

GROUNDWORK



**The climate
gangsters
gather...**

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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 campaign areas are: Climate Justice and Energy, Air Quality, Waste and Environmental Health.

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groundWork is the South African member of Friends of the Earth International

CREDITS:

Printed on recycled paper from Sappi Fine Papers

Layout by Boutique Books - Printing by ArrowPrint

The climate gangsters gather on the African continent for the UNFCCC COP17 in December to carve out the world's climate future
Cover design by Barry Downard.



From the Smoke Stack



by groundWork Director, Bobby Peek

It was hell, a place I would not like to revisit. What was hell? Yes, you guessed right – the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's 17th jamboree. Never trust a COP (an English word for a policeperson) was the mantra on the streets at the civil society gathering. We learned *that* when we got a commitment to a 4-5 degree temperature increase, emission increases (rather than decreases) and an empty bank account for the Green Climate Fund. Indeed, one does not trust or put faith in politicians and the global elite. So, it was a failure and I am sure that over the next few months there will be very many waxed lyrics on this.

But we must not take a self defeatist approach. Yes, we did not get anything positive from the negotiations on the inside, and the outside and the Peoples' Space was not without its challengers, but, all in all, women's movements, farmers, fisherfolk, the homeless, those challenging for equitable access to energy – mainly the poor – did manage to get the message to the South African government and to our esteemed world leaders that this COP was not about big NGOs and politically neutral statements about climate change, but was about the everyday pain and suffering of the people. This was the answer society gave to governments, this was the response that government was very worried about. Government was happy to see tens of thousands of people in the streets chanting no to climate change, but they did not want to see a few thousand denouncing their system and challenging the broader implications of climate change – the poor are getting it in the neck because of climate change, while the elite are making money from the very thing that is destroying the earth.

Yes, they are making money on climate change. Ask any carbon trade pusher about this. While the carbon markets are failing – as Patrick Bond can show ample evidence of – those setting them up – dealers, consultants, senior politicians and

bureaucrats – are laughing all the way to the bank. Money-making through fossil fuel combustion and over-consumption is the root cause of climate change, and those pushing carbon trading want us to believe that by making more money the climate change problem can be solved. Up whose proverbial backside are they trying to blow hot air?

Our strength outside the protected and restricted negotiating chambers were the very infiltrators that government was so worried about: not the 'black bloc' but the world's poor. The climate debate and negotiations need to be occupied with as much decentralised national force as possible. Some of it started at the COP at the speakers' corner a few hundred metres away but the next "occupy" needs to be in all cities and towns globally, rather than Qatar. It needs to be those who are affected – the so called infiltrators to the climate debate – who are at the centre of the debate, not large NGOs in fancy halls. We need to "occupy our political spaces" for democracy. We need democratic sovereignty that is ... the right of peoples to a democracy that ensures ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own democratic systems. It puts those that vote and actively work in their democracies at the heart of the systems and policies rather than those with the most money and resources, such as corporations.

During the first week of COP, which came after groundWork's Dirty Energy Week, my mantra was "this too shall pass". The week started off with a heated television debate between myself and Ambassador Mxakato-Diseko about government failure to meaningfully act on climate change. A strange debate, for she stated she would just talk about process and not policy – but nevertheless entered the policy debate since one cannot divorce the one from the other. When confronted with the facts of South Africa's huge climate footprint, which results from giving cheap electricity to companies



and continuing on a fossil fuel path, things got a bit nervy. Needless to say, there were no pleasantries after the interview. I was left in an empty studio with only the production staff.

But this was indeed the start of things to come. The first week came to a head with the Global Day of Action, where a good turn-out of environmental and social justice activists took to the streets but were harassed and attacked by the host city volunteers in green track suits with the UN logo. They soon became known as the Green Bombers, referencing Zimbabwe's National Youth Service programme whose participants have been implicated in human rights violations. This UN and South African state-endorsed violence was not stopped by the police, no matter how much the head of the police at the march was asked to pull the 'green bombers' off to a side road because they were not part of the march. The police were on the phone with various senior people, obviously taking instructions from them not to stop the violence.

This violence came back to haunt us on Thursday the 8th of December when our President hastily called for a City Hall dialogue which was nothing more than a process road show of democracy rather than a true engagement. At this gathering we called on South Africa to stand with Africa. groundWork staff and movement people came in with placards saying "Stand with Africa" as a supportive message to South Africa and our African brothers and sisters. The presidential security and other security staff did not agree with this, and the people were removed from the City Hall dialogue. Just as this was happening, a scuffle broke out between Greenpeace and Action Aid staff people and the Green Bombers as Greenpeace and Action Aid people also tried to take out banners. These incidents of violence and attempts at intimidating people wanting to meaningfully participate in their democracies is part of the sad legacy of the COP in SA, and indeed COPs for some time.

While all this was going on in Durban, on the evening of the 8th of December, or the early hours of the morning of the 9th, groundWork offices were broken into and our computer server and TV were removed. Computers were left behind. The alarm did not go off. The police, the computer technicians

and the insurance people are all convinced that whoever took the server knew what they came in for, as it was a neat removal of a single unit of computer equipment.

Are these events connected? You be the judge.

Finally, the Friday that we thought was the last day of the COP came and 350.org called on Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace to support their inside action where they wanted to make a strong call for the Ministers to support a strong African position. Kumi Naidoo of Greenpeace and myself, representing Friends of the Earth International, were shoved to the front with the Maldives Minister to escort him to the Ministerial plenary session. The inside protest started off with much buzz – I am sure the UN security staff knew something was up – but they did not know who to challenge first. The chanting started, then a weak Shoshaloza. But, when Bongani Mthembu from the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance, standing next to me, shoved his fist into the air and restarted Shoshaloza with much more vigour and animation, the eyes of the UN security staffer facing us popped out and he seemed to go paler than he already was. Was this an African war cry starting, he must of thought? Bongani's rendition of Shoshaloza got the crown gathering and growing. After holding the space for around two hours – it is said, I lost sense of time – the UN Security staff de-badged around twenty-five of us occupiers. Sadly, our hundreds of comrades who were chanting with us, refused to take the final challenge and be out of a meaningless COP. But we were out and did not have to endure the next close to forty-eight hours of the over run. The COP finally finished early on Sunday morning.

This was the COP that came to Africa, this was the COP that ignored Africa, this was the COP where African leaders failed to save Africa, this was the COP that will be remembered for killing whatever little hope we had left in terms of the Kyoto Protocol (insiders believed that Kyoto was a last hope). This was the COP that all those on the inside will deny incinerates Africa and want to persuade us has saved the world. This is the COP that President Zuma called a success.

Till next time, when I hope I will be able to be more cheerful! ☺



The Durban outcome

by David Hallowes and Bobby Peek

As expected, COP17 failed the world

Ahead of the COP, African Ministers met in Bamako and agreed that, to save the world, we need to limit the temperature increase to well below 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels; that the major historical polluters (AKA the rich Northern countries) must reduce their emissions by at least forty percent by 2017, and that they must make new and additional public finances available to Southern countries to enable the urgent actions needed to save people's lives and the environment.

In Brussels, while the COP was in session, Europe's leaders patched agreement after agreement in a desperate attempt to avoid the economic depression into which their devotion to 'the market' has led them. In Durban, the world's leaders went into extra time on the climate negotiations but the deal done there merely confirms that severe and prolonged global depression presents the best hope that global carbon emissions will be reduced at the scale required to avoid escalating the already dangerous climate crisis.

It may be recalled that, during the first round of the depression, between 2008 and 2009, the national states made some \$13 trillion available to bail 'the market' – effectively defined by a core group of just 147 corporations – out from the consequences of its insatiable greed. Since the national states assumed the costs of market failure, "the market" now insists that these costs are passed onto the people. The citizens of the weakest countries in the Euro-zone are the first in line for the austerity treatment demanded by "the market".

