



GROUNDWORK



**Energy Challenges, Legalities
and Political Stupidity**

In this issue

groundWork is a non-profit environmental justice service and developmental organization working primarily in South Africa, but increasingly in Southern Africa.

groundWork seeks to improve the quality of life of vulnerable people in Southern Africa through assisting civil society to have a greater impact on environmental governance. groundWork places particular emphasis on assisting vulnerable and previously disadvantaged people who are most affected by environmental injustices.

groundWork's current campaign areas are: Climate Justice and Energy, Coal, Waste and Environmental Health. groundWork is constituted as a trust. The Chairperson of the Board of Trustees is Joy Kistnasamy, lecturer in environmental health at the Durban University of Technology. The other trustees are: Farid Esack, Patrick Kulati, Richard Lyster, Sandile Ndawonde and Jon White.

groundWork's STAFF ARE:

Director: Bobby Peek

Deputy Director: Gill Addison

Administrative Assistant: Bathoko Sibisi

Waste Campaign Manager: Musa Chamane

Coal Campaign Manager: Robby Mokgalaka

Environmental Health Campaign

Manager: Rico Euripidou

Campaign Research and Technical

Assistant: Niven Reddy

Global Green and Healthy Hospital (GGHH) Network Campaign Manager:

Luqman Yesufu

Climate and Energy Justice

Campaigner: Samuel Chademana

Community Activist: Thomas Mnguni

Media, Information and Publications

Campaign Manager: Nombulelo Shange

Researcher: David Hallows

Bookkeeper: Gill Waterworth

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

- 3 **From the Smoke Stack**
- 5 **A sustainable energy webinar**
- 7 **Minamata enters into force**
- 9 **Jindal damaging not only its homeland**
- 11 **A resounding NO to an incinerator!**
- 13 **Recycling co-op making waves**
- 14 **"Exploring" the legal route**
- 15 **A just transition needs to be for people**
- 16 **Strengthening youth movements**
- 18 **Exchange with batman**
- 19 **Watt Park? asks Greenfly**
- 20 **The cost of mining resistance**
- 22 **United Movements Media Campaign**
- 24 **groundWork launches its Battle Map**



Help us spread the word

www.facebook.com/groundWorkSA



www.twitter.com/groundworksas

AFFILIATIONS:

groundWork is affiliated to the following international organizations:

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

Layout by Boutique Books – Printing by ArrowPrint

Wellington march challenging proposed incineration facility. Photo taken by Carol from Drakenstein Environmental Watch



From the Smoke Stack



Photo by FoE

by groundWork Director, Bobby Peek

groundWork is eighteen years old. Yes, it is that time again, when we have to pause and consider the reality that we are no longer a “new” organization, but have been around the block and have survived. Surviving in a time when there is chaos is not easy, and the events of the last months have highlighted this. Just a shout out to all of the trustees, staff and community people who made this happen. I got this from the web the other day while preparing a presentation: “We exist to resist”. Indeed we do.

In the planning for this newsletter we thought of the theme: “Energy challenges, legality and political stupidity”. As time progressed towards the final writing – this is the last piece that is written – we realized that the “political stupidity” continues to intensify. This chaos and “political stupidity” is best portrayed by the saga of Brian Molefe, the ex-boss of Eskom – the South African state owned coal-addicted energy utility – who left Eskom for parliament after being fingered for hanging around the Gupta’s, South Africa’s self appointed royal family. He then left parliament for Eskom and now has been forced to leave Eskom for what? This is still to be revealed.

Arrogant Brian has, however, decided to challenge his dismissal; and probably has a good shot at being successful considering how his political masters got it wrong. It is mind-boggling when you read the press on this. In a sitting of the portfolio committee on public enterprises on the 23rd of May, ANC “comrades” were having a go at each other and accusations of perjury and fraud, and calls for more investigations, were the order of the day when Public Enterprises Minister Lynne Brown and the board of Eskom appeared. Oh, by the way, the ANC was so vocal that there was very little space for opposition parties to say anything. For the sake of media objectivity, the DA’s comments were given

some space at the end of the page one lead of the Mercury that morning.

In the shenanigans of the back and forth of Molefe, there are calls for another investigation into “allegations of corruption currently hanging over State-owned electricity producer Eskom”. As @chrisyelland so clearly articulated on the 25th of May, this is now the twelfth investigation into the rot at Eskom, many of which investigations were never made public. And now Ben Ngubane, Chair of the Eskom board, has also resigned. Please, let’s not have another study to find out why he resigned. Let’s just speculate! This rot at Eskom and within the politics of energy in South Africa is as smelly as *Surströmming* – a fermented, smelly Swedish herring dish that a Japanese study claims to be one of the most putrid smells ever. Forget about what is rotten in the states of Denmark and Sweden – what is foul here is the big question. Is it a rotting ANC we smell?

During this period, truckers have gone to the streets and protested against Eskom planning to close five of its power stations: a reality that Eskom has been avoiding for some time, and about which no decision has been taken at an Eskom board level. This was confirmed by Eskom in a reply to correspondence in late 2016. It is clear that truckers were set up to protest to keep coal alive. Alive for whom, one has to ask.

The legality and political positions of coal remain a question of contention on all fronts. In the Mabola case, the illegality of allowing a coal mine in a protected area is clearly something that government wants to have disappear. Here local people are pitted against environmental justice groups that have witnessed the destruction of the people’s lands and water due to coal, and who are



raising concerns about mining in an area that is key to water production in South Africa. But it seems there is another force at play which wants this mine, no matter the costs.

But this is not only in the Mabola case. In Somkhele, people's houses were marked years ago and they now fear that they will have to make way for the expansion of the Somkhele Pitman Mine. Unlike Moses during Biblical times, having your house marked by a mining company means your existence as you know it is on the line. You are not spared. You are set to make way for mining. As I write, the Pitman Mine is seeking permission to expand and the community does not want this.

Just down the road, the Department of Transport is planning to build a bridge over the uMfolozi river that will link Fuleni to Somkhele, the result being the opening up of Fuleni to Ibutho Coal. From speaking to people on the ground, it is clear that they do not want the proposed bridge. The question has to be asked: is it legal to push someone from their homes when they do not want to move? Well, maybe you do not have to move people. You can just mine around them, as in the case of the Petmin Mine at Somkhele, the Jindal Mine outside Wakkerstroom and the Ntshovelo Mine in Arbor.

Surely this is illegal? Surely it is illegal to allow for coal-fired power stations to continue, as the evidence is out there in the many responses to the Integrated Resource Plan – especially from the Institute of Scientific and Industrial Research, a quasi government research technical think tank – that we can ditch coal in the future and move to a “greater than 70% renewable energy share by 2050”, replacing all coal plants with a “new optimal mix” of solar PV, wind and flexible power generators (like gas, CSP, hydro and biogas).

By South Africa maintaining its fixation on coal, there are health, water and land impacts that the CSIR did not even consider. If considered, we would probably have to move the 2050 date much sooner. Is it not illegal for our government to choose an energy pathway that is going to cost society more, drain the fiscus and cause ill health? Is it not illegal to continue on a pathway that pollutes the very little remaining land, water and air that we have to left use to survive climate change? Is it not illegal to continue considering proposals from thirteen new

coal-fired power stations that will equate to four times the size of Medupi? If government does not want to accept that this is illegal, and they have the political power to allow this, then we can only describe it as stupid.

