



# GROUNDWORK



**Planning, sharing, learning,  
working in solidarity**



# 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, head of the Environmental Health Department at the Durban University of Technology. The other trustees are: Farid Esack, Patrick Kulati, Richard Lyster, Sandile Ndawonde and Jon White.*

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3	<b>From the Smoke Stack</b>
5	<b>Coal impacts 'bombshell' our visitors</b>
7	<b>Eskom is killing people</b>
9	<b>A year of action!</b>
11	<b>A rose by any other name...</b>
12	<b>Africa striding towards zero waste</b>
14	<b>SAWPA plans for the future</b>
16	<b>Protests at Gupta-owned mines</b>
18	<b>The GGHH community meeting</b>
20	<b>Cell phone activism</b>
22	<b>Manipulating the IRP</b>
23	<b>Waste picker crushed</b>
24	<b>This Land</b>



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Cover: Participants in the coal extractives gender gathering that took place at Gender Links Cottages in Johannesburg. Credit: groundWork



# From the Smoke Stack



by groundWork Director, Bobby Peek

What a busy start to 2018. And it was all capped off by *u Baba Ka Dudazi*, AKA ex-president Zuma, resigning a few seconds before 11PM on Valentine's Day. Yes, I was watching this with a few friends from different parts of South Africa and the world – all commenting on WhatsApp as it was happening. While I raised concerns about the “scramble and unknown” I was told to “take a moment and be happy ... it's been a long decade”. Indeed it has been. A decade that highlighted the brutality of the politics of wealth accumulation at the expense of the people. And indeed we should be happy that Zuma has gone, but does the future look better for the very people that had to suffer from the scramble for mineral wealth? Ask the people living on burning coal mines, living next to coal waste heaps and in shacks with no energy. Do they feel there will be a change? I'd venture to say that they are not “happy”.

As we now know, our new president, while coming down hard on corruption, is probably not going to change the policies that facilitate much of this corruption. We are probably going to buy more weapons, we are going to increase mining and policies such as Phakisa, the fast delivery plan of Zuma that seeks to speed up the development of an offshore oil and gas industry, are going to go ahead – even faster.

The undemocratic practices of not releasing critical information to community people on industrial pollution is going to continue, so I do not have much happiness on my end. Until whoever is in government deals with the corruption within the environmental justice sector, I will not be happy. The corruption of allowing pollution that results in corporates making a profit at the expense of

people's health will continue, although I wish to be proven wrong. The corruption of not providing clean, affordable and healthy energy while spending billions of Rand to continue with coal will continue. The corruption of not doing one's job and allowing pollution that kills people will continue. This corruption needs to stop. The corruption of ignoring environmental injustices. We need to be careful of our euphoria post-Zuma.

Subsequent to Zuma's resignation, we have had our new president deliver the State of the Nation address where mining was touted as a “sunrise” industry. Mining that has, over the last 150-odd years, created immense wealth for a few and absolute poverty for the majority. Will a leopard change its spots? No! Mining has no future in a just and equitable society.

I write this just as I have finished facilitating a short session for a groundWork and the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance meeting, where people from various backgrounds and persuasions are trying to understand how they can effectively push back against offshore oil and gas, and Phakisa. This is one of various meetings groundWork has held over the first weeks of this year. This newsletter focuses on these meetings and lets you know about the key issues we are planning for this year in each campaign that we do.

The year started off, as per normal, with our staff planning meeting, which was followed by our partner meetings to plan the year ahead. Within these partner meetings we had more than fifty people representing various organizations and health institutions. Indeed a big shift from the days when there were maybe ten in the room.



Shortly after this we had two internal processes that kicked off. One is the three-year programme document, which reviews the context in which we work, tests the validity of the work we do and seeks to plan a three-year response to the present major environmental justice issues – as groundWork understands these – in South Africa. It is clear from the numbers of people and organizations that are involved with groundWork that the demands are going to be great on groundWork in 2018 and beyond.

Alongside this we are undertaking an evaluation that seeks to speak with the 'owners' / 'employees' / 'partners' and that takes us on a process of reflection on if/how groundWork as an organization should or could become even better enabled to implement and manage processes of change and growth over the next five to ten years. This includes consideration of changes of leaders, and exploration of how/if it is possible for change to happen in the way that leadership and management is practised in groundWork. groundWork is changing and we have to prepare for change.

To top all of this internal work, the other work has to continue. Our work is based upon mobilizing, resisting and transformation and this does not stop just because we have internal processes. So, during this time we hosted an Africa-wide coal exchange, with people from across Africa visiting South Africa to work with #coalextractivesgender and visit the coal fields of Mpumalanga. This was one of the biggest exchanges we have had and we must thank WoMin and 350.org who supported this process as well.

Besides this, the Climate and Energy Justice Campaign planned with various organizations a clear strategy on resisting offshore oil and gas exploitation. The Waste Campaign met with global activists in Morocco, challenging waste incineration and building Zero Waste and #breakfreefromplastic models. The Environmental Health Campaign met with the South African government to try and assist them in their commitments toward the Minamata Convention – which, as a country, we have fallen behind on. Some elements of the Coal Campaign

met in Cape Town to understand how we are going to navigate a year that does not have Zuma, nor a clear plan, known as the Integrated Resource Plan, on how we are going to generate our electricity over the next few decades.

Another exciting part of the beginning of the year has been the Environmental Justice School 2018, which ran from the 11<sup>th</sup> of February to the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March. We will speak more about this in the next newsletter, but from the first week that we have had to date – as I am writing this – it is clear that we have strong students this year.

Critically, pulling off all these processes at the start of the year has been a challenge. But what it does highlight is the growing complexity of groundWork and the increased demands that are coming our way.

So, essentially, we are looking forward to a busy 2018 that will be the basis of a medium term strategy that will emerge out of our programme planning process. We look forward to working with a new set of political leaders who we hope will listen to people and allow people access to information that can assist with not only resisting environmental injustices, but also in building a new tomorrow based upon informed, open dialogue.

As I finalize this writing, I am reading of workers on the minefields of South Africa losing their jobs or not being paid. Mass retrenchments. Local communities running out of water. Life after mining is now staring us in the face and it does not look good. Those with the profits have vanished and the workers and the community are having to fend for themselves on contaminated lands, water poisoned by acid mine drainage and air that is polluted.

We cannot accept this. We have to build a new tomorrow. We cannot accept that a mining charter will save the poor. Saving South Africa means more than hoping for economic growth! Remember that economic growth has never helped the poor.

Till next time,

Bobby ✂





# Coal impacts 'bombshell' our visitors

by Robby Mokgalaka

Communities affected by extractives around Africa gathered in Ermelo in January 2018 to witness first hand of the amount of pollutions of various forms caused by the coal mines and coal plants.

