanda Nkuwa is likely to forcibly resettle at least 1,400 people in the reservoir area, and affect 200,000 or more people living downstream, where changes in water flow will affect livelihoods in numerous ways. But these villagers' fears about their futures are not the top concern for the engineers at UTIP, the Mozambique dam agency. "You NGOs should not create false expectations with affected people. This dam is a public-private partnership, and it has to be profitable," said a representative of the Technical Unit for Implementation of Hydropower Projects (UTIP), the government's hydropower agency, at a public meeting on the project in Maputo last November. "We can't give everything for free to communities; we can't solve all their problems. If we could, I'd move to the Mphanda area myself."



A young girl holds a fish. The proposed new dam will impact on the lives of children such as this, decimating their villages and their ability to sustain themselves. Picture by Lori Pottinger



### **Warming World, Drying Rivers?**

If the dam is built, it may also mean a lost opportunity for restoring the Zambezi Delta and improving fisheries, wildlife habitat, and agriculture with more-natural flows from Cahora Bassa Dam. But Mphanda Nkuwa will require Cahora Bassa to operate according to its current destructive release patterns, and make the restoration project very difficult. The dam could also reduce the natural flow of river sediments, which are critical to the delta's health.

Climate risk is another problem that is being ignored by project planners. Climate change is making hydropower less dependable, and the wise use of water resources even more critical. The Zambezi basin is known for its climatic variability. Climate change is expected to increase the variability of rainfall in the region (increasing the risk of both worse droughts and floods), thus making hydropower even riskier. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has stated it has "very high confidence" that southern Africa will "suffer a decrease in water resources due to climate change", while a recent University of Cape Town study shows small decreases in rainfall could cause drastic reductions in river flows in Africa, including the Zambezi. To date, no large hydropower dam has been designed to take into account climate change scenarios on the bottom line, and Mphanda will certainly not be an exception.

### **Outside Influences**

Like many huge infrastructure projects in Africa, this one is heavily dependent on outside forces. Without the help of China, Brazil, Eskom and maybe even the World Bank, the project would not get off the drawing board.

The Mozambique government has listed Mphanda Nkuwa as a preferred project for many years. It has tried a number of times to lure investors to support the US\$2.3 billion project, but was unable to get any serious interest until earlier this year, when China's Export-Import Bank stepped forward with a financial commitment. Now, the 1,500MW dam is said to be far along, though the government is keeping all information about the project close to its chest, leaving NGOs in the dark.



There is concern that China will ignore the serious social and environmental impacts of the project. China says it does not interfere in the domestic affairs of other countries. China's African Policy of January 2006 stresses that China "respects African countries' independent choice of the road of development" and will "increase assistance to African nations with no political strings attached."

Eskom is another key player in Mphanda Nkuwa because Mozambique cannot use most of the electricity the dam is expected to produce. *Business Report* magazine states: "Eskom is unlikely to invest in [the dam]. Rather, it would negotiate a long-term power purchasing agreement, and the Mozambican government would raise finance to build the power plants... There will certainly be hard bargaining over the price." A previous power-purchase deal between Eskom and Mozambique was a tense one, because for years Eskom enjoyed below-market rates for electricity from Cahora Bassa. Like the Mozambique agencies involved in the dam, Eskom has been mostly uncommunicative with NGOs who have contacted them with concerns about the dam.

### **A Better Way?**

The government is not planning to study alternatives to the dam project. There is little awareness within Mozambique's electricity sector either of the growing number of viable, sustainable energy solutions now taking off elsewhere in the world, or the need for "no regrets" energy planning that will ensure Mozambique is able to adapt to a changing climate. There is no process to conduct a grid-wide analysis that would evaluate the various energy options appropriate for the region as a whole.

The most readily available, lowest-risk and lowest-cost way to add watts to the grid is energy efficiency. South Africa is currently one of the most energy-intensive economies in the world, and there is much room for improvement in efficiencies. In 2002, Eskom announced that it could reduce energy demand by up to 11,000 megawatts with energy efficiency measures and "demand-side management" (DSM) programs.

There are other good options too, for adding power to the grid in South Africa without destroying rivers in

Mozambique. There is high untapped potential for wind, solar and ocean power, among others. All of these options are more costly than coal, and Eskom has moved at a glacial pace to develop them. But like coal, large hydros such as Mphanda Nkuwa have a long list of "added costs" that are never included in the project balance sheet. The people, plants and animals of the Zambezi Valley should not be forced to subsidise large industrial plants and South African cities with their lives and livelihoods.