However, it is not only people in the Highveld who have to deal with the poor decisions made by government on energy planning. Our energy depends on fossil fuel, and the big coal-fired power stations are there to allow big industry to continue to operate with the cheapest electricity in the world. But this comes at a price. Ask the people of Shongweni and KwaNdengzi who breathe the fumes of EnviroServ's toxic dumpsite daily. These fumes are a result of production processors hooked on fossil fuels, such as oil refineries, the plastic industry and paint industry, to mention a few. These industries need toxic waste dumpsites. EnviroServ obliges while residents suffer. It is clear that energy and associated industry dependent on fossil fuels must stop this or else a grim future is inevitable.

Finally, before I sign off, one has to make a statement about Trump having pulled out of the Paris climate agreement. All major NGOs globally, such as Friends of the Earth International, Greenpeace and Third World Network, know that the Paris agreement is meaningless and cannot be enforced. Ken Ward, former Deputy Director of Greenpeace, stated recently that the Paris agreement “lacks teeth. Breaking it won't have any effect on the climate in the short term”. This, we argue, is because even if the Paris agreement was by any slim chance adhered to, it would still give global corporate capital – including China – the ability to build economic growth for a minority while the world temperature rises by 4+ degrees Celsius. The 1.5 degrees Celsius target is merely an aspiration. What Trump took away was the fig leaf that corporates and government needed to spin the world to get people to believe that they are doing something about climate change – while they actually carry on with business as usual. The only change that can come will happen when people fight against dirty energy developments such as coal mines, coal-fired power stations, new oil wells and new oil refineries, and push back on fracking. These local victories mean less pollution in the air, and mean less profit for the elite and better health for all. ✎



A sustainable energy webinar

by Luqman Yesufu

If we were to ask any health professionals – particularly the ones who are charged with the responsibility to do no harm and save lives – will you be willing to work in a hospital with intermittent energy supply or none at all? I am sure that the answer you would get is “No”, as energy or electricity not only plays a key role in delivery of health service, but facilities that have access to electricity may be better positioned to attract and retain skilled health workers, especially in rural areas. Energy also enables mobile and telemedicine applications, and facilitates public environmental health education and information. Modern energy provision is therefore a critical enabler of universal access to health care and universal health coverage.

Having said that, the rising energy costs, coupled with the unique requirements of health care facilities, threaten the delivery of health services as hospitals, by their very nature, are energy-intensive facilities, operating around the clock and using complex medical systems and equipment critical to patient care. This often leads to financial challenges for senior hospital executives and therefore sustainability initiatives have been employed by some of our Global Green and Healthy Hospital (GGHH) members over the last couple of months in a bid to improve efficiency and reduce overall costs while also improving the overall patient experience.

The trick, however, is that environmental sustainability in hospitals is more than purchasing a single piece of energy-efficient equipment or moving away from coal. On the issue of coal, this constitutes over 70% of our energy source in South Africa and burning coal results in air pollution, which the World Health Organization (WHO) clearly states is “responsible for over seven million deaths annually”. Health leaders are aware that asthma and lung cancer are linked to air pollution and that the emissions from burning coal can also result in global warming. Therefore, by replacing coal with clean energy, health leaders can lead by example by taking steps to ensure a healthier future for our planet and the people we love.

Efficient hospitals create a culture of sustainability that creates lasting change. These sustainability efforts do not happen in hospitals and care systems without vision, commitment and support. Rather, these efforts are the result of strategic thinking from leaders who are committed to creating a culture of change. This has been demonstrated by three of GGHH members in South Africa – Groote Schuur Hospital, Netcare Limited and Valkenberg Hospital. These hospitals have taken into consideration that reducing energy expenses and other costs through sustainability efforts is only achievable if hospitals find solutions that work in the complex hospital facility, as switching to a more environmentally friendly cleaning solution, for example, is not an option for hospitals unless it is proven to still kill germs and reduce infections as effectively as possible.

On the 26th of May 2017, these hospitals presented some of their sustainable energy efficiency measures implemented in their respective hospitals on a webinar which was held alongside the quarterly GGHH Western Cape Forum. The forum was well attended, with GGHH sustainability coordinators from KwaZulu-Natal Health, Gauteng Health and Free State Health departments in attendance. On a quarterly basis this GGHH forum provides a platform for GGHH coordinators to interact, share experiences and find solutions to common challenges they face. The GGHH webinar takes it a step further by providing such information to a global audience, but this time with a more specific focus on showcasing their GGHH achievement through presentations. Those who participated in the webinar as well as the forum had an opportunity to ask questions that were dealt with by the speakers. Overall, we had a very interactive session throughout the forum with lots of take-home advice on energy conservation strategies. I have briefly summarised the energy successes achieved by these hospitals below. ✕



Thorpe Koorts beside the passive ventilation system installed at Valkenberg Hospital



Valkenberg Hospital

This is a 370 bed, government-funded, tertiary [psychiatric hospital](#) in the city of [Cape Town, South Africa](#). It is situated in the suburb of Observatory between the banks of the Liesbeek and Black Rivers, overlooking Devil's Peak in the distance.

GGHH Sustainability Coordinator: Mr. Thorpe Koorts

GGHH Achievements: They restored the innovative passive ventilation system in the Historic Valkenberg which was originally designed in the 19th Century. The plan was to commission the building to operate in a warm climate as it used to, utilising the original design without any forced ventilation or tempered cooling. This system results in zero operational electricity usage and thus a low carbon footprint.

GGHH Challenge & Solution: The one real challenge was that the system provides no additional heating benefit over conventional buildings. Therefore, innovative approaches were needed to improve comfort in the winter. They have tried to resolve this by ensuring that staff change their behaviour when it comes to unnecessary energy use like lighting in empty rooms. They have also tried to come up with individual decentralised office solutions.

Denton Smith beside his boiler at Groote Schuur Hospital



Groote Schuur Hospital

This is a 975 bed academic hospital, in the city of [Cape Town, South Africa](#). [The hospital is](#) positioned at the base of Table Mountain.

GGHH Sustainability Coordinator: Mr. Denton Smith

GGHH Achievements: They have managed to cut the Hospital coal consumption down by about 50%. Coal is used to produce steam for the production of domestic hot water as well as space heating, cooking and sterilising is conserved. The Hospital started on the saving drive primarily to save money in 2011 but found that the reduction of the carbon footprint is beneficial to the

greater community as a whole, specifically regarding the improved health of the staff in the boiler house as well a marked reduction in the incidence of respiratory tract infections in the surrounding neighbourhoods.

GGHH Challenge & Solution: exciting challenges – primarily due to procurement as well as staffing but tied to these issues have been issues surrounding age of equipment and keeping machines running well past their designed life time. Due to money saved, procurement is now supporting them with more money. They also assist local colleges with training artisans which has helped with staff shortages.

Andre Nortje next to Solar Panel on Rooftop at one of Netcare's Hospitals



Netcare Limited

Netcare operates the largest private hospital network in SA and the UK, and provides comprehensive Healthcare services in SA with over 13 000 registered hospital beds.