Throughout the process of climate negotiations, national states have represented their respective interests in the global accumulation of capital. The

USA in particular has ensured that there will be no deal that jeopardises corporate power. The Durban session clarified, if clarity was needed, that it will not, under any circumstance, agree to any binding obligation to reduce carbon. Not now, not ever. Nor will it agree to pay more than a token amount into any climate fund. It will instead use China as a scapegoat for its own refusal to act.

The "Durban Platform" opens a new negotiating track within the climate negotiations. This is to develop some form of new agreement with obligations applicable to all parties. This initiative, proposed by the EU and supported by the South African hosts who wanted a result with brand value, is meaningless. As it has been in the past, the condition for agreement is that it should be ineffective in addressing climate change.

The costs of inaction will be severe. The poor will be hit first, the people of Africa and of the drowning islands will be hit first, but ultimately all will perish. The people of the world must consider whether the short-term interest of the ruling corporate and state elites is worth it and, if not, what they can do about it.

It is of particular concern to groundWork that the South African state enabled, and then justified, the use of informal violence against legitimate protest. On the first occasion, official Durban City 'volunteers' – who were in fact paid to be there – joined the people's march organised for the Global Day of Action on the 3rd of December. They responded with violence to protesters who denounced the record of Jacob Zuma's presidency. Five days later, at an open meeting with President Zuma in the Durban City Hall, the City volunteers



attacked people holding posters which called on South Africa to stand firm with the African Bamako position. President Zuma did nothing to intervene and city officials later justified their volunteers' actions.

Without a very radical change of policies, more people will suffer growing distress in consequence of both economic depression and climate change. And more people will come onto the streets to denounce policies which protect the rich at their expense. It appears that the state used the COP to rehearse violent responses to even the mildest forms of dissent. Parallel with this rehearsal, the Secrecy

Bill and the Weather Bill are respectively designed to close down people's access to information and their right to free speech on pollution and weather incidents.

We believe that South Africans who are concerned with environmental justice, with climate justice or even with the physical survival of people on earth must defend and expand on these freedoms which are essential to their capacity for action. ✊



Dirty Energy Week

by Bobby Peek

groundWork arranged a very successful pre-COP meeting for NGOs to share both on-the-ground struggle experiences, and UNFCCC inside policy processes

What the climate jamboree did reinforce in Durban was that the world is indeed in crisis. We see the ecological crisis, as manifested by climate change; the energy crisis, as manifested by peak oil and the global price of oil; and the imperial crisis manifested in the decline of the global hegemony of the United States. This triple crisis impacts upon the poor the most, as Southern governments give up more of their land, water and air to polluting industries in the name of "development". This in turn impacts upon peoples' health, as social services get cut because of austerity measures and as the impacts of climate change affect the poor more greatly, especially in Africa where the temperature rise is 1.5 times higher than the global average and already exceeds 1°C.

But the crisis that is most critical is the one in which we believe that institutions such as the UN will deliver a multi-lateralism that will secure a better future for all.

So, instead of placing all our faith in the UN system, more than one hundred community, union and NGO representatives gathered from the 22nd to the 25th of November to participate in the The Dirty Energy Week gathering, organised by groundWork, together with fourteen national and international NGOs and community organisations.

The gathering brought debates from those organisations following UNFCCC inside policy processes to those organisations and people who are resisting dirty energy projects that are impacting upon their lands and livelihoods: from oil drilling in the Niger Delta to tar sands in Canada, from coal mining in South Africa to shale gas in Israel and the South African Karoo region, from US coal power station struggles to the eminent nuclear energy struggle in SA.

Nnimmo Bassey, Chair of Friends of the Earth International and environmental justice activist in the Niger Delta, opened the week warning that "climate negotiations packages are created to show that the world is going green. But we cannot call criminal acts 'green' when they are really a rapacious grab of resources which lead to conflicts and wars." Needless to say, the Green Economy was a big issue.



Nnimmo Bassey addresses delegates at the Dirty Energy Week.

Photo:
groundWork

On the first day of dialogue, participants spoke about the local struggles and were clear that people are dispossessed of their own bodies. They identified the following common forces behind the conditions in which they struggle to exist: capitalist forces against people; repressive political regimes; weak regulatory frameworks; lack of transparency



and information; false solutions and sneaky tactics that divide community struggles.

After the open discussions, the next session took us directly into the heated debate of whether the UNFCCC was working at an international level and "What is the role of multilateralism and what are its limits?" This took place between some key figures in the climate change debate internationally, Bond, Raman, Rehman and Dorsey all eloquently arguing for or against the UNFCCC. While their opinions might differ greatly – the DEW report will be out in the New Year where you can read more on this – it was clear from the beginning that a new multilateralism is needed. On this, indeed, there is not disagreement, and this debate was carried through until the end of the week.

The DEW gathering also focused on false climate solutions under the banner of "Smoke and Mirrors: the pushing of false solutions!" Carbon trading, cleaner development mechanisms (CDM), reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD), agrofuels, waste to energy and nuclear energy were the issues explored.

During the second day, people shared local struggles including: electricity struggles in South Africa; oil refinery struggles; oil wells and misery in the Niger Delta; drilling crude oil at the source of the river Nile; coal to liquid in South Africa; the devastating impacts (legacy) of gold and uranium mining and the foreseeable impacts of coal; tar sands; fracking in the Karoo; incinerator struggles; dams; and coal-fired power stations.

The gathering also focused on the money behind these dirty developments. The main global players in the financing of dirty energy and climate change, such as the World Bank, regional development banks and private banks, were considered. Southern governments and their elite agendas, focusing on the BASIC countries and their place within the international climate dialogue, corporate capture of institutions and the Green Economy were hot topics.

But the meeting did not only focus on the negative. The second half of the DEW gathering focused on what we as society can do to challenge the very moribund talks of the UNFCCC, where we could

look beyond the UNFCCC and create options for people-led action on climate change.

To be able to ensure a new multi-lateralism, we must be context aware: there is a train of meetings leading up to COP, so we must be aware of this larger context, even if minimally, via other groups. The big meeting is just one meeting in a process of other meetings. The Road to Rio didn't start in 2011 but years before. We must consider planning in time: we need to be aware of the start of planning and the full road, including events in the future. Actions such as "leaving the oil in the soil", making the case for a development model without fossil fuels, were presented from social justice activists in both Nigeria and Ecuador. Shutting down coal-fired power stations in the US was a struggle well presented. And, needless to say, there was a strong conversation about Cochabamba to consider ways to move the process beyond Cochabamba.

Focusing on energy sovereignty as a means to try to respond meaningfully to energy poverty was an interesting session with people trying to come to grips with the meaning of energy sovereignty for their local setting. Indeed, the question of what energy is and what it means for people in different locations was an issue. Together with the "Million Climate Jobs: Possibilities for green labour approach", energy sovereignty does offer us possibilities.

Eventually the week ended recognising that three things need to happen urgently if we are going to see a change in the climate chaos we face. We need a new multilateralism that is democratic in nature and responds to people rather than the elites; we need local actions that challenge the status quo and finally we need to change the narrative from a technical to a political one.

Finally, Pablo Salón, the sole dissenting government voice at COP16, closed the DEW and stated that we have to exhibit "prescience" about the rights to Mother Earth. The real cause of climate change is the capitalist system and the way most developing countries work. We need a planet where we can all live, not just 1% of the population. The movement is now discussing the key issue of our world and he stated that he is optimistic about what we can achieve as civil society. 



The Climate Gangster Awards

by David Hallowes and Megan Lewis

The COPs are like mobsters' conventions, as the large corporations and the very rich - the 1% - gather to barter away the world's last chances to turn the rising tide of climate change. The Climate Gangster Awards celebrate the most "successful" of these gangsters

So, what did we honestly expect? A levelled playing field? Genuine honest negotiations? Surprise, surprise we did not get this. Rather it was like a mobster's convention, taking us back to the old Chicago days of the infamous US mobsters who bullied their way to wealth and power. So it was in Durban at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's (UNFCCC) 17th Conference of the Parties (COP17), where large corporations and the rich, 1% ruled.