They came from African countries such as Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Senegal, Botswana, Kenya, Ghana and Ivory Coast, teamed up with the locals from Gauteng, Free State, KwaZulu-Natal and the Mpumalanga Highveld area. The diversity of the groups benefitted the objectives of the event in that it built solidarity and created a platform from which to share different perspectives in order to boost the locals in their struggle.

Building up to the exchange we had a community planning meeting in Durban. The community planning meeting was attended by Centre of Environmental Rights (CER) and coal-affected community representatives from Newcastle, Fuleni, Highveld and Vaal. The aim of the meeting was to share and discuss the areas of our focus for 2018 in order to forge ways to work with each other. In the meeting, the exchange was one of the main subjects tabled for discussion. groundWork was to work jointly with the host, Khuthala in making it happen in the Ermelo area of the Highveld.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of January 2018 we had a gender workshop in Johannesburg hosted by Womin, the aim of which was to share, discuss and develop a common understanding of the impacts of coal in the lives of women. It was agreed that we should all consider how women are factored into our struggle and are empowered to fight their struggles of coal as it impacts on their day-to-day lives.

The exchange unfolded from the 29<sup>th</sup> to the 31<sup>st</sup> of January 2018. On the 29<sup>th</sup>, we travelled from Johannesburg to Ermelo and had an opportunity to visit one of the most polluting Sasol plants in Secunda. The visitors marvelled at the magnitude of the plant and the exuding pollutants from the operation. Our visit to the Sasol plant was short lived as the security personnel suddenly interrupted us, strongly reprimanding us and saying that we were not allowed to be in the area without an

appointment as the area is one of the South African key point areas. We were emphatically instructed to vacate the premises, so we left and proceeded with our journey.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> we had our early morning debrief talk before our toxic tour. We drove to the nearby Eskom-owned, 1967-built, Camden power station with energy generation of 1600 MW. The power station is historically notorious for contributing to pollution in the Highveld area. It is located in the town of Ermelo on the Highveld.

When we arrived at the Camden power station and we managed to view the establishment up close without any distraction. A tour guide from Khuthala Environmental Care Group (KECG), the local community-based organization, informed us of the horrendous incident where Camden relocated the community graves to make way for one of the coal-supplying mines without consulting the relevant family members. The Khuthala members intervened just as the remains were going to be reburied unceremoniously and without proper marking. The local media was called in to publicize the culture-offending activity by Eskom. As a result of the intervention, Eskom halted their plans in order to make an effort to consult with the relevant family members.

We then proceeded to view abandoned coal mines in the area. We started at the Mbabane opencast coal mine, which has been abandoned many years. We were travelling with former artisanal miners who used to work in the mine but have since stopped because of health problems from breathing coal dust. The mine is located less than 200 metres from the settlement area. The houses are literally located within a stone's throw above the mine, exposing community people to a dangerous environment. Anyone could easily fall into an almost fifty-metre-long open pit. Many artisanal coal miners lost their lives when trying to dig out coal from under the ready-to-collapse, heavily rock-covered wall of the crust. One of the artisanal miners narrated a horrible incident of a miner who got trapped and



## Lead

was severed into two halves by a collapsing rock from a tunnel while trying to dig out coal.

The miner explained to us that sometimes they sleep underground to up production. If they work hard enough, they can sell up to R4 000-worth in one day. They do this difficult and dangerous work in order to feed their families. The place is now less used by them as the coal reserves have decreased and the area is becoming more dangerous as they are required to go deeper in order to get more coal.

The top part of the mine has lines of cracks on the ground, marking the parts which are about to collapse. Walking near those cracks is a risky exercise. Near those cracks there are houses with a little walking path on the top side of the open pit.

Our trip continued to another abandoned coal mine called Golfview. This was an underground coal mine which operated in a wetland. The mine is continuously burning from coal combustion underground, exuding toxic smoke above the ground. The artisanal miners informed us that the tunnels underneath can go as deep as a kilometre or more. They are actively operating there, as there are still more coal reserves underneath. They further explained to us that underground it is pitch black, so dark that you can hardly see your own hand.

*The coal exchange participants visiting the Goldview abandoned underground coal mine which is constantly burning on a wetland. The former coal artisanal miner explains to the visitors the types of toxic coal.*

*Credit: groundWork*



They use head torches so that they are able to see where they are going and what they are doing.

The upper crust of the mine has very wide crack lines and some parts of it have already collapsed. We were also informed that some ladies trade sex in exchange for coal, while some are raped by the guys because the area is also remote from the villages.

The comments by the visitors during our statement-making meeting the following day were that they had seen another side of South Africa, a side they had never imagined. They have only been exposed to the beautiful side of the country such as Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban. They were very grateful to have experienced the inhumane side, which now repainted the image of the country altogether.

The group saw the need to help Khuthala as an organization to get themselves organized as an effective structure in order to improve their administrative component and amplify the good work they doing on the ground. The group also saw the need to also attend the Gert Sibande ITT meetings and other local government forums in order to support Khuthala and the affected community by raising their challenges of coal. X

# Eskom is killing people

by Rico Euripidou and Robyn Hugo

Every year in January, groundWork, along with our NGO and community partners, gets together for a community planning meeting to share our priorities and develop clear and powerful common strategies for the work in the year ahead. One of our agreed priorities was to continue our engagement with the Portfolio Committee on Environmental Affairs to address ongoing non-compliance with ambient air quality standards in the Highveld Priority Area (HPA) and, in particular, to focus on Eskom and Sasol's progress in ensuring compliance with the minimum emission limits (MES) of the Air Quality Act. In our various representations to the Portfolio Committee we highlighted various expert studies on the health impacts of air pollution from industrial facilities and we reiterated that Eskom is well aware of the health impacts of its stations, drawing attention to their own health impact assessments. So, one of our agreed priorities for 2018 is to engage with health sector practitioners and institutions to eliminate toxic emissions and support community environmental justice movements.

There is no dispute that air pollution in the South African priority areas is above safe levels, with regular exceedances of our national ambient air quality standards. This is despite South African standards being weak and significantly more lax than the World Health Organization guidelines to protect human health. This is because our minimum emission limits (MES) from big industry, like coal-fired power and chemical plants (Eskom and Sasol), are ignored by polluters and are also substantially less stringent than elsewhere in the world, including most other developing countries like Thailand, China and India. For this reason, the Life After Coal (LAC) Campaign – a joint campaign made up of the Centre for Environmental Rights (CER), Earthlife Africa, Johannesburg and groundWork that aims to: discourage investment in new coal-fired power stations and mines; accelerate the retirement of South Africa's coal infrastructure; and enable a just transition to renewable energy systems for the people – and our community partners with whom we work have been working with the parliamentary

Portfolio Committee on Environmental Affairs over the past two years or so to reverse this harmful trend and to force the polluters to adhere to the requirements of the law.