GGHH Sustainability Coordinator: Mr. Andre Nortje

GGHH Achievements: They embarked on a national lighting project, which involved the replacement of 115 000 lights with energy efficient alternatives, Installation of solar PV rollout – 10.4MWp installed by October 2017 – and domestic hot water efficiency. They replaced electric boilers/geysers with energy efficient heat pumps and finally upgraded the heating ventilation and cooling (HVAC) to reclaim heat.

GGHH Challenge & Solution: The feasibility of the project, good operation and maintenance practices, creating increased awareness among staff and patients and finally the available roof space (Solar PV) – all this posed a challenge before, during and after project implementation. They have achieved a saving of R69 million since 2013

Minamata enters into force

by Rico Euripidou

The 50th ratification triggers entry into force of the Minamata Convention on Mercury

groundWork has over the past fifteen years worked on various projects to eliminate the use of mercury in society. Mercury is essentially a harmful chemical that has known negative impacts on health and the environment. In South Africa, we have the sad legacy of imported toxic mercury waste leading to the death and injury of workers in the late 1980s and 90s. Like other heavy metals, mercury persists in the environment forever. It can be transported over distances far removed from its original emission source, contaminating the food we eat, the water we drink and the air that we breathe. Mercury is thus a global pollutant and its most toxic form – methylmercury – accumulates in large predatory fish and is taken up in our bodies through eating fish, with the worst impacts being on babies in utero and small children.

Approximately fifteen years ago, groundWork started to work systematically in partnership with other NGOs towards a global treaty to address the entire life cycle of mercury, including controls and reductions across a range of mercury-added products, processes and industries where mercury is used, released or emitted, for example coal-fired power stations. In particular, groundWork is a key member of the Zero Mercury Working Group (an international coalition of over ninety-five public interest environmental and health non-governmental organizations from more than fifty countries from around the world, formed in 2005) and Health Care Without Harm (an international coalition that works to transform the health care sector worldwide, without compromising patient safety or care, so that it becomes ecologically sustainable and a leading advocate for environmental health and justice).

This group works towards the substitution of mercury-based medical devices with accurate, affordable alternatives. In health care settings, mercury may be released from thermometers, blood pressure devices, gastrointestinal and other mercury-containing medical products. Fixatives, preservatives, lab chemicals, cleaners and other products may also contain intentionally added mercury, and when these products are discarded to the waste stream, the result is environmental contamination. Furthermore, many other products such as batteries and switches also contain mercury.

To begin with, the global government stakeholders we worked with had very little confidence and belief that another global treaty would ever be possible, considering the age of unilateralism that prevailed globally. In South Africa our government largely viewed mercury as a middle class issue that was not a priority. However, during a window of opportunity, the world's governments – including super powers China, India, Russia and the USA – agreed to begin negotiations for a global treaty, which was agreed in October 2013 in Japan. The treaty took its name from Minamata, the site of the world's greatest mercury poisoning tragedy, which occurred when over 10 000 people died as a result of mercury poisoning that started in the 1950s.

From this slow start over ten years ago, on the 18th of May 2017 Romania became the fiftieth country to ratify the Convention, thus triggering the “entry into force” of the Minamata Convention on Mercury in ninety days' time, in mid-August. Over time, the treaty will provide countries with both the technical and financial resources necessary to reduce worldwide exposure risks to mercury.



Most recently, groundWork continues to execute a GEF-funded Mercury Initial Assessment (MIA) project, aimed at facilitating the ratification and early implementation of the Minamata Convention by providing key national stakeholders in five African countries (Ethiopia, Gambia, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia) with the scientific and technical knowledge and tools needed for that purpose. Zambia and The Gambia from the project have both ratified the treaty. Additionally, fifteen other African countries have now ratified the treaty. They are: Benin, Botswana, Chad, Djibouti, Gabon, Guinea, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, and Togo. African countries that groundWork has worked directly with that have ratified the treaty include Gabon, Swaziland, Lesotho, Chad and Madagascar. The African Region accounts for the majority of ratifications from a single Region signifying the importance of the convention to the region.

To date, and already since 2013, 128 countries are signatories, (signalling their intentions to ratify and implement the Convention). This includes South Africa, which makes us bound by the intentions of the treaty.

By the 2nd of June 2017, South Africa had still not deposited our instrument of ratification, we think because of external pressure from Eskom and the large-scale mining sector that are unwilling to take meaningful actions to address their mercury emissions. So, in South Africa coal energy and mercury go together and the most recent estimates from Eskom themselves is an annual release of approximately thirty tonnes of largely uncontrolled mercury emissions into the atmosphere per annum – one single gram of mercury is known to be enough to contaminate the fish in a small lake!

The Minamata Convention text Article 8 deals specifically with emissions of mercury from coal-fired power stations (one of five of the most significant source categories identified during the Convention negotiations). According to the 2013 United Nations Environment Programme's Global Mercury Assessment – a report that documents the global evidence base on mercury releases to air and water – mercury from coal is the second largest source category (current man-made sources are

responsible for about 30% of annual emissions of mercury to air, which was estimated at 1 960 tonnes in 2010). Man-made emissions also contribute to the vast majority of mercury re-released into the environment annually from surface soils and oceans, now accounting for about 60% of the global air pollution pool. Progress in reducing mercury global pollution cannot be achieved without significant reductions in atmospheric emissions leading to corresponding direct and re-release declines over time.

Other major highlights of the Minamata Convention include a ban on new mercury mines, the phase-out of existing ones, and the phase out and phase down of mercury use in a number of products and processes including batteries, lamps, health care measuring devices and the like. There are also control measures on emissions to air from coal-fired power stations and other large emitters such as cement kilns and metals smelters, and on releases to land and water, and the regulation of the informal sector of artisanal and small-scale gold mining. The Convention also addresses interim storage of mercury and its disposal once it becomes waste, sites contaminated by mercury as well as health issues that, taken all together, will eventually lead to global mercury reductions.

The first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury (COP1) is scheduled to take place from the 24th to the 29th of September 2017 at the International Conference Centre in Geneva, Switzerland. ✕



Jindal damaging not only its homeland

by Robby Mokgalaka

*The Jindal mining group does the damage in South Africa
... as well as its home country India*

Violation of people's environmental human rights and transgression of the dignity of humanity seems, according at least to Jindal mining group, to be equivalent to the normal way of treating people. The Jindal Group is an Indian company founded by OP Jindal in 1930 and its group companies are Jindal Ltd (dealing in mining), Jindal Petroleum Ltd, Jindal Cement and Jindal Steel. It carries on its operations around the world and is said to be making billions of profit.

Its economic growth from coal mining leaves a trail of blood, tears and desperation, leaving the poor people on the ground in poverty due to its operations. In the Tete province of Mozambique, the small Casoca village has been fenced off by this company, which continuously monitors their movements in a manner akin to slavery and is destroying the community's only long-relied-upon means of survival, which is farming. Even the security personnel at the mine's entrance find it normal to interrogate any visitor visiting the people in the village.

Last year, groundWork, in collaboration with Earth-life Africa – Jhb (ELA), organized an international exchange made up of coal-affected communities of Botswana and South Africa to discuss their coal struggle in solidarity. We had an opportunity to visit different Mozambican communities affected by coal mines, including the Casoca community "enslaved" by the Jindal coal mine.