Exposing corporate power and their influence on the climate negotiations was a common theme that brought a strange coherence amongst NGOs that were present at the COP17.

Friends of the Earth International focused on "How Corporations Rule" and particularly on corporate capture of the UNFCCC; the Polaris Institute on "Corporations, Climate and the United Nations: How Big Business has Seized Control of Global Climate Negotiations"; the International Forum on Globalisation on rich individuals in "Outing the Oligarchy"; and Greenpeace on the role of big business in climate destruction in "Who's holding us back? How carbon-intensive industry is preventing effective climate change legislation".

So, after having read, spoken to people and scanned the media, the institutions, corporations and governments below have seemed to us to be the main mobsters who bullied and connived their way through the climate negotiations to make the

public believe that they have our interests at heart. Some have, however, been brutal and honest about their attempts to make profit from "people and the planet". So here's to our main mobsters! Enjoy!

Gangster Award: Trading away the climate Award!

IETA

Arising from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in June 1999, and supported by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, the International Emissions Trading Association (IETA) was established as an international framework for trading in greenhouse gas emission (GHG) reductions.

This organisation is replete with contradictory rhetoric, the most prominent being its listing as a non-profit business organisation and a Business and Industry NGO (BINGO). The very foundation of a business is to create profits, and thus IETA has a vested interest in the economic functionality of a global emissions trading system. The problem with this system is that it commodifies the very cause of climate change, namely GHG emissions, thereby creating little incentive for polluting corporations to put an end to their dirty activity.

This is reflected on the IETA website, where it justifies an emissions trading system as the "most economically efficient means of reaching a given emissions reduction cap or target". It is problematic when economic interests are put before



environmental and social ones. Whilst it presents itself as a challenging force to climate change, it engages in trade with the largest of the corporate GHG emitters, such as BP, Chevron, Eskom and Vale, and the chairman of IETA is himself the Senior Climate Change Advisor for Shell.

IETA is one of the three most influential pro-business lobbies in the UNFCCC COP process and, according to the November 2011 Polaris Report, it is ultimately a glorified industry lobby group in NGO clothing; one that plays a large role in infiltrating this process with a corporate agenda. Over 2 000 lobbyists accredited by the IETA have appeared at COPs since it began attending the meetings in 2000 at COP 6 in The Hague. The emissions trading system that IETA is involved in is detrimental to the environmental and social justice struggle because it sets up a framework that ignores the rights of communities to live in a healthy, emission-free environment.

Gangster Award: Revolving door Award! Sasol

According to the Friends of the Earth International December 2011 report, Sasol's plant in Secunda, Mpumulanga, produces more carbon dioxide emissions than any other single source in the world. No doubt because of this, Sasol has promoted itself as a champion of the environment, using phrases such as sustainable development, and environmentally and socially ethical work, as part of their greenwash campaign.

A protester makes fun of the Sasol slogan at a protest in Cape Town.

Photo: groundWork



The end of the apartheid regime brought a repositioning of Sasol as a transnational corporation to better fit into the framework of the new neoliberal development paradigm in South Africa. This strengthened ties between Sasol and the government, providing it ample space to monopolise South Africa's energy production and distribution. It has become the leader in coal-to-liquid (CTL) and gas-to-liquid (GTL) technologies, which have been described as "clean coal" producing – a bigger oxymoron is difficult to find! Their internally produced carbon emissions figures in June 2011 – undoubtedly conservative – show a 0.3 million ton increase from 2010 to 2011. This puts them at 52.9 million tons of carbon emissions in 2011, which accounts for 11% of South Africa's greenhouse gas emissions.

Sasol plays a large role in pulling South Africa's climate change policy in the direction that benefits its pocket, as evidenced in its launch of the South African Coal Roadmap which seeks to expand the country's coal industry into both domestic and global markets. It is linked to a board made up of Mineral Energy Corporations and officials from the Departments of Energy and Mineral Resources, evidence that the revolving door between the South African government and the Sasol corporate is in full swing.

Not only does Sasol have a huge piece of the South African energy pie, it also lobbies at an international level, where it has an official on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, as well as being part of South Africa's delegation at the UNFCCC COP17 in Durban.

Gangster Award: We can do what we want Award!

Canadian government and the tar sands

The Keystone XL oil pipeline proposed by TransCanada, which was to run 2 700km from the tar sands in Canada to the oil refineries along the Gulf Coast, had been stopped by the US presidency due to pressure from civil society groups. Unfortunately, this type of victory is rare, as the Canadian government has recognised the huge economic potential that lies within the tar sands of their country. These are the second largest reserve



of carbon in the world after the Saudi Arabian tar sands.

Tar or oil sands are large deposits of bitumen (a tar-like substance), which is turned into oil through complex and energy-intensive processes that have negative environmental and social consequences. According to NASA scientist, James Hansen, as quoted in an online *Guardian* article, if oil sands were to be exploited as is projected it would be "game over for the climate". Drilling tar sands for oil results in more GHGs than conventional methods, as well as forest destruction, water contamination and the displacement of local communities.



Nevertheless, the Canadian government purposefully supports the development of tar sands and lies through its teeth when it comes to fulfilling any commitments to actively reduce carbon emissions. The November 2011 Greenpeace report notes that Canada is the only country that signed the Kyoto Accord and then openly announced it would not comply with its commitments. In fact, its emissions were 34% higher in 2009 than in 1990 when it signed the Kyoto Protocol.

Not only is the Canadian government lobby vehemently against the EU Fuel Quality Directive, which aims at reducing emissions from transport fuels, it has also established an Oil Sands Advocacy Strategy in coordination with big-time polluters like Shell. If the Canadian government gets their

way, they will get a new route for the Keystone XL pipeline approved, costing billions of dollars as well as causing massive amounts of environmental and social destruction.

Gangster Award: Who's fooling who award? World Bank

The World Bank has come under much pressure over the last few years and their commitment to burning up the planet via their large coal lending portfolio continues. Despite this, the Bank has claimed it is one of those in the forefront when it comes to funding sustainable development and, in particular, addressing climate change. Among other things, it manages the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the UN Development Programme (UNDP). It is also a key player in developing the global carbon market.

In 2009, *groundWork's* report "The World Bank and Eskom: Banking on Climate Destruction" exposed the World Bank's negotiations with South Africa to lend up to \$3.75 for state-owned power utility Eskom's "new build" programme. A year later, Christian Aid reported that World Bank funding for coal power stations has soared forty-fold over the previous five years to a staggering \$4.4 billion in 2010. The Eskom loan is under investigation by the Inspection Panel of the World Bank. Instead of learning their lesson from the Eskom debacle,



however, the World Bank has signed an agreement with the political elite to loan Kosovo \$20 billion for a lignite fired power station.

The Bretton Woods project warns that this is why civil society globally has questioned, and continues to warn against, World Bank influence in the design and management of the new Green Climate Fund. But, more alarming is South Africa's link with the Fund, as Trevor Manual – who has ambitions of being the next World bank chair – was part of a troika that was set up to design the Fund. What a set of incestuous relationships that need to be exposed – The World Bank, coal, Eskom and Manual.

Gangster Award: Loaded climate lobbier Award

The US government

It just wouldn't be the Gangster Awards if we didn't include the US government... it's not a corporation or a gang, but it sure acts like both!

When it comes to the UNFCCC process at the COP, the US has a major phobia of committing. Even before the COP17 in Durban began, there were reports that the US government – along with other rich nations like Japan and Canada – were going to delay a global treaty on climate change and delay they did. The US delegation, led by Todd Stern and Jonathan Pershing, had a heavy hand in manipulating the text of the Durban Platform agreement to wipe out any effective policy to curb climate change. The list of dodgy climate behaviour by the US continues...