Our community partners include the Highveld Environmental Justice Network (HEJN), the Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance (VEJA) and the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA), who have been active in our attempts to ensure implementation, enforcement of and compliance with the MES, particularly in the context of the urgent need to improve air quality in the priority areas (including south Durban). These are areas so declared, in terms of the Air Quality Act, because air pollution is so bad it's exceeding the already weakened National Ambient Air Quality Standards, harming human health.

Multiple health reports, including ones commissioned by Eskom itself, highlight the health impacts of coal-fired power in SA. The most recent is Dr Mike Holland's report, which found that air pollution from Eskom's power stations kills more than 2 200 South Africans every year. In addition, thousands of cases of bronchitis and asthma in adults and children are caused annually from PM<sub>2.5</sub> exposure alone. This costs our country more than R30 billion each year, through premature deaths, hospital admissions and lost working days.

Given the seriousness and importance of these findings and the urgency to take meaningful action to reduce pollution, we invited members of various portfolio committees to attend a presentation by Dr Holland of this report in Parliament in September 2017. Several members of the Health committee attended, as did a representative of the Portfolio Committee on Environmental Affairs.

We are particularly concerned about the postponements of MES compliance granted to a number of Eskom coal-fired power stations (CFPSs) and to Sasol – the Highveld and our country's two biggest polluters – for their operations located in the heavily-industrialised Highveld. It is also clear that these industrial emissions, including coal-fired



power generation, are by far the largest sources of air pollution in the priority areas, and in South Africa as a whole. Together with these community partners, we have been testifying before the Portfolio Committee on Environmental Affairs over the past few years or so.

Significantly, 92% of global pollution-related disease (PRD) occurs in low and middle-income countries like South Africa, and in the most polluted places like the Highveld and Vaal priority areas. This is responsible for more than one death in four globally. As fewer households burn coal indoors and cleaner water is supplied to homes, diseases like pneumonia and diarrhoea are decreasing. However, ambient air (the air we breathe), chemical and soil pollution, linked to industrial production, are all on the rise, and the incidence of noncommunicable diseases caused by these forms of pollution is increasing.

Globally, air pollution was responsible for 6.4 million deaths – 2.8 million from household air pollution and 4.2 million from ambient air pollution. There can also be no doubt that there are devastating health impacts and violations of constitutional rights that result from these high levels of air pollution – or that these health impacts have significant economic impacts. Where pollution is not addressed, these costs are externalized onto society and the government, meaning that we pay for this, rather than industry, which is responsible for the pollution.

Local government, primarily responsible for implementing the air quality laws, says that, right from the onset, when air quality management plans were drafted, there was a lack of capacity and this has not been addressed. To make matters worse, air quality monitoring stations are not functioning properly and this compounds the problems municipalities have since they don't have access to the data that they need to enforce compliance.

Additionally, communities say they have tried engaging with the Department of Health and the Department of Mineral Resources, which they insisted with the DEA had to be on board, and over the years nothing has happened. To make matters worse, many people in the Highveld are stuck next to highly polluting mines. Industries talk about the

cost of compliance, instead of the health and lives of people.

Industry and government say this is the unavoidable consequences of economic development. However, this notion that developing countries must pass through a phase of pollution and disease as they grow is obsolete and unsubstantiated. Proven, cost-effective pollution control strategies are available today to countries at every income level. These solutions are based on law, policy and technology, and are in combination the most effective means to eliminate pollution at source.

Pollution can no longer be viewed as an isolated environmental issue. Leaders of government at all levels (local, provincial and national government) need, therefore, to elevate pollution control to a high priority within their agendas; to integrate pollution control into development planning; to actively engage in pollution planning; and to link prevention of pollution with commitments to advance the Sustainable Development Goals in order to slow the pace of climate change and to control noncommunicable diseases.

Several times a year, we go to Parliament and to this Portfolio Committee on Environmental Affairs, and we share these horrific figures. But it seems that, after a while, people stop being outraged. Maybe it's too unbelievable, or too overwhelming. But these are real people, real children, our fellow South Africans, who are suffering, simply because companies like Eskom and Sasol tell us – and tell government – that it is too expensive for them to reduce their pollution to comply with our lax standards. That it's "not worth it". Even worse, they're making arguments here that they would never get away with in other countries.

South African lives are not less valuable than other lives.

These polluters won't change until people like the members of this committee, like the NAQO, like the Ministers of Environmental Affairs, Energy, Public Enterprises, Trade and Industry, and Finance, say, "Enough is enough". We can no longer morally defend sacrificing the lives of people on the Highveld and in the Vaal in the interest of "economic development". It is time to act in our courts! ✕





# A year of action!

by Samuel Chademana

*From energy cooperatives to climate action strategies, from community-hosted work group meetings to participation in the country's law-making processes, the Climate and Energy Justice campaign is focusing on a year of Action*

It's an established groundWork tradition to commence each year with a string of planning meetings meant to set the direction and tone of each campaign and 2018 was no different in that regard. So, from the 23<sup>rd</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> of January we brought together thirty delegates from the six fenceline community partners and one NGO partner to our annual community planning meeting. As the CEJ campaign we used the meeting to focus on a number of deliverables for the year in the four focal areas of the campaign, namely: Energy Sovereignty, Climate Learning Group, Climate Governance (Just Transition and NCCC) and Push back on Dirty fuels (Fracking and Offshore oil and Gas).

Under the Energy Sovereignty stream, the search for a municipal partner continues. During the planning meeting we were able to identify two possible municipal partners to serve at project sites: the Matatiele Local Municipality and Fuleni Local Municipality in the Vaal triangle. We were able to approach the former during the community planning meeting and got a favourable response and will be having a follow up meeting before the end of the first quarter to thrash out the actual details of the project. Meanwhile, we have yet to secure a date for our first engagement with the Fuleni Municipality. We did, however, agree during the community planning to have our first meeting during the first week of March. The overall plan for the year is to secure a working partnership through an MOU with any of the two municipalities, identify and set up an energy cooperative and secure the right funding for the project implementation phase.

Concerning the CLG, our 2018 planning meeting was held from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> October 2017,

in the Vaal Triangle's Vanderbijlpark. The three-day learning platform was co-hosted by groundWork and its partner organization, the Vaal Environmental Alliance (VEJA). We brought together twenty-six climate change activists from our partner frontline communities and the aim of our meeting was to strengthen the climate response capacities of our partner organizations in climate action and to develop a preliminary draft of a collective climate action strategy.