Upon our arrival at the gate of the Jindal coal mine, we were greeted by a conspicuous written notice on the board saying: "Unauthorized entry to this site is strictly forbidden". Before entry is granted, you are first asked sets of questions regarding who you are visiting and why. Upon entry approval, you are required to sign a form. Fortunately we

were allowed entry into the village, which is a rare opportunity.

This is a village that was promised relocation by the mining company before operations started. The place they were to be relocated to is arid and the village cannot farm there as they are doing right now, but they reluctantly agreed as they could not tolerate the dehumanising environment they currently are experiencing. The unfulfilled promises by the mine bred frustrations within the community and riots broke out, with the residents demonstrating against the mine due to the unbearable living conditions.

A similar situation exists right in our own back yard, created by the same Jindal Group in Piet Retief in the Mpumalanga province of South Africa where the company owns a coal mine called Kiepersol Colliery. The mine has fenced off more than forty households and has left them literally and dangerously living inside the mining yard.

When we arrived at the gate of the Kiepersol coal mine to access the community living in the mining yard, we were shocked to be interrogated by the security at the gate entrance as to who we were visiting inside the mine. Astonished and simultaneously infuriated by the discourse under the circumstances, we asked them whether that was how all visitors of those families were treated when they wanted to visit their beloved relatives and families. Challenging the security officer made her realize the inhumane part of their access control. Although she tried to justify the access control as part of her work requirement, she was vividly embarrassed as she obviously realised that her reasons were not enough. She reluctantly and ashamedly handed us a book to sign indemnifying the company from any injury sustained during our visit.



The mine and the community use the same gate for entry and exit of the area. The poor community have to use hired cars to transport themselves through to the gate as they are not allowed to walk for safety reasons. This means one needs to have money to move through the gate. This left us wondering what happens to those who don't have money. It also means their right to freedom of movement gained from their own democratic country is violated. We were shocked to be informed by a community member that the company only provides a taxi for school children and nothing else.

The coal mine was originally developed by Duiker (Pty) Ltd, which sold its mine to Xstrata which then sold the operation to the Jindal Group in around 2006. Kiepersol Colliery is a mothballed, underground mine which produces mid-low volatile content thermal coal, used mostly for power generation. The mine is one of the largest producers of anthracite coal in South Africa and has more than twenty million tonnes of coal reserves expected to last for fifteen years. Jindal is also said to be expected to use the coal for power generation rather than a metallurgical application.

The impact of the mine also affects the nearby community. One of the community persons whose household is situated near the mining fence, although outside the mine, informed us that the mine removed their family graves in order to operate. She further informed us that the family has since contacted the mine about this and the mine did not dispute that there are graves where it is currently operating, but requested the family to come to identify the graves. The lady requested us to assist in resolving this.

When we moved into the mine area to find people from the village we could talk to about the situation in order to gather more information regarding the impact, we met one young man who informed us that there are several complaints from the community but he was uncomfortable to share the details so he referred us to the community liaison person who attends to the grievances between

the community and the mine. It was clear from his demeanour at the beginning conversation that he was also not free to talk to everyone. We then talked to the community liaison officer telephonically to get information. Through persistently explaining ourselves we managed to convince him to share some of the difficulties with us. He insisted that we arrange a community meeting to hear more complaints from the community as there is more to talk about.

There seemed to be so many challenges experienced and the community seemed dispirited and felt helpless to challenge the mine as already physically they are compromised since they are fenced off.

The situation left us dumbfounded and wondering how this could be happening in a democratic country where we all think everyone has right to vote for the kind of life they choose to live and we have moved past the old and oppressive kind of life. It is inconceivable that such neglected communities are still in existence in our democratic country.

groundWork, in conjunction with our partner organization Centre for Environmental Rights (CER), plans to hold a community meeting with the affected villagers and forge a working relationship in pursuit for environmental justice. We also hope to empower the community to act on their own to fight for their own rights.

The meeting between ourselves and the community has to be arranged to happen some time this year. We need to thoroughly prepare ourselves by doing a background check of the mine, and develop a good strategy to approach the situation.

Everyone, regardless of race, class or settlement setting, deserves the protection of all the human rights entrenched in our South African Constitution. We all have equal rights: poor or rich. It is disheartening to notice that the poor seem to be enjoying fewer rights and less protection than they deserve, although at the end of the day we all voted for a better life. ✕



A resounding NO to an incinerator!

by Musa Chamane

I recently witnessed a remarkable first. Those don't happen often anymore, given my age and how long I have been at groundWork. The Wellington community, a wine producing town in the Western Cape, managed to pull together and unite diverse masses of different races, classes and genders in a common effort to say "NO" to incineration. The protest took place on the 29th of March 2017 and was organized by Wellington Community Care Group and Drakenstein Environmental Watch, two local non-profit organizations that are at the forefront in making sure that the incinerator never gets approval. The walk was to resist a large-scale "Waste to Energy" incinerator project planned for Wellington by Drakenstein local municipality.

United in diversity

The youth, farmers, farm workers, waste pickers, activists and professionals walked the streets of the popular wineland town, voicing their grievance to the government about their dissatisfaction regarding a proposed waste incinerator. The community challenged the lack of consultation by the municipality. Legislation was not observed when the municipality approved the proposed project. The Environmental Impact Assessment has been done because the municipal officials have seen fit to have an incinerator in this town without consultation with the community. Even though the municipality has agreed to the project, it still has to apply for a licence from the Department of Environmental Affairs.

No community consultation

The saga started in 2013 when the municipality did a feasibility study, followed by approval by the council. In 2015, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the incinerator commenced. The community only heard about it at the eleventh hour and they felt that their lives and livelihoods will be threatened by this planned incinerator. They will have polluted air, rivers and soil, and this will affect health and agriculture. The community submitted a memorandum to the municipality calling for alternatives to incineration, namely recycling and

promoting informal waste pickers who can work towards a Zero Waste future, while creating income for themselves. The community has taken local government to court for making reckless decisions and ignoring legislation (<http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/saf93030.pdf>).

Falsely branded

Incinerators in this century are branded as sophisticated, modern technology. They are marketed as a perfect technology with huge financial benefit for municipalities. Energy source incinerators are currently attractive to municipalities since municipalities owe Eskom (the national energy producer) for electricity. Therefore, incinerators come as a hope for municipalities that they will save some costs should the incinerator manage to produce a couple of megawatts of electricity. Drakenstein Municipality is also hopeful that this will be beneficial to them. There is no country that has clean, environmentally friendly incinerators without emissions. Third world countries such as South Africa are a preferred destination for such dirty technologies because our environmental laws are not stringent enough and are usually not enforced.

Conclusion

Incineration is not a solution to our energy problem. The solution is to have zero waste or recycling of every waste materials that we produce. The Wellington community believes that these would be amicable solutions. There are people who derive their livelihoods from recycling and if waste is incinerated that means loss of livelihoods and loss of jobs. Drakenstein Municipality should just for once listen to their community and abandon the incinerator plan because it is clear that the communities, recyclers and waste pickers are opposed to it. Instead, the municipality should meet with residents and devise a strategy for how can they best deal with waste. It is vividly clear that an incinerator plan will fail due to community disapproval. ✕



Waste

Wellington anti
incineration
walk

Credit:
Wellington
Community Care
Group's Aniel
Redelinghuys.