In 2009, the US government pressured their Ethiopian counterparts into signing the Copenhagen Accord at COP15, which favours corporate interests in a big way. According to the November 2011 Greenpeace report, the US invests \$3.5 billion a year in lobbying against effective climate legislation at the federal level, and many sectors in the US have more than trebled their numbers of lobbyists between 2003 and 2008. The US Chamber of Commerce plays a leading role in blocking climate change negotiations on an international and national US level in Congress.

Even president Obama, the "Yes we can!" man, has said no to a climate change platform for the US as Congress has been unable to agree to any kind

of central legislation on the matter. What he (and his Congress) has said yes to is offshore drilling, expansion of nuclear power and the process of Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS), all of which have destructive effects on the environment. Despite his positive rhetoric towards renewable energy, Obama continually lets the energy sector be dominated by fossil fuel junkies like Koch and ExxonMobil.

And so, whilst actions against the rights of people and their environment by corporations are "gangster", the US government (or is that mafia?)



is not doing too badly itself. ☺



Banking on climate change

by Bobby Peek

Leading banks around the world lent €232 billion (more than R2 billion) to the coal industry, one of the biggest sources of greenhouse gases (GHGs), from 2005 to 2010. These were the shocking figures presented on the sidelines of UN climate talks in Durban. These figures came from a trawl through the lending portfolios of ninety-three of the world's leading banks and was presented in a report titled "Bankrolling Climate change: A Look into the Portfolios of the World's Largest Banks", which was published by urgewald, a German NGO working on monitoring banks' expenditure in energy, including nuclear energy, groundWork (Friends of the Earth, South Africa), Earthlife Africa Johannesburg and BankTrack, based in Europe.

The total value of financing for thirty-one major coal-mining companies and forty producers of coal-fired electricity amounted to €232 billion over the five years.

The figures clearly show that coal financing is on the rise. Between 2005 and 2010, coal financing almost doubled. If banks are not challenged, coal financing will continue to grow.

Coal has emerged as the biggest single area of concern about GHG sources. Emissions from coal-fired plants have rocketed as emerging giants, led by China and India, turn to a fuel that is cheap, plentiful and free of geopolitical risk, but also a massive emitter of carbon dioxide (CO₂).

According to the report, the top three banks lending to the coal industry are JP Morgan Chase, which funded €16.5 billion; Citi (13.7 billion) and Bank of America (12.6 billion). They were followed by Morgan Stanley (12.11 billion); Barclays (11.51

billion); Deutsche Bank (11.47 billion); Royal Bank of Scotland (10.94 billion); BNP Paribas (10.69 billion), Credit Suisse (9.49 billion) and UBS (8.21 billion).

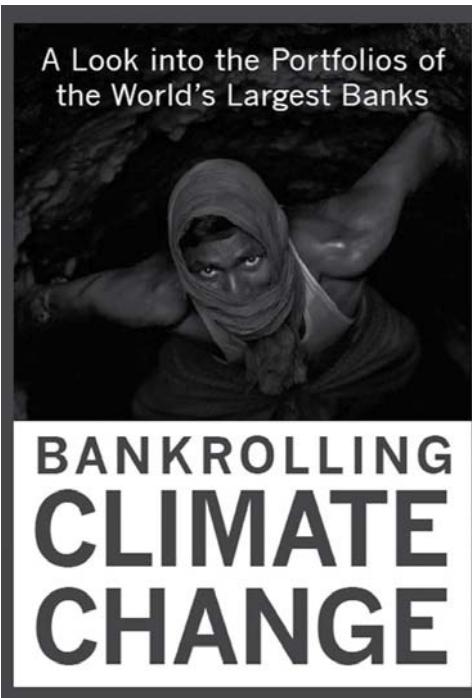
Three Chinese banks – Bank of China, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China and China Construction Bank – were also listed in the top twenty lenders.

South African banks, Standard and Nedbank, have also loaned heavily in the fossil fuel terrain, Standard to the tune of R1 billion Rand and Nedbank financing Eskom's environmentally unfriendly coal projects to the tune of about R941 million.

Interestingly, almost all of the top twenty climate-killer banks in the ranking have made far-reaching statements regarding their commitment to combating climate change. However, the numbers show that their money is not where their mouths are.

According to the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), levels of CO₂ surged by 2.3 parts per million (ppm) between 2009 and 2010. They have risen by around a third since pre-industrial times and are now at their highest in 650,000 years, say climate scientists.

In spite of the fact that climate change is already having severe impacts on the most vulnerable societies, there are an abundance of plans to build new coal-fired power plants. If banks provide money for these projects, they will wreck all attempts to limit global warming to below 2° Celsius, let alone to below 1.5° Celsius.



Don't talk about the weather

by Bobby Peek

Civil Society and Community Organisations Challenge Draconian South African Weather Service Amendment Bill

In October, groundWork came across a small, one inch piece in the Pretoria News, which indicated that it would be illegal to announce air pollution events and that people could be imprisoned if they did this. Strangely, without groundWork and local community people's knowledge, Minister Molewa, according to AllAfrica.com, published the SAWS Amendment Bill in May. I say without our knowledge because the first mention of it that we came across was in the media, despite groundWork and communities' ongoing interactions with the Department of Environment, under which the SAWS falls.

Many civil society and community organisations – groundWork, the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA) and the Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance (VEJA), for example – are particularly concerned about the offence the Amendment Bill proposes if an air pollution-related warning (which is not defined in the Bill) is issued without written permission from the South African Weather Service. If the Bill is passed in its current format, this offence is likely to have negative implications for the environment, public health and, particularly, civil society participation in environmental governance and community information dissemination.

Community organisations that choose to conduct independent monitoring of air quality by sending samples for laboratory analysis, and advising the public (including through media releases) of the results of such analyses, face a R5 million fine and/

or five years' imprisonment for a first conviction of this offence. They can also be held liable for any loss or damage that arises as a result of the offence. This is despite the fact that such organisations disclose air pollution-related information in the public interest, and as a check and balance for air pollution information generated by major emitters such as Engen, Shell and ArcelorMittal, as well as by the authorities.

There are other cases in which awaiting the Weather Services' permission could undermine the protection of public health. For instance, an acute air pollution incident by industry in close proximity to a school requires speedy dissemination of information in order to evacuate the school urgently. In these, and similar circumstances, it would not be appropriate to require permission from the Weather Service before alerting the school.

The offence created is also at odds with the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (NEMA). Section 30 of NEMA obliges the reporting of certain incidents which may result in serious danger to the public or potentially serious pollution of, or detriment to, the environment and does not require the Weather Services' permission. Also, section 31 of NEMA – which, in certain circumstances, protects whistleblowers from prosecution if they disclose evidence of an environmental risk – does not require this permission.

Constitutionally, the offence well may impinge on the right to freedom of speech in terms of Section



16 of the Constitution, as well as the environmental rights in Section 24.

Placing such draconian restrictions on how people make air pollution information publicly available, and criminalising such actions, is unconstitutional and smacks of the heavy-handedness of the Protection of Information Bill.

"Over the years there have been various oil refinery incidents which have resulted in air pollution events in south Durban that have affected peoples' health. Shell and Engen will be directly 'protected' by this Bill, as community people would not be able to make this air pollution event public knowledge – locally, nationally or globally", says Desmond D'Sa of the SDCEA.

"This Bill will further restrict community activism in places such as the Vaal, where major polluters such as Sasol, Eskom and ArcelorMittal regularly impact upon communities' lives. People will be scared to speak out against these companies and their air pollution," warns Samson Mokoena, Coordinator of the VEJA.