Consequently, as one of the main deliverables of the meeting, a preliminary draft of the common climate change strategy was developed, subject to further refinement. The agreement is that respective fenceline communities will use the draft strategy as a guiding framework in the development of area-specific, contextualized strategies, developed in consultation with their respective communities.

Furthermore, the pre-workshop survey also revealed the need for a change in the format of the climate learning group meetings from a conference, room-based learning process to one that is a hybrid of the latter and a more hands on, community outreach-oriented approach. As a result it was agreed, starting with the very last meeting, that Climate Learning group meetings will no longer be hosted in a central location such as Johannesburg, but instead will be organized and hosted by respective fenceline formations in their communities in an effort to enhance the learning experience. The next CLG meeting will be held in the Karoo with SCLC as our host organization.

Under the Dirty Fuels Stream, the community planning meeting allowed us the opportunity to set



the 15<sup>th</sup> of February 2018 as the date for our first Stakeholder Consultative Workshop for offshore oil and gas. The workshop was a resounding success. It brought together twenty-two delegates representing eleven organizations operating within the KwaZulu-Natal area and with a wide diversity in the scope of work, ranging from legal, nature conservation, environmental justice, and fisherfolk formations, film production and coastal watchdog organizations, as well as individual activists. The two main outputs of the meeting were the formation of a loose umbrella body of concerned organizations and individuals in what will be known as the "Oceans Not Oil" Campaign; and the formulation of a preliminary strategy/programme of work with clearly delineated roles and responsibilities.

Based on the developed strategy, the *Ocean Not Oil* Campaign will focus on three areas of work 1) Review of the legal and policy framework; 2) Awareness raising and community involvement; and 3) EIA, technical and scientific support.

Under the Fracking stream, a date was set for mid-March for a follow up regional meeting of all stakeholders to map out the details of an annual work plan. Three main deliverables for the year have been identified as 1) continuation of the community awareness raising meetings on Fracking; 2) involvement of Traditional and Local government leaders; and lastly 3) the organizing of a big march for the whole of the Northern KZN area, with the aim of highlighting the dangers posed by fracking to the water security of the area and issues of agrarian reform.

Finally, under the Climate Governance stream, which is the youngest of the four streams of the CEJ work in groundWork, the plan for the year is to entrench our presence at the National policy level discussions through our contributions at the various NCCC platforms. We will be monitoring the development of the South African Mitigation plan, the National Adaptation Strategy and, most importantly, the formulation of the National Climate Change Act. Furthermore, through engagement at various national and local platforms, 2018 will see the "Just Transition" ethos entrenched as a core component of our CEJ work in groundWork.

One golden strand observed throughout all the planning meetings outlined above was the general consensus and a concerted call among delegates for ACTION. Delegates highlighted the need to begin designing, from the ground up, community-owned action projects aimed at addressing the respective CEJ challenges faced by their communities. They emphasized the need to revive and rejuvenate community activism across all classes again, and to end the current trends of passivity and low levels of awareness within fenceline communities. One delegate called it the AWAKENING: "There is a need to wake our communities up by informing them of the dangers posed to their wellbeing and the need for concrete, on-the-ground action that is opposed to climate injustices".

They emphasized the fact that this action should be nested in an atmosphere of praxis – a cyclical process of experiential learning. In the context of Climate Justice, one of my favourite writers of emancipatory literature, Paulo Freire, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* defines praxis as: "Reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed". Freire posits that through praxis oppressed or marginalized people can acquire a critical understanding of their own condition that is essential in the struggle for liberation.

Based on the positive outcome of our various planning meetings, I'm sure that we are on the right track and only the best can come out of this process. However, there is a need for certain issues to be addressed to ensure the realization of our goals. Top on the list is the retention of the same crop of community activists, as we call them. Continuity in this manner is key to attaining the needed results in our attempts to achieve climate justice. There is also the urgent need for us to start mobilizing resources to finance our community-based climate action projects. As the saying goes, "It's only that which gets funded that gets done".

A daunting task lies ahead. Our work is cut out for us, alright, but we are pregnant with optimism and have no doubt that the future of climate action within groundWork and its community partners is on a solid footing. ✕



# A rose by any other name...

by Bobby Peek

*..Is still a rose, and waste remains waste however it is referred to*

This is a reality. But in South Africa there has been for decades – starting with colonial South Africa, passed on to apartheid South Africa and now seeking to be perfected by a ‘democratic’ South Africa – the fallacy that toxic waste can be made non-toxic with a simple swipe of the pen.

But before we get onto the “swiping of the pen” to make law that will make toxic waste non-toxic, let’s visit a real example.

In February 2008, Assmang, a steel smelter outside Durban, South Africa, comes under scrutiny after six workers were killed in an explosion. Patrice Motsepe, one of the richest people in the world whose net worth is more than US\$2 billion, owns Assmang. He is now sitting with disgruntled workers as well as severe legacy toxic waste pollution because of the poor operations of the plant since it opened in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the early 1990s, while challenging Thor Chemicals, stories start to leak about how the toxic slag waste from Assmang is contaminating the groundwater with heavy metals such as cadmium.

Fast-forward to the next decade. Assmang, after coming under scrutiny, makes a series of improvements in their operations and is seemingly on a new path. Government commends this but, as usual, us NGOs are not satisfied and still remain sceptical. In December 2016, groundWork starts to ask Assmang and government for the permit and associated documents that resulted in the toxic slag waste ‘disappearing’ from the Assmang site. For more than fifteen months we do not receive a reply and then we learn that the Slag Recyclers Association, an organization you cannot find a reference to on the web, has removed more than 100 000 tons of waste off site. Assmang claims that it was recycled waste and that the metals were removed and that it was not toxic. But no one knows

the validity of this, for no documentation is on the table, despite us having asked for information. What we have also discovered is that 4 000 tons of the slag waste per month is going to China. One has to ask: is this toxic waste trade?

Suddenly, in early 2018, the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) is planning to exempt industrial toxic waste from regulation and will allow it to be used as a profit-making venture, exposing the public to severe health risks. As in the case of mining waste, which makes up 70% of South Africa’s waste, the proposed, and published for comment, draft regulations exclude certain wastes from the definition of waste in the National Environmental Management: Waste Act, including the toxic waste from Assmang. This effectively means that harmful wastes such as coal ash, metallurgical slag, gypsum and biomass could go unregulated if those wastes are used for certain purposes listed in the regulations, such as brick-making or inorganic fertiliser. In other instances (for wastes not expressly listed in the regulations) an application can be made to the Minister for exclusion of the waste from the regulations.