One man's waste is another man's resource. Waste
picker collecting waste at Mooi River Landfill site.

Credit: groundWork



Sbusiso Dladla (far left) giving visitors a tour of the
Mooi River Materials Recovery Facility

Credit: groundWork



Recycling co-op making waves

by Musa Chamane

Mooi River Recycling Cooperative has been the leader of the pack amongst waste picker's cooperatives in South Africa. Back in 2007, the cooperative members were working at the small dumping site of this town. There were about three members who were consistent in doing the work. These three members started piloting working as a group. I would assist them by hiring a trailer every Friday, since it was their market day. I would drive the about 70 kilometres from Pietermaritzburg to Mooi River and back to the market with waste picker's materials. At that time their collected recyclables would amount to less than R500. It was clear that a new plan had to be devised. As we were seeing each other almost every week, we started negotiations as to how they could improve their income as well as their working conditions.

New ideas emerged

Ideas were brainstormed on how this work could be improved. A meeting was convened to talk to all the waste pickers, even those who were not serious pickers but frequented the site. It was made clear at the meeting that if they worked collectively they could make a respectable amount of money every week. Some of them bought into the idea. Then a cooperative of ten members was formed and was registered. This happened simultaneously with their individual's daily work. The relationship between the buyer and waste pickers had matured and they started negotiating for better prices and they leased a baling machine from the buyer. The municipality was approached to give them the right to do recycling at the landfill and to further electrify the space that they were using next to the landfill.

United Nations: Seed Award

The project started to break even when the materials were compressed and baled. The cooperative members shared profits amongst themselves and they were now guaranteed livelihoods and a safer work environment. The project received attention from the media as one of the best recycling projects in South Africa. They even received a United Nations Seed Award in 2010. Due to good publicity of the project, the district municipality sourced

funding for the project and a proper structure was built and machinery such as baling machines, scales and a bottle crusher were supplied.

Environmental Affairs Deputy Minister visit project

Attention from national government led to trolleys being dispatched to the project in 2017. A marquee tent was erected and a clean-up campaign was a curtain raiser for the trolley hand over event. Since Mooi River is a small farming town without enough job opportunities, government felt that the cooperative had done well and they had read a lot about it in the past. The Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs has even visited the project and made a promise that she would try and organize tools for the project.

Conclusion

Mooi River people were very grateful for the recognition of the project by government. The event came at the right time, as the municipality was having internal problems and we had seen protests in the Mpofana local municipality and, as a result, the event was postponed more than once. The community were happy because they got a chance to voice other challenges they have as a community and the Deputy Minister agreed to send various concerns to relevant departments.

South African Waste Pickers Association (SAWPA) is very pleased with what the department has done. "We encourage the government to build more materials recovery facilities and provide more tools for the waste pickers," said Simon Mbata (SAWPA National Speaker). In his speech he made it clear that there are many jobs that can be created through waste recycling.

Mooi River Recycling intends implementing a Zero Waste Plan for this town and the municipality needs to develop bylaws that promote total recycling (Zero Waste). The municipality, SAWPA, groundWork and the local cooperative will have a meeting before end of June to discuss how Zero Waste can be achieved for this town. ✕



“Exploring” the legal route

by Niven Reddy and Samuel Chademana

For a while now there has been a cloud hanging over our heads as environmental organizations and community people have been following the prospects of a fracking nightmare becoming a reality in South Africa. Various companies have applied for exploration rights for conventional and unconventional gas. If unconventional gas is found, fracking would be the logical conclusion.

There have been eleven exploration (excluding the Karoo applications) applications made to government in the past five years with the applicants being Rhino Oil & Gas (5), Sungu Sungu (2), Motuoane Energy (2) and Afro Energy (2).

groundWork has been following the public meetings and has been working with Frackfree SA, Environmental Rural Solutions, Church Land Programme and community people in Matatiele in the Eastern Cape, lawyers and the KwaZulu-Natal Agricultural Union (KwaNalu) to understand what the future holds for communities, farm workers and farmers in these various areas.

Over the last months, KwaNalu and a number of land owners embarked on legal interventions and now there are only eight proposals left standing. These legal cases have been nothing short of educational – and are defining moments in the legal community and a positive reassurance to the environmental justice NGOs that our judicial system is still dependable and independent of political interference.

The 107 day dilemma

According to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations, within 107 days of receipt of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and Environmental Management Programme (EMP), the authority (being the minister of Environmental Affairs) should, in writing, either grant or refuse an environmental authorization. A number of applications that are awaiting Competent Authority decision (from PASA/DMR) have exceeded the 107-day period allocated by law for PASA to assess the application and make a recommendation to the

Minister of Mineral Resources, who either grants or refuses an environmental authorization.

Legal opinion is that this is tantamount to a refusal and there is basis to appeal the decision by the competent authority if they make a decision after the 107 days. At a groundWork-hosted legal meeting on the 12th of May, one attorney rightly put it: It is possible that the decision of the competent authority could be considered *ultra vires*. In layman terms this means it is no longer within the powers or authority of the designated office to decide on the matter since the time period allocated by law has been exceeded.” Since there is no known legal precedence so, if pursued and a favourable outcome is secured for exploration, it could form one of the grounds to appeal the relevant office’s decisions and possibly the basis for a judicial review. Consequently, applicants (Rhino or Motuoane) might have to start the whole process from the scratch. As one attorney in Matatiele rightly put it, we could be “making law” in these legal cases, breaking new ground in our interpretation of statutory instruments governing the extractive industry in South Africa.

Over the last year we have also had parliament send parliamentarian Cherillyn Dudley of the African Christian Democratic Party as a representative at the Matatiele meeting, a debate on fracking occur in parliament on the 2nd of December 2016 and now legal cases have pushed the exploration of gas further into the distance. A victory for society. ✕

Summary of the eleven proposed applications

Three applications have been terminated, one of the three following a decision of the North Gauteng and Cape Town High Courts.

Six applications are with the Petroleum Agency of South Africa (PASA) to inform a decision to be made the Minister of the Department of Mineral Resources (DMR).

One application is currently on hold as Afro Energy have requested a nine-month extension on their application.

One other application will be decided through the legal route as well.



A just transition needs to be for people

by Samuel Chademana

The capitalist economic system has contributed to the achievement of remarkable feats in technological advancement and increasing productivity – but all to extract profit for a few. Meanwhile land, water, air and the majority poor pay the long-term price of pollution. Pollution for profit is externalised on them, so they are dispossessed as their natural resources increasingly become enclosed and privatised in the name of productivity, and they are excluded from decision making to challenge this. According to Oxfam, the richest 1% holds [more wealth](#) than the rest of the world combined. At the same time, environmental degradation and climate change proceed at a terrifying pace.

With the advent of the theory of a *Just Transition*, with its emphasis on the need for a transition from a high carbon to a low carbon economy, the question that begs to be answered is: “Shouldn’t this process be participatory, inclusive and fair?” I hold the notion that the transition to a low carbon economy from our current unsustainable means of production and consumption provides humanity with a great opportunity to deconstruct the current unequal economic order and allow the inclusion of the marginalised masses who constitute the majority of the world’s and nations’ poor. It is not fair, nor is it just, to transplant the current, skewed patterns of resource ownership (now applied to private renewable energy) for use into the future. Instead we should take this moment to equalise the status quo and share the cake more evenly. This equal distribution has to be for all forever, as the Matatiele Manifesto against fracking has called for.