Given the reluctance of the Mozambique government to seriously analyze energy needs and options before moving forward with the dam, our organisations are undertaking a review of research into potential "market-ready" green energy alternatives to the dam, both in South Africa and Mozambique. We believe it is critical to devise an energy plan for the region that will "first, do no harm" to water resources, whose value will continue to increase as climate change's impacts grow.



This tranquil scene will be one from the past should the proposed new dam go ahead. Picture by Lori Pottinger

For more information:

View a slideshow, "Defending the Zambezi: Africa's River of Life" (<http://www.internationalrivers.org/node/3140>). Sign a petition asking the government to review all energy options, and involve civil society, before moving forward with the dam: <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/23/protect-the-zambezi-river>



### **Royal Dutch Shell are to at last go to trial for complicity in torture and murder**

A court date has at last been set for a human rights and racketeering case against Shell and the head of its Nigerian operation. The case was first brought in 1996, but Shell has been filing motion after motion to postpone the trial date. In October 2008 Judge Wood rejected Shell's latest attempts, and set the date for February 2009.

The cases, Wiwa v. Royal Dutch Shell and Wiwa v. Anderson have been filed by the Centre for Constitutional Rights, with support from EarthRights International, on behalf of relatives of murdered activists who were fighting for human rights and environmental justice in Nigeria.

The defendants are charged with complicity in human rights abuses, including summary execution, crimes against humanity, torture, inhumane treatment, arbitrary arrest, wrongful death, assault and battery and infliction of emotional distress.

The cases have been brought under the Alien Tort Statute and the Torture Victim Protection Act.

### **Shell to face legal action over pollution**

Four Nigerian plaintiffs, fishermen and farmers in the Niger Delta who have sustained huge damage through oil spills in their villages, are bringing suit against Shell in the Netherlands. It will be the first time that Shell's liability for pollution in another country would be asserted within its home country.

Subsistence farming and fishing are the mainstay of the 27 million people living in the oil-exploited Niger Delta. Oil spills, of which 250 are reported annually by Shell Nigeria, have poisoned the soil and water, impacting deeply on the lives of the people.

Shell is aware of the damage that it has caused and could act to ameliorate the situation if it so chose, but has neglected to do so.

### **Toxic waste is behind Somali piracy**

The Tsunami of 2004 provided evidence to support rumours of illegal dumping of toxic wastes in the Somali seas. Rusting containers were washed up onto the beaches and smashed open by the waves, exposing the frightening activity that has been going on for more than a decade. There is apparently evidence of uranium radioactive waste, lead, heavy metals like cadmium and mercury, industrial waste, hospital waste and chemical waste. Since the containers came to the Puntland shores, hundreds of residents have fallen ill, suffering from mouth and abdominal bleeding, skin infections and other ailments.

Since the start of the year, there have been over 60 hijackings of ships by Somali pirates. While money is probably the primary objective, pirates say that much of the ransom money would go towards cleaning up the waste. A spokesman for the pirates said "The Somali coastline has been destroyed, and we believe this money is nothing compared to the devastation that we have seen on the seas."

The Somali coastline used to sustain hundreds of thousands of people. Now much of it is destroyed, primarily by Somalian ministers who entered into agreements with foreign companies to allow them to dump waste. Mohammed Gure, chairman of the Somalia Concern Group said "these so-called ministers have sold their nation to fill their own pockets."

### **Shell must return land to Nigerians**

While it has appealed the verdict, a Nigerian judge ruled, in August 2008, that Shell must return to the local population the land in Nigeria on which the oil terminal Bonny Island has been built. Two families of Bonny Island and a council of tribal chiefs brought the case against Shell.



# Goodbye Jon, Hullo Joy

By Bobby Peek

There's been a change in leadership on the groundWork Board



At groundWork's (Friends of the Earth South Africa) ninth Annual General Meeting, Joy Kistnasamy was unanimously voted in as Chair of the Board of Trustees after Jon White stepped down having lead us for our first nine years – our formative years. We must say a big thank you to Jon for his leadership, enthusiasm and time over the last years. He served us well and, in repeated attempts to move on, the Board asked him to continue the work – and this he did diligently. Jon remains on the Board of trustees.