Already, mining waste from South Africa’s mining areas have exposed people to asbestos, uranium and acid mine drainage because mining waste has been treated as a residue product, rather than a waste. In this way, companies escape the cost of proper management and externalize the pollution onto communities. Now we could have hazardous waste in the building blocks used for low-income communities.

Is this not a novel way to deal with hazardous waste? Expose the poor! Nothing new there! Come on DEA, you need to be more creative and take your mandate seriously rather than hoping waste will disappear with the stroke of a pen. ✂





# Africa striding towards zero waste

by Niven Reddy

*The Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives is bringing strong focus to bear on zero waste in Africa*

Waste is dealt with in different ways throughout the world. While Asia has seen large amounts of plastic waste being disposed of on their continent, Europe and North America still produce the most and look to incineration as a solution. In Africa, we still have an issue with basic waste collection. While in South Africa it is meant to be a municipal function, the same cannot be said about other parts of Africa.

The Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA) have been working with groups all around the world to promote sustainable practices through a zero waste approach.

GAIA is a worldwide alliance of more than eight hundred grassroots groups, non-governmental organizations and individuals in over ninety countries whose ultimate vision is a just, toxic-free world without incineration. GAIA recognizes that our planet's finite resources, fragile biosphere, and the health of people and other living beings, are endangered by polluting and inefficient production practices and health-threatening disposal methods. Because of this, GAIA opposes incinerators, landfills, and other end-of-pipe interventions, with the goal being clean production and the creation of a closed-loop, materials-efficient economy where all products are reused, repaired or recycled.

In Durban last year, following the #BreakFreeFromPlastic meeting, we had a GAIA Africa meeting in which an advisory committee was established as an oversight and support structure to assist me in coordinating the work in Africa for GAIA. In February this year, I attended a global meeting in Marrakech, which brought together this

advisory committee and the similar oversight bodies from all of the other regions too. It was good to hear how each region campaigns at various levels and to hear about how strong the incineration resistance is.

In Africa, we do not have any municipal waste incinerators that are operational but there are many proposed, with Ethiopia and Morocco having developments at the most advanced stage. We are seeing these developments come to South Africa, in particular in the case of Wellington, where waste to energy is falsely promised as a solution. As is the case with most environmental justice issues in South Africa, this resistance is led by the community of Wellington and waste pickers at the Drakenstein landfill site who know the negative impacts this will have on their health and livelihoods. This technology does not work and displaces the role of recycling.

There are a few countries in Africa that have really strong waste picker movements and many emerging groups that have begun organizing. They play a critical role in diversion from landfill and earn their livelihoods from materials that would otherwise be lost through incineration. As much as the pro-incinerator argument states that only non-recyclable materials will be burnt, we know how demanding those machines are and at some point everything will just be sent to the furnace in order to meet the numbers.

The biggest activity planned for the network is a joint campaign that will seek to identify a common polluter in the African region. This will involve a series of beach clean-ups in different countries in





*Participants of the GAIA Global meeting in Marrakech this year*

*Credit: Zero Zbel, Morocco*

which members are represented. The beach clean-up will be the basis of the project, with the core component being a brand audit, which basically looks at the producer of the material and logs the amount of times that their product was found during the clean-up.

In the Philippines last year, in a place called Freedom Island, there was a successful beach clean-up and brand audit conducted by various members of the #BreakFreeFromPlastic movement. We hope that we can replicate this methodology and identify who the main contributors to the plastic crisis in Africa are. Once we have identified who the perpetrators are, future campaigning in this regard will revolve around getting them to committing to reducing their waste, or to implement programmes that aim to clean up their mess.

Going forward, the global movement aims to strengthen and continue to improve study tours, exchanges and zero waste conference programs, as well as to support cross-regional participation. GAIA

aims to establish a global leadership committee with representation from each region that will oversee certain aspects of GAIA's strategy development and implementation, network policies, and the leadership team.

There is also a need to create a global recognition program that encourages cities to aim higher, which will also divert their attention from the false promises of waste-to-energy incinerators.

A serious problem that we encounter in Africa is that it is difficult to advocate for zero waste programmes in cities when we do not have readily available examples of zero waste in practice in Africa and using examples from other regions is often construed as being out of context. To remedy this, a lot of attention this year will be on researching and writing up case studies of the existing zero waste initiatives in Africa.

Wakanda Forever! 🌟



# SAWPA plans for the future

by Musa Chamane

*SAWPA is ensuring that their leadership will be well placed to lead South Africa to a zero waste future*

On the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of January 2018, SAWPA convened in KwaZulu-Natal's capital city to induct the new leaders, after their election in September 2017. The training was a collaboration between SAWPA, groundWork and WIEGO for twenty leaders of the association. As with all new leadership, at times there is limited understanding as to what the demands of a leadership role is. The new leadership is gender balanced and composed of old and new members. The gap has to be bridged between the leaders' understanding in terms of experience and their understanding of the organizational role.

They started by trying to define what is meant by the term leader. Views were different, but ideas emerged that a leader has to be selfless and put the needs of others before their own. There were different views from different leaders about the subject. It was interesting to hear the different ideas, which included that the leader is someone who is most powerful in an organization: whatever he says goes. At times it sounded like the leader is bigger than the organization!

The discussion was very fierce and it demonstrated to me why each and every one of them had been elected into their position. The leaders assist the organization in becoming effective and efficient, and help in determining the organization's destination. Being a leader means defining and exhibiting moral and ethical courage and setting an example for everyone in the organization. It also helps you teach leadership skills to others. A leader has to demonstrate leadership abilities and be able to analyse their own strengths and weaknesses. It made me realize that we have a good crop of leaders in the South African Waste Pickers Association and I therefore concluded that the future of the organization is bright.

It was agreed that the constitution of the organization still needs to be workshopped more

with members, preferably in their vernacular, as it was used in referring to the role of the leadership in the organization. The other issue that was discussed was the registration of members, which needs to continue in order to grow the organization.

The pilot projects were amongst the issues that were discussed. Projects that are in existence in different towns have to be supported, so that those livelihoods can be multiplied. Those municipalities that are not doing anything regarding Zero Waste have to be assisted. The Mooi River projects have the potential to grow to make Mooi River the first Zero Waste town in South Africa, and therefore some energy need to be invested there.

During the workshop there were organizational issues that were discussed other than the above. It was agreed that working with other organizations is very important. You can't have a solitary struggle because all the struggles are linked. There was a brainstorm session around the idea that the organization should work closely with shack dwellers' movements because the majority of the waste pickers reside in shacks, so it makes sense that they also join that movement or at least work closely with it. There was also a suggestion that the Zero Waste movement is something that should be considered if we want government to take Zero Waste seriously.