The Centre for Environmental Rights, on behalf of groundWork, SDCEA and VEJA, will challenge this using all available avenues, including making submissions to Parliament calling for the deletion of the "air pollution-related warning" offence from the Bill. ☀



CC, COP17 and poor South Africans

by Musa Chamane

Climate change affects the poorest first, but many of the poor are not fully aware of the issues surrounding either climate change or the Conference of the Parties processes

In recent years, after the first democratic elections in 1994, South Africa has been in the spot light. We have seen South Africa holding international events in various aspects of life ranging from sports, education, politics and health. Africa has always been on the agenda and was in the forefront in climate change talks that were hosted in December 2011. There have been mixed feelings from people of the south regarding climate change talks. Some of them say, "What is it with climate change, how relevant is it to us, the poor?" Some will say, "This is a waste of the state's money," while others say, "it's a propaganda" and others are laughing it off.

People from all walks of life came

People in South Africa are now familiar with some climate change issues following the hosting of the COP17. It was encouraging to see civil society groups working together to fight for climate change justice. There were farmers, fishermen, church pastors, politicians, students, women, children and activists who came and graced the two-week event. There was, however, no optimistic hope from most activists regarding commitments from the parties during the COP.

No decisions taken

There were no concrete commitments that were made during this COP. In a nutshell, the COP has been a flop in terms of negotiations. It was a failure due to the US failure to ratify and the pulling out of countries such as Canada and Japan. Some of the countries feel that this is just a talk shop and that therefore there will never be any binding decision that will ever come of these negotiations –

no binding carbon emissions limits; no agreements of global temperature reduction; no compensation for those countries which have borne the brunt of climate change; no climate change fund. And it can't be denied that the COP was a failure in terms of negotiations and agreements.

Global Day of Action

The Global Day of Action may have made the COP appear successful while actually the poor countries had nothing to prove the success of the COP. The Global Day of Action was well organised and well-attended and served to convince international community that there would be good decisions coming out of the COP come the last day, but reality contradicted this because there was no decision taken at all. The climate change march was very exhilarating and this was fuelled by the militancy of South Africans in voicing their dissatisfaction. Unions, churches, NGOs and the public came in their numbers to march for climate justice. There was a strong presence as well of the international communities including NGOs, activists, etc.

Fights while Zuma looked on

Durban was the centre of attraction for all the international visitors and the locals. The COP was well planned and organised, even though there were instances where we saw brutality by eThekweni City Volunteers – dressed in Green – against the civil society members in front of the country's president. The city volunteers were tasked with making sure that the COP ran smoothly and that people abided by UNFCCC and the country's rules and regulations.



The International Convention Centre was controlled by UN security forces and one of the rules was that no placards or banners were allowed to be displayed without permission from the secretariat. The President's meeting with civil society was hosted at the Durban city hall and that was out of the boundary of UNFCCC. The volunteers failed to understand that the protesters were operating

out of the boundary of the UNFCCC. There was no need for the young politicians to be as violent as they were. If a civil society member is ordered to stop displaying the message of a placard and refuses to do so, that should not translate to violence or mob attack. That was a very barbaric act for such a high level meeting.



Ethekwini City
Volunteers,
otherwise
known as the
Green Bombers,
outside the
Durban City
Hall.

Photo: Mandi
Smallhorne



South Africans have rights, such as the freedom of speech, but this was infringed upon by Durban hooligans, who disguised themselves as volunteers. At times it helps to have a matric before joining politics, because if you don't you end up making mistakes that could land you in jail due to ignorance. Considering that we operate in a political environment with too many agendas from too many different people, maybe the volunteers were told to behave in the way that they did. Maybe there were not ignorant, but were carrying out orders from their chief to silence civil society. The freedom enjoyed in South Africa now was fought for by all of us from civil society, unions and political organisations, and not only by a few special individuals. No-one, therefore, should be more important than anyone else.

The rich will survive more years than the poor

This conference raised the awareness of communities about climate change but it has not gone far enough to teach people deeply about climate change. Some people are not yet aware that climate change impacts will come with huge costs to the poor. Climate change will lead to crop failures and this translates to high food prices and even famine. Only the rich will be able to afford to live such an expensive life. Because the essential resources such as food and water will not be affordable by the poor, the rich will survive a few more years than the poor before climate change fries the earth – yes, even the rich will be fried – bringing an end to the human race.

Climate change impacts in South Africa

Climate change impacts have been visible in South Africa. Climate change causes too much rain at the wrong time of the year for farmers, or too little, and it becomes increasingly difficult for farmers to grow the food that we need for survival. We can already see evidence of this in the high prices of vegetables and seasonal fruit. Weather patterns are becoming foreign to us and we all know that in the 1980s and 1990s South Africa's average temperatures were lower than today's average temperatures. Then one could enjoy the sun without a shirt covering one's upper body parts but today one would not dare do that because one would suffer severe sunburn.

Climate change is a very important subject for every human. Everyone is either impacted or affected by the subject of climate change. Some are directly impacted while others are indirectly impacted, but this should be a concern for everyone on the planet as we are seeing an unprecedented number of floods and weather-related disasters throughout the world.

Locally, the disaster relief funds come from our government; these funds should be going towards development and service delivery. Instead, as citizens, we end up spending money in dealing with the natural disasters that come with climate change. We are a reactive nation rather than a proactive nation. One day, average temperatures will reach intolerable levels, where everyone will be forced to have an air-conditioned house to survive. The question is, who can afford this? The answer is the rich, but not the majority of people. Since we are failing to act on climate issues as a country or globally this means the global temperature is rising fast, year by year. Imagine one day receiving a weather report of 65 degrees Celsius? Who will survive or tolerate this? We need to own and understand the subject, and the time is now.

Conclusion

Climate change is not a myth. If one compares this with HIV/Aids in the 1980 and 1990s we know that people will either deny or laugh it off. Twenty years on, who can laugh off the HI virus? Everyone in South Africa knows someone who has died from the virus, be it a family member or someone in the community. With climate change there won't be any chance to know "someone" because it's going to directly affect us all. One day climate change will wipe out nations, starting with island countries such as Haiti. Does Haiti, after its tumultuous history, deserve this? Did the people of Haiti's actions feed climate change? No!

The impacts of climate change have started to be evident in our planet. Some are taking it seriously while others are laughing it off.

Let us take it seriously. Let us now unite against climate change. 



Meet the new SAWPA leadership

by Musa Chamane

In order to increase female representation, new members have recently been added to the leadership of the South African Waste Pickers Association

The emergence of the South African Waste Pickers Association (SAWPA) in 2009 resulted in the formation of seven provincial coordinators who overlook the affairs of the movement at both a provincial and national level. Northern Cape and Limpopo are still not represented in the leadership due to waste pickers not being organised, even though each province has been visited twice by the current leaders of SAWPA. The 2009 landfill coordinators have been changed in most landfills and that has led to a vacuum in terms of leadership within SAWPA. Only a few members retained their positions in 2010. This has motivated the formation of a new leadership for this organisation, which took place during the COP17 activities in Durban. The elections took place without any interference from outsiders such as NGOs or members of the public.

Some SAWPA members have always been critical of the leadership as they claim that the leadership is not doing anything to assist them in solving local problems. This was despite the fact that people were well aware that the current leadership was not tasked with solving their local or landfill problems because that has been the local committee's duty. The duties of each committee member have been discussed at great lengths at various meetings.

As an organiser I have learned that people like positions, even if the position does not come with any incentives or rewards. I stand to be corrected, however; maybe these comrades love the movement deeply and that is why they want to remain in leadership positions. The leadership duties are not categorised because there is no chairman or

treasurer, but they are all in the leadership to steer the movement forward.

The leadership of any organisation should have a vision and must always act in the best interests of the movement. This is enshrined in the movement's constitution and code of conduct. These documents have not been finalised but are still being discussed on the ground or at a local/landfill/street level. There have been some leaders in the movement who have tried by all means to see that the movement succeeds. Each leader receives compensation whenever they attend meetings; some leaders have requested money from local members, claiming that they are working for them when they attend leadership meetings. The issue of whether leadership should receive payments from members when attending meetings is also still being discussed.