Going into the “uncharted” water of a Just Transition means no one holds a monopoly yet and we all stand on “even” ground. Aspects of the low carbon economy – such as renewable energy, eco-design and green production technology – are emerging sectors and they are some of the fastest growing sectors globally and have the potential to be key contributors to the national economy. More importantly, they are potentially small and decentralised and therefore have the potential for

social ownership rather than having to fit within the model of profit privatisation. There is therefore an urgent need to, through the use of the right policies and legislative framework, ensure the inclusion of those who are excluded from the mainstream. We should support people from vulnerable communities to be able to understand these spaces of a just transition, equip people and local government with the right skills, appropriate resources and push for national government to provide capital incentives at a local level before the monopolies of multinational corporations move into these spaces and perpetuate the current order of unequal access and beneficiation of resources. We should lower the barriers of entry into the low carbon economy in such a way that it allows the entrance of new players from marginalised communities and local government that have not had the chance in the era of the brown (carbon intensive) economy.

Government interventionist policies and brave leadership should be the vehicles that facilitate this just transition. The deepening of climate change, and hence the need to transition to a people’s economy, comes with the demand for new skills and technology. Numerous reports have highlighted the potential for “green collar” jobs – jobs that seek to reduce harmful greenhouse gas pollution, such as those in the clean energy and green building industries. A just transition is also about building the resilience of poor communities. Caution will have to be exercised to ensure that the adoption of new technologies does not exclude the working-class poor whose skills sets fall within the older and carbon intensive sectors. Job losses should be avoided by deliberately putting in place measures to absorb the working class through reskilling and/or alternative livelihoods.

A Just Transition is not only about jobs. It is also about repairing the land, cleaning our water, breaking down exclusion and enclosure, stopping externalisation by the elite economy and reoccupying our politics. A Just Transition means a real democracy so that people can be in control of production and consumption. ✕



Strengthening youth movements

by Niven Reddy

groundWork hosts the first ever cross regional youth exchange of Friends of the Earth International (FoEI) held in Durban

The Erasmus+ Youth Project saw seven African groups of FoEI come together in Liberia in January this year for the launch of the project in Africa. Seven European groups also had their launch event, which took place in October 2016 in Brussels. This year, both groups came together in Durban for the first time, for a cross regional meeting which strengthened the broader aims of the project in building strong cross regional and bilateral solidarity and understanding, and supporting youth engagement in the FoEI federation. The process was guided by groundWork's Environmental Justice School approach, which seeks to build people knowledge from their own and shared experience.

The week was full of exchanging ideas and ways in which the youth movement in Europe has strengthened and the potential for a strong African youth movement. There is a long and interlinked history between African and European countries. We mapped and went through significant moments in our countries' histories and built a time line of colonialism, capitalism, climate change and people's resistance.

We did a toxic tour of South Durban with SDCEA, which highlighted the severe health issues faced by our communities on the fenceline of large-scale industries. After the toxic tour, everyone appeared dulled by the sights they had seen so the perfect pick-me-up arrived in the shape of a traditional Durban bunny chow. Not a curried bunny rabbit, but rather a ¼ loaf of bread filled with good Durban curry.

The last night together was a cultural exchange night that saw each participant bring in an edible item significant to their home country. It was a fitting end to a week of meeting new people and sharing knowledge with the common goal of achieving environmental and social justice. It

was also useful for the Friends of the Earth Africa (FOEA) members to engage with our partners and understand how the youth campaign in Europe has grown. We ate, drank and danced until deep into the night, until we got chased away by Bobby, the aging director of groundWork.

Young Friends of the Earth Europe is an established grassroots network of young people and youth organizations working collectively for social and environmental justice on a local, national and European level. In Africa, the youth movement is still growing and there is much to be learnt from our European comrades on how to successfully campaign as youth and have an impact on regional and African level. The Friends of the Earth Africa (FoEA) AGM will be held in Togo this year and for the first time Young FoEA were invited to present a communiqué to the rest of the federation to support the youth-based movements in Africa.

In addition to the seven youth groups from each region being brought together, there were also two-week bilateral exchanges between an African and a European member. groundWork was paired with BUND from Germany and, seeing that the cross regional meeting was held in Durban, it made sense to have the bilateral exchange immediately afterwards. Maike Tasch, who is from the youth group in Germany known as BUNDjugend, spent two weeks with us at groundWork. We spoke about common issues that we both deal with in our various organizations and the challenge that we both seem to face in the reluctance of our respective governments to move away from fossil fuels – and coal in particular – to a sustainable renewable energy source. Germany still has coal-fired power stations, and despite their claim that there will be no more hard coal mining from 2018, they will still be hooked on soft coal. ✂



Youth and Environmental Justice



FoEA and FoEE youth gathered in Durban, during the Erasmus meeting
Credit: groundWork



groundWork's Niven Reddy and BUNDjugend's Maike Tasch during the Durban Erasmus Meeting
Credit: groundWork



Exchange with batman

by Maike Tasch

5:30: "Get up, stand up! Stand up for your right!" My alarm clock continued singing until I finally got up. I wasn't used to that early time. As an ordinary German student, I never go out before ten in the morning. That's my secret German uni-life law. But I wasn't in Germany. And university was more than 12 000 kilometres away. After a fresh shower Niven, my exchange partner from groundWork, picked me up. We fetched some more groundWorkers and went from Durban to the office in Pietermaritzburg. "This is Batman from Germany. She's working with us the next two weeks," Niven introduced me to everyone and I felt comfortable and welcomed from the first second. Who wouldn't want to work together with me, Batman?!

As it was a Monday, I participated in the usual Monday meeting where all staff members of groundWork come together and discuss what they're currently working on. It was perfect to get an overview about working structures, topics groundWork deals with and to spot the first similarities and differences from the NGO I'm working with in Germany: BUND, Friends of the Earth, Germany.

The structure is one of the biggest and most obvious differences from groundWork. At BUND I work with BUNDjugend / Young Friends of the Earth Germany, which has been focussing on young people for the past twenty-seven years because "Those who get the youth get the future". Our aim is to empower young people to become actively engaged in environmental protection and social justice issues.

We also offer practical workshops to explore positive alternatives for eco-friendly lifestyles and get involved in hands-on habitat conservation activities. Last but not least, we organize large ecological camps or environmental youth congresses.

Actually, every day of my short visit was a highlight, but the main highlight was when Batman flew to Jozi, visiting eMalahleni and Middelburg in the

Highveld Priority area. eMalahleni means "place of coal" in Zulu and the town is surrounded and under-mined by active and abandoned coal mines. You can imagine that the emissions and pollution of environment and air are significant. Even without measuring it you were able to smell, see and feel the difference. Trying to implement two new campaigns – "Life after Coal" and "Unmask my City" – groundWork is targeting exactly those issues.