The outside issues such as Industry Waste Management Plans (INDWMP) that are being developed by industry will also be the main focus of the work of the organization in 2018. The packaging industry needs to make clear how they will deal with their packaging waste material. In being involved with doing the plan, the organization will be afforded an opportunity to contribute towards the development of the plan to make sure that waste pickers are not shafted. Public participation will be taking place countrywide and waste pickers will be voicing what they want in the plan.





Closure of the landfills is also an issue facing the organization. Some landfills where members of the organization operate are becoming full and will therefore close. Waste pickers need a strategy on how to deal with that. It was agreed that government, through municipalities, has to build Materials Recovery Facilities (MRFs) in all the historical sites. Waste still needs to be transported to these closed sites for further separation and baling. If the old landfill sites are used as transfer centres there is no need for Environmental Impact Assessments because the land is already zoned as a landfill. Therefore, landfills are low hanging fruits for the municipalities to use to implement Zero Waste by building a waste transfer centre. The waste transfer centre cannot exist in isolation from the full plan, where every household will be required to practise separation at source. Legislation or by-laws promoting separation at source will be very useful in making sure that there's nothing to be buried at the landfill.

Privatization of the waste management services in municipalities is something that needs to be discouraged. Government cannot privatize the waste service because it denies waste pickers a chance to earn their livelihoods. The privatized landfills or dumps are the most difficult to access for waste recovery purpose and therefore this needs to change. We cannot continue to be a throwaway society. It was clear in discussion that citizens are forced by the system to throw waste away because what is being produced or used to package products are made of non-recyclable stuff. "The non-recyclable materials have to be phased out" said Nonhlanhla Mhlophe, a leader in the SAWPA.

MRFs are a starting point for municipalities, supported by bylaws that are promoting separation at source. At the same time, waste pickers should be trained on how

the strategy of waste separated at source will be dealt with. A reliable market for waste pickers' materials is also of importance. If all the above could happen, that means each and every municipality in this country would create jobs using waste. The only financial investments that municipalities have to make is when they build MRFs. Jobs can be created without spending billions of Rand. A couple of municipalities are well aware that waste has the potential of creating jobs and making sure that the environment is clean.

Guidelines for municipalities on how to integrate waste pickers are being developed by WITS University and CSIR, as well as SAWPA. The organization is part of the steering committee to make sure that the integration happens in a fair manner, making sure that waste pickers' needs are taken care of. The organization is well aware of the mammoth tasks ahead of them.

The leadership training ended up by planning for 2018 and years ahead. It was good to see the commitment that the leadership have shown in committing themselves to making sure that the organization matures. New organizations normally lack committed leaders. SAWPA is a shining star when it comes to Zero Waste in South Africa. ✎



Vanessa Pillay, Trainer from WIEGO during SAWPA leadership training  
Credit: groundWork



## Protests at Gupta-owned mines

by Thomas Mnguni

*Now that the Guptas are no longer the capturers but the captured, their mine holdings are in disarray, as was evidenced by visits to the Optimum and Koornfontein mines.*

To understand what is happening with regards to employees of both Koornfontein and Optimum mines, one needs to understand the labour and political issues behind this saga.

Employees of both mines haven't received their salaries after the Guptas, owners of both mines, were left without a bank in the country. Last week, employees at Optimum decided to protest, wanting

to be given assurances that they will get paid, but also wanting to know about the future of the mine.

When I got to Optimum, the employees were protesting as management was reluctant to engage with them. Some of the employees went inside the mine to stop the few people who had been working, mainly to load the trucks with coal. They

Police  
patrolling  
the entrance  
whilst  
workers look  
after blocked  
road at  
Optimum  
Credit:  
groundWork



also started burning tyres on the road to block all vehicles from moving in or out of the area.

The mine brought in extra security, namely Bidvest and Hlalamnandi security companies. It was only then that the mine was prepared to engage. When the shop stewards returned from the meeting to give feedback, they were not allowed to gather at the entrance of the mine, and police insisted that they disperse. What was apparent from their report is that management didn't have any idea how to resolve the issue. Some of the employees asked why an arrangement couldn't be made with Eskom to pay the employees and other service provider directly, as they did in January 2018.

The situation in Koornfontein was similar to what I witnessed in Optimum. Employees of the mine went on strike for the first time this week. What transpired in this mine was that the workers didn't agree with their leaders as they felt they had engaged on something different from their mandate. The workers wanted to know when they would be paid, as most of them were concerned that they would not be in a position to meet their financial obligations. When the leaders couldn't provide an answer, they were chased away and the plant was stopped completely.

Representatives from all mines affected will meet the business rescue practitioner and representatives will later leave for Cape Town to meet the Portfolio Committee of Mineral Resources.

I also had a side discussion with a plant manager, and he confirmed that last month they were paid

by Eskom. He indicated that the Guptas would normally request some of the service providers to make the payments and apparently this became a problem because most of them did not want to be suspected of money laundering or to face high tax payments. There was also a disagreement when such transactions took place as the service provider would demand a fee or payment for their services.

In the town of Hendrina, Kwazamokuhle and nearby areas, people are without water as the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality (STLM) has been buying water from Optimum mine. STLM is now using water tanks to supply water until the strike at the mine is over.

According to the unions, if they don't get a clear answer this week, the plan is to mobilize the community in Hendrina and Middelburg to join their protest.

While the strike in Koornfontein was not properly organized, the message was clear: people fear losing their jobs, as happened when Glencore left. Strikers at Optimum had a more structured approach and managed to get almost everyone on board. The employees are determined to escalate the matter to get a solution quickly. There are concerns about the appointed practitioner, as they are unsure whether he works for the Guptas or not.

The STLM is not engaging with community people on the issue, except to say water tanks will be available to provide water.





# The GGHH community meeting

by Luqman Yesufu

groundWork hosted its 5<sup>th</sup> annual community planning meeting for Global Green and Healthy Hospital (GGHH) coordinators on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> of February 2018. The purpose of this meeting was to review key GGHH highlights and challenges in 2017 and to plan for both individual and joint work for 2018. Two GGHH sustainability coordinators or champions, from across five provinces – Western Cape, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Free State and North West – were invited to the groundWork office in Pietermaritzburg. The meeting created a space for members to learn and share experiences while finding solutions to the common challenges they face as they implement their sustainability goals.

Sustainability practice in hospitals is more than purchasing a single piece of energy-efficient equipment or switching of the lights when not in use. Sustainable hospitals are led to create a culture of sustainability that creates lasting change that runs through the veins of everyone who works in that hospital. These sustainability efforts do not happen in healthcare institutions without vision and commitment. Rather, these efforts are the result of strategic thinking from leaders who are committed to creating a culture of change that will last for years and years. These are the leaders we are trying to build with the Global Green and Healthy Hospital (GGHH) network – Health leaders who will change practice and policies aimed at protecting patient, health worker and environment, using innovation, ingenuity and investment.