The meeting in Durban saw four new members added to the leadership of the movement. The house felt that women should be empowered more and, as a result, four female members were added in addition to the seven provincial leaders. The house was divided about whether to disband the current leadership and form a new leadership because some in the house felt that the leadership was weak and women were not represented enough. The additional members who were elected by votes were:

- Ms Mmapula Baloyi from Hammarskraal, Gauteng
- Ms Joyce Mokeona from Sasolburg, Gauteng



Waste

- Nomacebo Mbayi from Khayelitsha, Western Cape
- Nonhlanhla Mhlophe from Pietermaritzburg, Kwazulu-Natal

The provincial coordinators still remain in their positions of leadership and are:

- Douglas Maphumulo from Pietermaritzburg, Kwazulu-Natal
- Simon Mbata from Sasolburg, Gauteng
- France Masego from Zeerust, North West
- Cynthia Nkosi from Barbeton, Mpumalanga
- Musa Nokwe from East London, Eastern Cape

- Nimrod Mati from Tshwane, Gauteng
- Nompumelelo Njana from Khayelitsha, Western Cape

We are having a leadership meeting in January where we hope to discuss further the role to be played by each member in the movement. We hope that 2012 will show real results in terms of the activities for the movement.

Amandla!!! ✊

Members of
SAWPA march at
COP17.

Photo:
groundWork



The public health “road to nowhere”

by Rico Euripidou

250 health leaders have issued a declaration and call to action following the Global Climate and Health Summit held during the COP 17

The “Road to Nowhere” was first popularised by the Talking Heads on their 1985 album *Little Creatures* and, while many interpreted the song as one of hope and new beginnings, a 1980’s interview with the band’s lead, David Byrne, confirmed that it was, in reality, not about the road to paradise but instead downbeat and about the road to oblivion...

This, if the world’s leading public health scientists are to be believed, is where we are currently headed if we don’t reach zero carbon emissions by 2015! They say that climate change cannot now only be perceived as a global economic or environmental problem but increasingly it will become a significant global public health problem and, according to the Lancet (one of the world’s leading general medical journals) in 2009, climate change is now the greatest global public health threat of the 21st century.

This warning was echoed by over 250 health leaders from more than thirty countries who have issued a declaration and call to action following a Global Climate and Health Summit¹ held during the COP, warning that the direction of current negotiations risks the lives of billions of people around the globe.

Professor Sir Andy Haines (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, UCL London), a leading climate change public health expert, reported that the current official estimate that we have from the WHO on the impact of climate change is approximately 150 000 deaths per year, mainly from increased diarrhoea, malaria,

malnutrition and floods. This estimate is, however, widely considered to be out of date.

In fact, Haines states that more recently published literature is giving climate change public health scientists even more reason for concern because global carbon emissions have, over 2010, increased compared to the previous year by approximately six percent, with an approximate overall increase of forty-nine odd percent since 1990. It is now clear that we are entering into a period of rapid greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, which is in stark contrast to the language of the UNFCCC negotiations which are still talking about mitigating a two degree Celsius rise in average global temperature. This barrier is considered to be breached unless we reach zero emissions within about twenty years, complimented with geo-engineering to extract carbon from the atmosphere.

He also reminded us that there are physiological and thermal limits to the habitability of the environment. For example, at a wet bulb temperature of 35° Celsius it becomes impossible for the human body to regulate its thermal environment so this exceeds the limit for habitability. This does not happen in the world at the moment but, at the status quo of global emissions once we reach a seven degree Celsius warming, this will happen in substantial parts of the world. Based on this new science it seems there is a real possibility that we could reach temperatures as high as seven degrees globally.

Policies to reduce GHG can, however, have many positive spin offs for health – the so-called health co-benefits of reducing GHGs. For example, there

¹ For more information visit www.climateandhealthcare.org





are approximately two million deaths from indoor air pollution due to indoor biomass and coal burning which emits black carbon and which adds to climate change. Additionally, there are an estimated 1.3 million deaths per year from outdoor air pollution. So, bringing on low carbon clean energy could prevent many of these deaths. Sustainable transport policies, both by reducing fine particulate emissions by cars' GHGs, and also promoting active transport such as walking and cycling, can provide substantial reductions in modern lifestyle diseases such as cardiovascular disease, stroke and diabetes associated with a sedentary lifestyle.

More importantly, the savings made in promoting these policies and mitigating these lifestyle diseases could be used to offset the cost of bringing online alternative sustainable energy systems and low carbon policies. Similarly, in the food and agriculture sector, which is estimated to contribute to approximately fifteen percent directly, and more through deforestation, to climate change globally, significant benefits can also be achieved by taking concrete action. By reducing the demand and consumption of animal products in high-consuming economies we can reduce saturated fat intake and therefore significantly reduce the incidence of ischemic heart disease.

The need to act is urgent and there are also very many positive reasons to act that will benefit not only global health but also the global economy and environment.

Dr. Maria Neira (Director, Public Health and Environment, World Health Organisation) went on to declare that the health community now needs to become a movement, because the reasons needed to decide to move are now incontrovertible. She went on to describe the diagnostic as a "public health alert". Normally, when WHO declares a public health warning, the next step is to start to generate action. The health sector must be incorporated into the UNFCCC COP negotiations because this is a very good long term investment as putting health on the adaptation agenda and incorporating health in any planning means that health care planning facilities (already under stress globally) will have the capacity to at least adapt to the major challenges that climate change will effect.



She also said that the public health sector needs to be part of the mitigation policies because, by reducing GHG emissions, you effectively reduce air pollution and inadvertently protect public health. She concluded by saying that this is the time to be positive and action-orientated, and this is the time to develop health mitigation plans of action!

Prof. Rajen Naidoo from the UKZN (Nelson R. Mandela School of Medicine) reminded us that in the developing world there is a continued perception that we have to address climate change in the context of our other perceived public health crises such as HIV and AIDS, TB, and other infectious diseases. Climate change has the potential to cause reversals in the gains we have made in public health just as the HIV and AIDS epidemic has done in the past two decades.

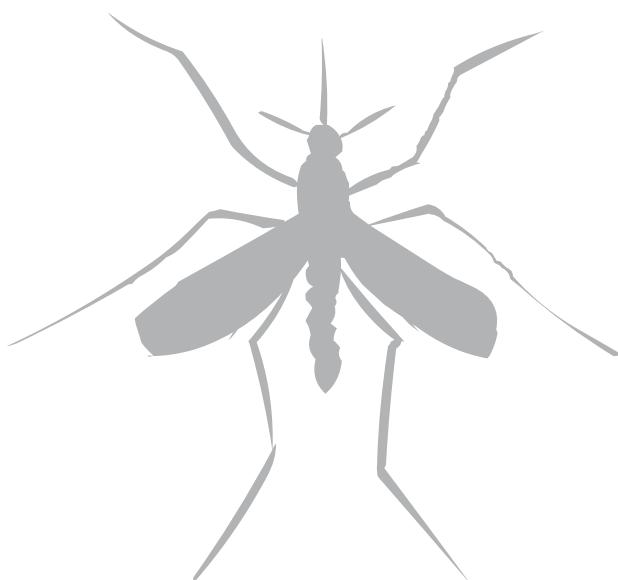
Dr. Hugh Montgomery (UCL Division of Medicine; Climate and Health Council, UK) went on to summarise the situation as a global emergency, a crisis that is not well understood by the government delegate negotiators. No-one is immune from the health impacts of climate change; people in both developed and developing nations are all at risk.

To give a quick summary list, the impacts of climate change on health are from extreme heat wave; from changes in bacterial disease as a result of bacterial doubling rates, for example salmonella and malaria (vectors and parasites), where the replication rate increase with increases in temperature; water contamination; changes in disease vectors; changes in ground level ozone; changes in pollen; droughts, floods and extreme weather events; agricultural failure; starvation and the subsequent migration and conflict.