Joy has been on the Board of Trustees for the last 5 years.

For groundWork her election was a significant occasion, for in Joy we have an educator, researcher, academic and activist who is key to groundWork's future.

Joy has read for both environmental and commerce degrees, a rare but important mix of 'new and old' schooling.

Joy cut her teeth as a researcher at the Nelson Mandela Medical School, in her activism at the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance, the foremost community environmental justice network in the country, and through her academia at the University of Durban Westville and her environmental research at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. A rich grounding seldom found.

But it is not only all of this that Joy brings to groundWork – it is also her passion to be able to break new ground with the work that she is doing, her passion to ensure that her students become leaders of tomorrow in whatever they are doing, and her passion to ensure that research has a meaning for people on the ground, and not just for shelves in academic libraries.

I look forward to the very many years that groundWork will have the pleasure and honour of having Joy Kistnasamy leading the charge against environmental injustice in South Africa, Africa and indeed globally.



# Who is JA!

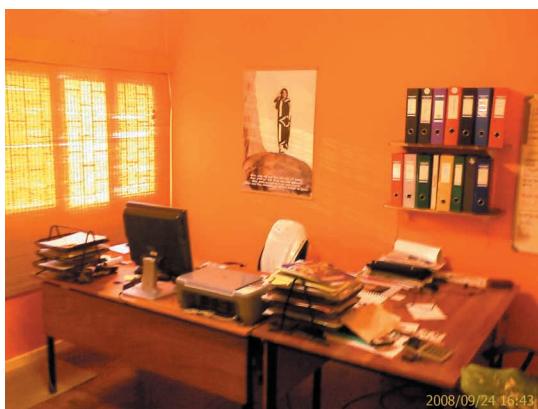
By Bobby Peek



of the project officers, said it was the cheapest paint they got on the market, but hey it did the job. From lime to some form of pink, from yellow to orange, it is shock therapy. Your senses are challenged. But then, so are you, for Justice Ambiental is a place where there is a buzz as interns mix with staff in a place that is certainly too small for so many people. Small it might be in size, however, but it is bustling with the amount of work that is going on.

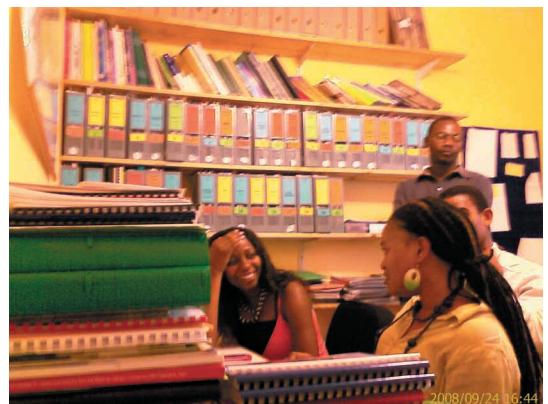
Justica Ambiental (JA!) is Portuguese for environmental justice and JA means "now" in Portuguese.

From dams to pollution, from agrofuels to oil and gas, from toxic waste to climate change – people are busy writing, researching and working with community people to make a new world in Mozambique; to develop a dialogue and development path in Mozambique that takes it away from the global capital paradigm that seeks to export all of Mozambique's resources. South Africa is the main recipient of 'aid' from Mozambique as we obtain our electricity from the Cahora Bassa at a rate that we can afford to 'give it away' to the likes of ArcelorMittal and BHP Billiton.



Downtown Maputo is a drab place with dirty white, greying buildings, many of them unfinished or in a state of serious disrepair. The past colonial Mediterranean-African mix that once made Maputo stunning has the potential to re-emerge and for Maputo to take its place as possibly Africa's most beautiful city.

Walking up a dark stairway we followed Anabela Lemos to Justica Ambiental offices on the first floor of a block of flats in downtown Maputo. After a knock and a bit of fiddling behind the door, it opens into an office that hits your senses head on as it contrast boldly with the outside. Daniel, one



To satisfy our insatiable desire for energy, Mozambique is planning to dam more of the Zambezi for our needs. Who is questioning this? It is not the leadership of Mozambique but rather the people in the Zambezi Valley and JA! Mozambique does not need the energy from another dam, so why mess with people's livelihoods?

JA! joined the Friends of the Earth International family in November and with all this energy and spirit they are going to make a great contribution to the Federation and to environmental justice in Africa.