Over the past four years, groundWork has continued to support and assist members of the global green and healthy hospital network to achieve their sustainability goals. We have seen a rise in membership from one in 2014 to over seventy in 2018. Furthermore, these members are actively participating in webinars and writing up case studies that document their achievements, giving other existing members and potential new member's information on what is possible and the challenges that potentially may occur. This often serves as a real motivation for other hospitals and

health institution to join the network. In fact, a recent evaluation of GGHH in 2018 revealed that over 60% of new members joined because they were fascinated by the case studies written by members. This feedback has further emphasized the need for continuous engagement and strengthening of the core structure of the GGHH network in South Africa, with a view in mainstreaming GGHH into all activities of a health institutions' mandate of health service delivery.

During the 2018 GGHH planning meeting, our members reported on their major achievements for 2017 and it was a largely successful meeting with members seeking to support one another and setting sustainable goals to be achieved in 2018

Some standout achievements by members in 2017 include;

- Netcare Limited reported a R35-million saving on energy after installing solar panels, energy efficient light bulbs and behavioural change measures;
- Bongani Regional hospital in the Free State reduced the amount of medical waste generated in the hospital by 30 000 kilograms as compared to other years;
- Greys Hospital in KwaZulu-Natal had a R294 825 saving on electricity after installing smart metering in their hospital;
- Inkosi Albert Luthuli Hospital have embarked on a hospital-wide waste reduction strategy that has encouraged an over 50% increase in the recycling programme embarked upon at the start of the year;
- In the Western Cape, Worcester Hospital has embarked on a massive infrastructural and behavioural change campaign to save water due to the drought situation. They currently save about 70% of the water used for hand washing. Doctors and Nurses have been very involved in the training facilitated by the hospital green committee.



Generally, groundWork aims to ensure that our members are supported to achieve the sustainability goals they have committed to by providing them with regular information and training. We plan on conducting five more waste management training sessions for environmental health practitioners, compared to the three conducted last year. We have recently got GGHH accredited by the South African Medical Association (SAMA), which allocated us two Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points for doctors. Therefore, doctors will be involved in our regular training across all five provinces. Finally, we would like to see health people in our GGHH community advocating on behalf of and with communities affected by environmental injustices.

GGHH members in attendance also made some significant commitments for the year;

- Netcare Limited, through the chief engineer, offered to support ten new GGHH members who are implementing their energy goal. He offered to assist them with baseline assessment and make recommendations to improve energy efficiency in their respective hospitals.
- In KwaZulu-Natal, members committed to have quarterly meetings and also assist one another with case studies and launching activities. They have decided to form a green task force or committee from various departments in the hospital to help guide and implement the GGHH efforts.
- In the Free State, GGHH members have decided to participate in local networks in their communities, engaging with municipal environmental health officers, and assisting in disease surveillance of illnesses that are linked to environmental factors.

Here are some comments from members of the GGHH planning meeting:



GGHH Sustainability Coordinators from across five provinces in South Africa who attended the 5th Annual planning meeting in Ilawu Hotel, Pmb

Credit: groundWork

Boniswa Hlotshana from Tembisa Provincial Tertiary Hospital said: *"The Planning Meeting was awesome to say the least. It exceeded my expectations. The atmosphere was relaxed, allowing for free flowing conversations that were easy to participate in. This, coupled with the many opportunities to benchmark, integrate systems and see real outcomes, made it worthwhile. I thoroughly enjoyed networking and being surrounded by such learned and enthusiastic GGHH Champions."*

Cindy Crompton from Inkosi Albert Luthuli Central Hospital: *"groundWork's planning workshop successfully facilitated networking amongst us as GGHH South African member hospitals, and specifically the hospitals in our own provinces. The meeting was invaluable in getting us focused for the year. In KwaZulu-Natal province (KZN), our plans are to get together as KZN hospitals twice each year for information sharing sessions. Additionally, we hope to organize an energy exchange for our engineers. I picked up invaluable information and tips for greening the OR whilst at the planning session as well as some tips on Food Waste Recycling. I also agreed to help one of our KZN hospitals with their waste recycling initiative by hosting them at our hospital, Inkosi Albert Luthuli Central Hospital. All of the presentations were most helpful in generating ideas and discussion."*

Overall, the planning meeting was successful as members made environmental health, safety and sustainability key organizational priorities. We hope to continue engaging members and fostering good relationships among members. ✌



# Cell phone activism

by Nombulelo Shange

*United Media Campaign Activist are creating content with cell phones – long live the cell phone revolution*

*A portrait of UMC participant, Mathapelo, taken during the portrait session.*

*Credit: Joanne Groom, SDCEA*



The media campaign ended 2017 with a bang. We had our second meeting and we didn't waste time creating all sorts of media during the workshop. We even tapped into our inner actors by acting during a confidence-building session, which taught us how to free our voices and release our inner fierceness. We also created recorded audio content with environmental justice-focused messaging. The content included interviews, panel discussions, endorsements, drama scenes and even vox pops.

The four-day workshop took place in Johannesburg and we were joined by a new young women's group from Lephelale called Matjoba, which means beautiful flower. The usual suspects were also there: Green Thumbs, South African Waste Pickers Association, Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance, Highveld Environmental Justice Network and South Durban Community Environmental Alliance. The four-day workshop focused on four main topics: writing, portraits, audio/radio and interviews.

The participants found the drama, audio and portrait sessions the most exciting because they were the most interactive sessions. The





drama session kicked off with a sixty second pitch, where we had to sell ourselves and our campaigns. Participants listened and gave each other feedback on what was missing or what worked. Next we did voice training, where we exercised our vocal cords, jaws mouths and tongues, and went as far as body movement and exercising. Princess, the facilitator, helped us understand that, even with speeches and talks, it isn't just your voice that needs to be awake. Your voice is connected to your body and if your body isn't functioning properly, neither will your voice, meaning your message will be lost.

We also did an exercise on fears and strengths, where we all wrote one of each on a piece of paper and put it in a hat. They were read out and discussed along with solutions. We had a competition where two people picked an object and had to sell it to us at the same time, in a sense fighting for our attention. We gave feedback on who was our favourite after every pitch and gave each other advice on how to improve.

There were several other activities that either dealt with targeted messaging, the voice or the body. In the end, people had to repeat the first activity, which was to sell themselves and their organizations. Many of the people whose pitches were too short in the beginning were now confident enough to share more details. Those whose introductions were too long made them clearer and more targeted, picking only the important messages to share. People were clearer and more alive in their feedback the second time round, which was interesting because we were all tired from the games and activities.