All of these issues are with us now, and have all recently happened over the last few months, as is witnessed by the catastrophic flooding in Thailand, the Philippines and Pakistan, and the heat waves in Russia in 2010. These events are already happening; now, globally. Montgomery also pointed out that a global two degrees Celsius increase in temperature is not safe. This myth has entered the negotiations text because it was probably the best that the negotiators felt they could aim for. The climate changes we have experienced so far are all because of a 0.7 degree Celsius increase in global

temperature. A global two degrees Celsius increase in temperature is not safe and the science suggests that even a rapid trajectory down to zero emissions within twenty years, and geo-engineering to suck CO₂ out of the atmosphere, is not sufficient to limit the global increase in temperature to two degrees Celsius. This is an emergency and if we continue only to sculpt well-worded prescriptions over the coming twenty years then we will effectively be writing a death certificate for humanity on our planet.

In conclusion, if we have to wait another eight to nine years for another agreement it would be the equivalent of diagnosing a patient with lung cancer and then telling them to keep smoking for another decade. It would not be a wise public health strategy to not address climate change at this point in our modern history. The delegates all went on to call for a fair, ambitious and binding global treaty, and urged all countries to commit to immediate strong climate action to protect and promote health. 



World Bank Inspection Panel Report

by Sunita Dubey

The World Bank's Inspection Panel has submitted their report on the loan for Eskom's Medupi coal-fired power plant

The Inspection Panel submitted their report on the World Bank US\$3.75 billion loan to Eskom for one of the largest coal power plants (4800 MW) in the world, on the 30th of November 2011. The Inspection Panel Report (IPR) highlights several key shortcomings in the World Bank's loan to Eskom and, in particular, the failure of World Bank management to adequately consider key issues on water, sand mining, air quality, climate change, and the general wider environmental impacts of the associated complex of coal-based economic activities (such as coal mining) on the environment and human welfare in the region. It is unclear at this stage what, if any, actions the Bank will take in this regard.

Background

On the 10th of April 2010, the World Bank approved this loan to Eskom despite world wide opposition. Five major countries, including the United States and United Kingdom, abstained from voting on it. This coal power plant, with CO₂ emissions of twenty-six million metric tonnes, would have a detrimental impact on climate change, especially on a continent like Africa. The developmental and economic impacts were exaggerated, while the local impacts like pollution, health and water stress were down played. Ironically, the World Bank's "Expert Panel" (which reported on the 18th of February) also gave this project the green light on reasoning based on saving South Africa from plunging into darkness and a complete economic meltdown. There was some reference to mitigating the impacts from this massive coal power plant, but there were no concrete suggestions. This raised a question on both the World Bank's competence and climate/poverty commitments.

Inspection Panel findings

The local communities from Lephalale filed a complaint against this project because many social and environmental issues were not dealt with or taken into account. The Panel provides a forum for people who believe that they may be adversely

affected by Bank-financed operations, allowing them to bring their concerns to the highest decision-making levels of the World Bank. The Panel also determines whether the Bank is complying with its own policies and procedures, which are designed to ensure that Bank-financed operations provide social and environmental benefits and avoid harm to people and the environment.

After a year-and-a-half-long investigation, the World Bank Inspection Panel criticised the bank for insufficiently taking health, water scarcity and the pressures on local services into account when supporting the 4,800-megawatt Medupi power plant in South Africa. Some major findings by the Panel are listed below:

- **Water:** The investigation found that in the Medupi area sand mining and coal-mining operations are likely to have a significant impact on the availability and quality of water supplies in the area and that the World Bank Management failed to adequately assess these issues.
- **Air quality:** The report found that the management did not adequately assess air quality issues, and that significant negative impacts on human health may occur. The Panel also noted that the retroactive installation of flue gas desulphurisation at Medupi may be delayed (for an unspecified time) because of the water problems caused by the plant.
- **Climate change:** The IP suggests that management may have been over-optimistic when saying that the plant "will enable the country to achieve a low carbon economy". It noted that the emissions did not violate Bank policy only because the Bank did not have an actual policy on emissions.





The Medupi coal-fired power plant being built with World Bank money.

Photo:
groundWork

- **Influx of labourers, land development and local impacts:** The IP basically states that the EIA for Medupi was inadequate in this regard and that Bank management failed to deal adequately with these issues. The IP notes that serious stress has been placed on local infrastructure, including water and sewage.
- **Project externalities:** The IP states that Management failed to consider the externalised costs in its economic analysis of the project.
- **Poverty:** The IP states that Management failed to assess the impact of the project on poverty reduction and the negative effects of Medupi on poverty in the area.
- **Cultural heritage, project alternatives, impact on SA economy, and energy access:** The IP found that Management acted in accordance with Bank policy.

Conclusion

The finding from the Panel report shed doubts over proper due diligence by the World Bank when it

came to funding a power plant of this scale, and suggests that this will have implications for South African communities, environment, health and climate change for the next forty to fifty years. The report clearly states that "the magnitude of emissions from Medupi far outweighs emissions avoided through project mitigation measures" such as a rail project, energy efficiency and two token renewable energy projects (Sere Wind and Uppington concentrated solar power projects). The panel also felt that The World Bank's statement at the time of the loan that its partnership with South Africa will, over the long term, "serve to lower the country's emissions trajectory is 'overly optimistic ... given that Medupi will emit significant levels of GHG emissions.'"

While communities are still awaiting an action plan by the World Bank to mitigate the impacts of Eskom project, the Bank is already in the process of funding another lignite (brown coal) project in Kosovo. This once again shows how the World Bank is pushing coal/lignite-based coal power plants rather than funding the kind of renewable energy projects which not only make sense in this climate-constrained world but which also make energy access a reality. ☺



Greenfly at the COP

by Greenfly

Our (green)fly on the wall speaks out about the COP

OK. We all know what a cop is and we now know what a COP is. And, as the slogan said, we can't find a good one. It is true that the official delegates did not get into a big circle to follow Todd Stern chanting "burn baby, burn". Todd Stern, for those who don't know him, is the head honcho of the US delegation. It cannot be said that he or they have acted alone. Pretty much everyone has joined the dance on the embers. But the US sure has the leading role.

They certainly know where this lot is headed. A couple of years back, they sent a White House staffer out to inform us that we are heading for four degrees and the US is cool with that. There are two things to be said about four degrees: first, most of the world will be uninhabitable, including Texas; and second, four degrees is unstoppably on the way to eight degrees which will take care of the rest of us.

Perhaps there is some disappointment that the first version of Mutually Assured Destruction failed. MAD1 was the Dr Strangelove version and had the bronco man from Texas riding a big fat A-bomb to the end of the world over Moscow. That didn't happen. Instead, the Berlin wall fell, the Soviet Union was dismembered and privatised and great profits were made. It was the end of history. Capitalism was in charge finally and for ever. Until 2008.

MAD2 seems more assured but there's a twist to it. The alternative to destruction is absolute control. MAD2 presents the opportunity for geo-engineering – such as producing heat shields in space – as the

final conquest of nature. Strangelove's ghost is cheering from the shadows of an underground weapons laboratory.

Corporate America is already licking its lips. This is what you might call Business As Usual Plus Plus (BAU++) and it's already in rehearsal. First, big oil has stopped all that nonsense about "beyond petroleum". Now it's "drill baby, drill" and everyone out the way. Next up, profiteering from catastrophe is already under way with carbon trading but the Rio+20 agenda takes a broader view of sustainable development: all of what we once thought was "nature" will be dismembered and privatised and great profits will be made. Geo-engineering – still to be officially announced – is the second plus for monster profits.

All this will, of course, turn to dust. Absolute control fails all the time. Just think of the regularity with which Sasol and the refineries catch fire. In the end, absolute control is not the alternative to destruction but the story line for MAD2.