We have a lot of lignite coal mines in Germany as well, but I've never been so close to them. The destruction of environment and nature is incredibly vast and I'm disappointed in those people who are destroying the basis of life. I simply don't understand it. In Germany, approximately 40% of the energy supply is provided by coal whereas in South Africa it is still over 90%. The coal mines and power plants are largely owned by Eskom, which gives them a lot of influence and power. Further, developed countries like Germany support the coal sector generously through financial development cooperation. Countries like South Africa receive these funds to build new power plants and extend the coal energy sector. Super ridiculous, if you ask me. We should rather focus on renewable energy.

I learned a lot about campaigning and climate justice in South Africa in the place of coal. I understand now that it's not just a national problem, and through our globalized planet we have to work and stand together. I'm sure the campaigns will be successful and I'm trying to support them with all the power I've got. Taking everything into account I will miss the beauty of South Africa... well, not the Highveld and place of coal areas of course. I will miss the awesome people behind groundWork and the great atmosphere in the office as well as the delicious lunchtime curry-breaks. Batman is more than keen to come back and get involved! Let's move forward! A Batman exists in every one of us; you just need to wake him up to start fighting for a sustainable and peaceful world. "It's not who I am underneath, but what I do that defines me" ... Batman! ✂



Watt Park? asks Greenfly

Curiouser and curiouser, cried Alice as she screamed down the rabbit hole. That was even before she found herself at the mad hatter's blue label party. Readers may know that the hatter was mad because making hats involved the use of mercury and mercury makes you mad. Which brings us to Eskom. Eskom puts over 31 000 kilograms of mercury into the air over your head every year. Enough to make anyone mad. Probably enough to make everyone mad.

But does it explain what happens around the big table at Megawatt Park? Last year, Eskom boss Brian Molefe resigned because Thuli Madonsela caught him in the Saxonwold Shebeen. Matshela Koko was then made acting boss.

A little later, being a member in good standing of three ANC branches, Brian was made an MP. Then he wasn't made Minister of Finance. Then Ben Ngubane, who sits in The Chair at the top of the Mega Table at Watt Park, said Brian should get a payout of R30 million. Then Lynne Brown, the Minister of Public Enterprises, said that was too much. Then those at the Mega Table said, O dear. In that case we'll just have to give him his old job back. Then Lynne said that's a better "value proposition" than paying him R30 million.

The value proposition was not out of her mouth before Brian resigned from Parliament and was ready for work the next Monday morning. And not a moment too soon because, said Lynne, Matshela had to go on holiday that very day. Unfortunately, he hadn't noticed that his daughter was scoring big contracts with Eskom so there needed to be an investigation. And with him out of the way, the return of Brian saved Watt Park from being bossless. And Watt Park saluted the hero, defender of the coal yards and keeper of atomic faith against all reason, with raised cell phones.

This was not Matshela's first holiday.

But before we come to that, let's remember some earlier hats paraded at the Mega Table. In the time of the philosopher king, then Minister Alec Erwin was keeper of the atomic pebble bed of dreams. He announced the brave new build that gave us Medupi and Kusile. Valli Moosa, once Minister of

Environment, was then in The Chair at the top of the Mega Table and also on the ANC's national finance committee. Valli didn't notice that the ANC's Chancellor House scored big time on the boiler contract for Medupi and Kusile. He didn't go on holiday.

Jacob Maroga was then the boss at Watt Park, appointed just when the lights went out. In this, the time of darkness, Alec called in Bobby Godsell, a retired Anglo grandee, to take The Chair at the Mega Table. And the price of power went up. But Bobby and Jacob fell out and were never more seen at Watt Park. The philosopher king was meanwhile deposed and succeeded by uBaba of the House of Nkandla. Barbara Hogan followed Alec and, with a rush of reason to the brain, popped the pebble bed dream.

Barbara said all power to the Mega Table. Mpho Makwana followed Bobby in The Chair and Brian Dames was the new boss. Brian the First. You can see the light, they said, shining on the World Cup. The price of power went up and up. Watt Park looked neat and proper when along came the chopper for Barbara's head.

Malusi Gigaba was uBaba's next Minister. Chip chop chip chop. All heads rolled at the Mega Table. Brian the First held on a while but resigned just ahead of the 2014 elections. Those at the Mega Table then made deals at the Saxonwold Shebeen before appointing Malusi's man Tshediso Matona as boss.

Poor Tshediso. uBaba gave Lynne the Ministry. Chip chop chip chop. Heads rolled at the Mega Table. Within six months of arriving, Tshediso had to have a holiday. And Matshela was one of three lieutenants on holiday with him. The vacational inquiry found nothing but the holiday cleared the way for the entry of Brian. Never the Second. Tshediso was seen no more. But they let Matshela back when he swore fealty to Brian the Great.

It's blue label time again at the Mega Table. Brian is Great again. Off in a corner, an old rabbit is nodding off and dreaming of pebbles again. Suddenly, he is awakened by a screeching command: "Off with his head!"

"Who?" asked the rabbit. ☘



The cost of mining resistance

by Robby Mokgalaka and Nombulelo Shange

Duzi
Production's
Sphiwe
Mazibuko
capturing
interview with
Bab Mtshali
outside his
Somkhele home.

Credit: Mfolozi
Community
Environmental
Justice
Organization's
(MCEJO), Billy
Mnqondo



"The blasting sounds like gunshots being fired at us". These are the words of Newcastle resident, Khulu. Her neighbours are Buffalo Coal Mine and they have been steadily creeping towards her fence. She tells our community partner, Lucky Shabalala from Sisonke, that the mine used to be kilometres and kilometres away but overnight they became close, aggressive neighbours, terrorising her and threatening her livelihood with their pollution and constant blasting. Her once stable and strong home now has massive cracks running from floor to ceiling. It is a miracle her home still stands.

Our next culprit is Somkhele anthracite mine, owned and operated by Tendele Coal Mining (Pty) Ltd as a subsidiary to Petmin in the Mtubatuba area. The mine is located 85 kilometres North-East of Richards Bay in Northern KwaZulu-Natal and began its operation in 2007.

The mine has resulted in many households being relocated to make way for the mine. People relying on the land for food, shelter and income generation were moved off their wide open fields of land and relocated to spaces with tiny back yards, removing their ability to farm and rendering them helpless.



The Sangweni family refused to relocate because the mine did not agree to compensate for the loss they would have suffered if they relocated. They decided to stubbornly remain on their rightful land and the mine eventually fenced them off. They breathe the coal dust from the daily blasting.

Somkhele mine, during its recent 2017 expansion, refused to compensate the Mtshali family for the grazing land they used for their 200 cattle and other livestock. The family is now also fenced off and suffers the health and environmental impacts caused by the mine and its blasting.

The community is advised to evacuate their homes or remove their valuable items from table tops every time the mine is blasting. Unfortunately, this does not stop the houses from cracking and collapsing. No compensation is given when people's homes and valuables are damaged.

The community reported the mine's violations of environmental human rights to the Department of Mineral Resources. As a result, the Department began its investigations and ordered the mine to



A collapsed structure in Bab Mtshali's yard, the damage was caused by the constant blasting coming from Somkhele Mine.

Credit: MCEJO's, Billy Mnqondo

apply mitigation measures in their operations to minimise the impact on to the community.