There were some people at the COP and they talked of the Disaster in Durban. On the other hand, our minister who presided over the COP thought it was wonderful. We got the 'Durban platform' and that label will be attached to the negotiations process for at least another two years. It might go all the way to 2020. A triumph of branding. After all, why would anyone care what happens outside the world of image making? ☺



Into the fire

by Megan Lewis

*A fresh view on the COP17 proceedings from groundWork intern,
Megan Lewis*

I was nearly brought to tears on my second day of working as an intern for groundWork when, at the Dirty Energy Week, one of the members from Oilwatch stood up to recite the last words of the late Ken Saro-wiwa. As someone new to the struggle for environmental justice, I realised then what had come before, what civil society was up against now and how necessary it was to brace myself for the fire that was the COP17 conference to come. Remembering some of his powerful and motivating words served as a firebreak throughout the two weeks.

Coming straight from five years of university into a logistics assistant role for Friends of the Earth was daunting but exciting. It was the first time I had had a chance to learn the structure of such an organisation. Every decision and action, whether internal or external, was taken according to the most democratic processes possible, which consequently leant itself to inclusion and transparency. The UNFCCC process, I soon realised, was a different scenario altogether and trying to gain access to this as an outsider was further marred by the laborious jargon that accompanied discussions and documents. I often thought about what the South African public thought about the conference.

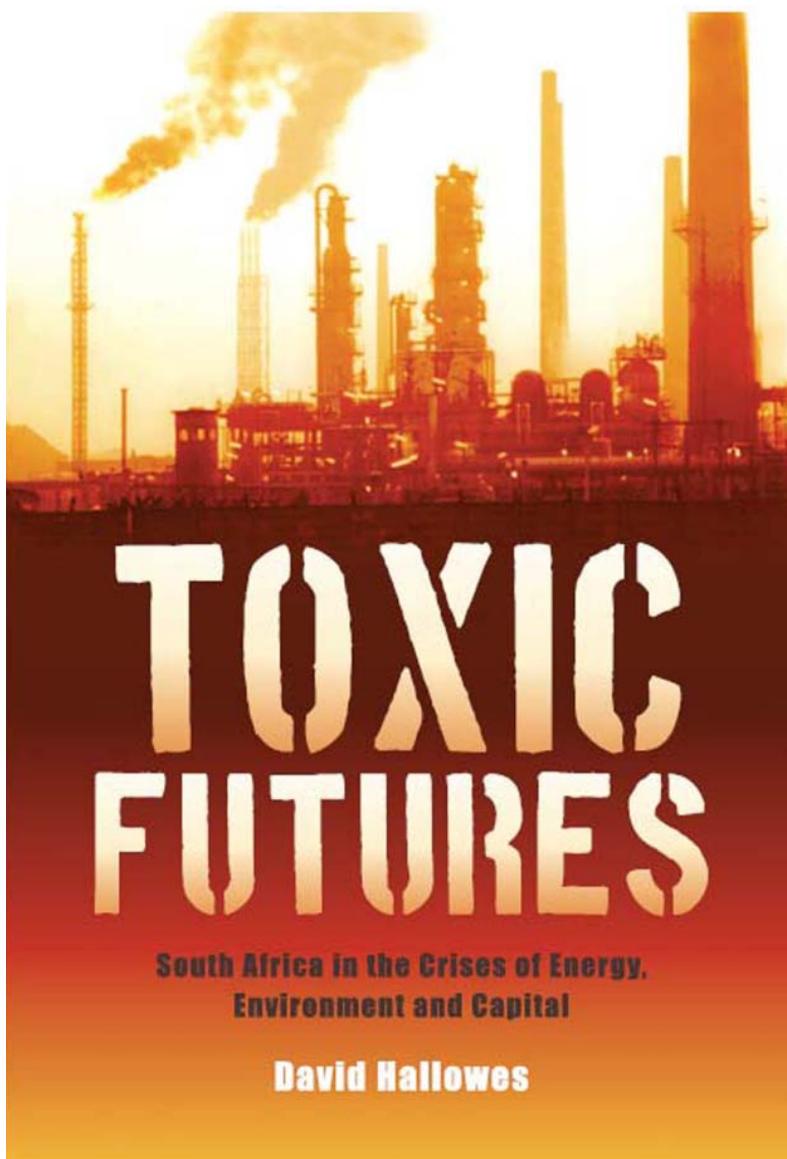
Talking to a policeman during the COP17 conference, I realised that whilst the groundWork and Friends of the Earth members were consumed by it, it seemed that some of the public were unaware of what COP was all about. He related a conversation he had had with members of the public, where they understood the COP conference to be a conference for 'cops' or the police. Whilst I had been dropped into the all-consuming deep end of helping to co-ordinate FoE delegates, it seemed many South African citizens were unaware that the future of our relationship with the climate was being decided for them under their noses.

I began to develop a sense that the UNFCCC had become a process that I, along with others, had been conned into believing was the only option. The concept of 'climate change', too, was a catch phrase that was not fully understood by everyone in all spheres of society. Through the different discussions at the C17 space and the various other alternate spaces, it became apparent that is the UNFCCC COP17 space is not only one of many options but also one of the most futile. Despite the critical nature of my university degree, in the beginning of the conference my 'newbie' naivety still caused me to be optimistic that Durban could bring about change (no matter how small) to the issue of environmental destruction and climate change.

As I began to learn about the many nuances involved in this broad concept of climate change, along with the various agendas and approaches that were involved in the UNFCCC process, the fire seemed impenetrable. Even within the environmental justice movement, it was evident that perspectives varied along organisational and country lines, as each was dealing with their own set of circumstances. These differences were put aside during the Global Day of Action, however, where an estimated 12 000 people from across the world marched together in a largely unified mass civil society action calling for a change in the interrelationship between humans and the environment.

When negotiations at the conference continued through another two nights, all optimism had been quashed and, like many other civil society members, I felt the singe of the COP17 experience. Nevertheless, remembering those encouraging words from the late environmental activist from Ogoniland in Nigeria pushed me to see that the resistance must continue within a framework that makes sense to the people and not the politicians. ☺





On the 21st of September in somewhat unusually cold and wet winter weather, groundWork and the University of KwaZulu Natal Press gathered with friends, family and comrades at Ike's Books in Greyville, Durban to launch Toxic Futures. Toxic Futures is a culmination of many years work by groundWork associate David Hallowes who has worked with groundWork since June 1999, writing away while listening to our struggles locally and globally. This was indeed a milestone for groundWork, to be co-publishing its' work with a formal publishing house, and for this to kick off our main campaigning process towards the COP 17.

Bill Freund (a former professor of Economic History at UKZN) participated in the evening, sharing his reflections on the book. Freund described the work as a "passionate and partisan book", saying that in South Africa we need debate around the two major development challenges facing SA: firstly, ensuring the protection of environment while growing the economy, and secondly, fighting the exclusion of the poor. He said South Africa was going to have to make some big systemic changes to deal with these issues which would involve "smart planning and, at times, authoritarian interventions, from a democratic government". He thanked Hallowes for pushing the question of how to find a path between environmental concerns and citizens' yearning for a better life.

Hallowes said he hoped his writing would encourage more democratic participation on the ground in tackling environmental issues. He said that this is the "anthropocene era", where humans will have a dramatic (negative) effect

on the world as we know it. People have to resist and "assert themselves forcefully in relation to elites in order to bring about a change in the way governments participate".

Toxic Futures was also released in Scotland in October. The weather was better there than in Durban, believe it or not.

Toxic Futures is about the world brought into being through the collusion of state and corporate power. Maintaining profit has relied on institutionalised fraud on the one hand and a war on the poor and the environment on the other. Resistance is growing at all scales and, however chaotic, constitutes a fourth dimension of the elite crisis. Toxic Futures locates South Africa in this crisis and explores the implications for environmental, social and economic justice. It concludes that another world is inevitable. Whether people allow the political and economic elite to lead them into a world of growing destruction or take charge to create a world of mutual solidarity is the central challenge of the age.

Get it and read it! The challenge to save our tomorrows started yesterday!

Thanks to UKZN Press for some of the material for this short piece.