These stories are just a few of many that come from the *how mines ruin everything in their path* handbook. To document and record all of the stories would fill volumes and volumes of encyclopaedia-sized books. The violence is both structural and personal, affecting the most marginalised communities made up predominately of vulnerable black women and children.



The Centre for Environmental Rights (CER), with the assistance of groundWork, are trying to enter into mediation with the mine to mitigate or reduce the impacts from the mine for the benefit of the community. Other organizations that are part of this effort include Mfolozi Community Environmental Justice Organisation, South African Human Rights Commission, WOMIN, MACUA Global Environmental Trust and many others. ✎

Bab Mshali's livestock and livelihood which is now under threat as the mine creeps closer and closer to his property.

Credit: MCEJO's, Billy Mnqondo



United Movements Media Campaign

by Nombulelo Shange

I have been talking a great deal about community-led, grassroots media and knowledge sharing. I have talked about it in meetings, and with friends, who are no doubt tired of hearing my ramblings and sermons of how media should be revolutionary. I also wrote about it in my [March 2017](#) Newsletter piece, and even found a way to sneak in the idea in my [December 2016](#) piece, even though it was actually about conflict and challenges within the revolutionary space South Africa finds itself in. I can't promise that this will be the last time I write on this topic, but I promise it won't be a repetition of March's newsletter.

So, we decided to live our politics, walk the talk and put together our first solidarity and media training workshop. Planning it was a growling and nerve-racking process of making calls, sending endless emails, sourcing participants and facilitators, developing material and making sure everyone understood the vision.

Our first workshop took place in Newtown, which I like to refer to as South Africa's "cool capital", with its vibrant creative scene. We were surrounded by so much art and a melting pot of ideas and individuals. We were hosted by The Pla4orm, which is also an art space that frequently puts on exhibitions, music shows and plays. The activists who attended the media workshop represented old and new partners, including: South African Waste Pickers Association, Highveld Environmental Justice Network, Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance, Right2Know, South Durban Community Environmental Alliance, Green Thumbs, Marapong Community Forum and Community Concern Group. The twelve participants came from all over the country –

Limpopo, Kwa Zulu Natal, Gauteng and Northern Cape – and represented a whole host of interests linked to environmental justice, including womanist movements, access to information groups, artist groups, and groups affected by mining, air quality, water restrictions and so much more.

We all got to learn from and engage with writer and photographer Zukiswa Zimela, radio producer Nolwazi Tusini, Amandla mobi's Thuli Ngubane and Right2Know's Palesa Kunene. We all also learnt that the challenges are great and extremely hard to overcome but we are motivated, invested and passionate about this process.

There are so many greats who inspire us and whom we look up to, like the Wooden Spoon Revolution women of Burkina Faso, who played a huge role in ending President Blaise Compaore's oppressive twenty-seven year rule in 2014. Like many recent revolutions, the powerful images made it to social media and created intrigue and awareness on an issue many of us might otherwise not have known about. The women holding wooden spoons, a symbol for discipline in many black households, brought down an entire system because they were united and fully armed with their modern day revolution weapons: their cell phones, their voices and wooden spoons to remind their predominately male leaders that they're not too old for a beating similar to those they might have received as boys for being naughty.

Here is a sneak peek of what we got up to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1vXZvzlyDGI>





groundWork's
Niven Reddy star
gazing
Credit: Thuli
Mtshali from
Green Thumbs,
Environmental
Artists



Mathapelo,
Mahlohonolo,
Thando,
Cathrene
and Thuli
flexing their
photography
muscles during
our photo
session
Credit:
groundWork

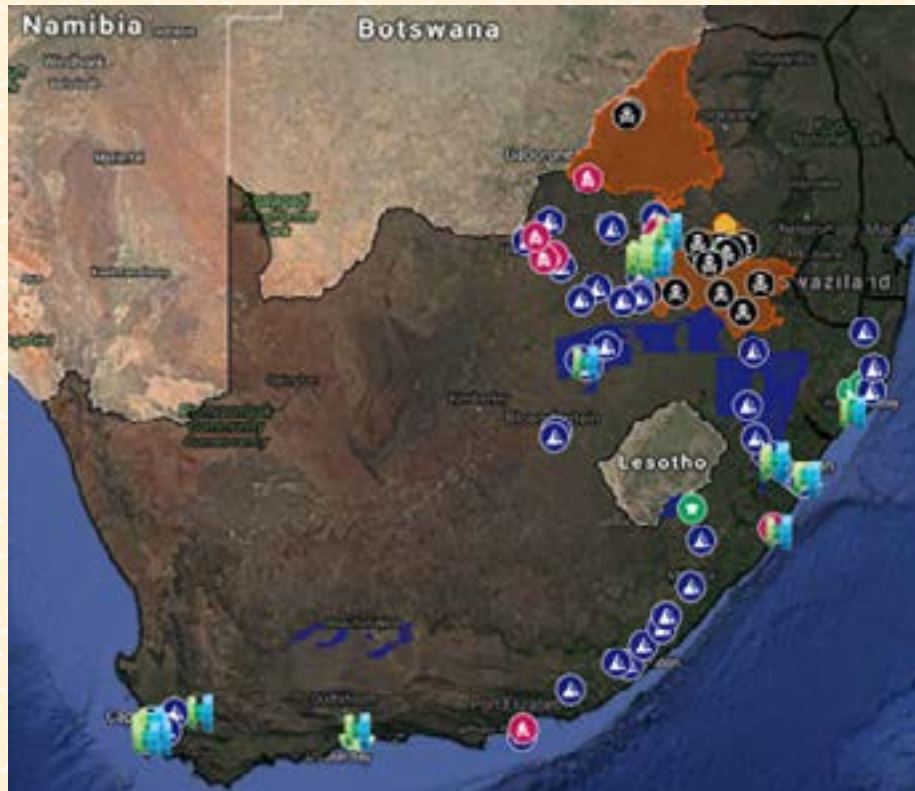


United
Movements
Media
Campaign group
photo consisting
of participants,
facilitators and
groundWork
staff
Credit:
groundWork



groundWork launches its Battle Map

by Niven Reddy and Nombulelo Shange



groundWork's interactive geographic battle map shows our community support and global footprint and how wide-reaching our campaigns are, especially in South Africa and Africa. The work that we do in our humble, comfortable, peaceful little Pietermaritzburg office spreads thousands of kilometers and has the force of supporting rapidly rising revolutionary movements towards a just transition.

The concept of a battle map started years ago and grew out of a desire to track the impact that groundWork and its partners have.

Since the map is interactive, using the zoom function enhances the resolution and refines the work that we do in a specific area. The map is best viewed on a PC as you can view the full layout as well as the ability to toggle through the layers. While the viewing experience is better on a PC, the map and

the features are still pretty cool even when you are viewing them on your cellphone or tablet.

The map consists of combination of layers. Each layer represents a campaign in groundWork or partner organization and, of course, our three offices had to have their own layer too. At first glance it is difficult to see through all the icons but layers can be deselected on the left in order to only view the partner organisations or just our GGHH campaign (Just an example, calm down other campaigners – your campaigns are there as well).

If you are viewing this electronically, you can access the battle map by [clicking here](#).

Please note that the map is and always will be updated so it will never be a finished product. You can make suggestions or report a broken link to niven@groundwork.org.za.