Participants also shared their stories and experience of making media, mostly using only their cell phones. We talked about the challenges with high data costs and poor network in areas where they come from. People shared about their experiences during the research process and others offered solutions and alternatives, including safety tips when doing activism work that requires you to move around a lot in your community or enter people's homes.

Coming back to the office meant, for me, lots to be done, including final edits to participants' articles, finding the right platform to house our stories and uploading the media we have been creating. While we still have a long way to go, the work we have

done so far is pretty "dope". You can check it out yourself if you don't believe me: <https://www.unitedmediacampaign.com/blog/>

In the meantime, we work on our next stories which will be interview focus pieces, based on the stories of environmental justice heroes in our communities and those who have suffered at the hands of environmental injustices. We have committed to continue to try and improve communication amongst ourselves, despite all the challenges and restrictions. We have committed to do justice to the process of representing the voiceless, oppressed and marginalized members of society. We have committed to sharing the stories that you won't find in the media even though they affect so many South Africans. We have committed to continue the cell phone revolution, one story, one video, one audio recording at a time.

The groundWork media work is also growing. The Global Green and Healthy Hospitals campaign has a jam-packed calendar this year and at the centre of some of these events is some crucial media work. Our environmental health work will be elevated through continual work with the Public Health Association of South Africa, with which we will have a conference in September, to highlight the importance of environmental justice messaging by encouraging doctors to be more vocal about the health impacts linked to climate change. GGH member hospitals will continue to work together and exchange ideas in a gathering set to take place in June.

We will continue to spread the message on the health impacts linked to pollution and dangerous industries like coal, by implementing a roadshow. It will consist of important pieces of work like our documentary, *Bliss of Ignorance*, *The Destruction of the Highveld* reports and the *Broken Promises* report. All these materials highlight the dangers of pollution and illustrate how our government has let communities down by allowing industries to carry on contributing to pollution instead of reducing it and complying with our environmental laws. The roadshow will include interactive leaflets which summarize the findings from eight important pieces of research we and our partners have undertaken on coal impacts on people's health and their environments. ✂



# Manipulating the IRP

by Greenfly

The power of the patriarch drains fast. The giggle turns to a gurgle and the patriarch follows his power down the plug hole of history. The gang that was given impunity is on the run. The cops who bowed and scraped are suddenly at the door with arrest warrants. There's nothing left with which to buy the loyalty of prosecutors. The courtiers in cabinet rush to turn their coats. The expansive prospect from the palace balcony narrows to a barred window. All deals are off.

Even the nuclear deal. Perhaps. What was promised, paid or threatened by one patriarch to another is not known – yet. Or if the party got the payoff. It would not be the first time. Remember poor Sandi Majali. Back in 2001, in the days of Thabo Mbeki and Saddam Hussein, he went to Iraq with a group of party and government officials. Soon after, he was the man in the middle doing deals between Glencore and PetroSA. Then he slipped R11 million to the ANC for the 2004 election. The money was meant to pay for a tanker full of oil condensate. PetroSA then found it could deal directly with Glencore and paid again for the same cargo. Some years and some sour deals later, Majali was found dead in a hotel bedroom.

Then there was the matter of Chancellor House and Hitachi. Chancellor House is the ANC's investment fund and was Hitachi's BEE partner when Hitachi got the R40 billion contract to supply the boilers for Medupi and Kusile. Still in Mbeki's time. Hitachi paid Chancellor House a US\$1 million 'success fee' followed by another \$1 million payoff. Finally, according to the US Securities and Exchange Commission, Chancellor House got another \$10 million when it sold out its shares in Hitachi – a 5 000% return on investment in nine years.

Maybe Jacob Zuma thought he could trump all that with the trillion Rand plus nuke deal. After all, if the

ANC is to rule till Jesus comes, it'll need buckets full of slush money. Or perhaps it was more personal. Certainly the cronies were lined up to take control of the uranium fuel supply chain. They are all down the plug hole now.

Zuma shuffled one energy minister after another to bully the deal through. They made it routine to cheat the Integrated Resource Plan for electricity (the IRP) to keep a place for nukes. But they kept coming up against constitutional and democratic roadblocks. Enough to make a man want to be dictator. Heh, heh, heh. At this writing, Zuma's last minister of energy, a man of impeccably dictatorial instincts, followed him down the plug along with the whole dirty deal, we hope.

The Chamber of Mines seems to think so. It has just published the Coal Strategy 2018. Never mind that the IRP's figures were cooked, it quotes them to claim that coal is the cheapest available option. So with nukes gone, coal should take its share too. And it puts forward the latest clean coal acronym – high efficiency low emissions (HELE) – to proclaim the goodness of coal. It does not mention that no one wants to build such a plant.

If things go badly for coal, the Strategy says, the colliers will mine eight billion tonnes in the next thirty-three years – more than they mined in the last thirty-six years. It does not say that that would make for about fourteen billion tonnes of carbon dioxide. But if things go wonderfully well, they'll dig out twenty billion tonnes – with forty billion tonnes of carbon dioxide not mentioned. But we'll have HELE and carbon capture and storage (CCS). Porkies will fly and everyone will love coal.

Greenfly has an alternative proposal: let's have an honest IRP. ✕





# Waste picker crushed

## *Another Waste Picker Dies on the Pietermaritzburg Waste Dumpsite*

In the early hours of the 15<sup>th</sup> of March, Ntsiki Mhlakwane was killed by a municipal waste compactor which crushed her. She is the fifth person to have been killed or badly injured on the landfill site since 2007. Such incidents where waste pickers have been killed or badly injured by the heavy machinery operating at the landfill is a sad reminder of how waste pickers have been neglected by our government.

groundWork and the South African Waste Pickers Association (SAWPA), representing more than 1 000 waste picker's country wide, have been telling Msunduzi Local Municipality about the danger to which waste pickers are exposed.

In 2010 funding was approved at the The uMgungundlovu District Municipality for a Materials Recovery Facility (MRF – also known as

a recycling centre) but that was never built due to political clashes between the district and local municipality. Lives would have been saved by an MRF due to safer working conditions. The best way of managing waste is to have an MRF where waste pickers would work to recover and sort recyclable materials, rather than work on the dumpsite where waste is being dumped.

groundWork and SAWPA are saddened that waste pickers must die in this way. They have never resorted to crime but instead they have opted for recycling as a means to earn an honest if meagre living. Waste pickers and groundWork have scheduled an urgent meeting with the Msunduzi Municipality on Monday the 19<sup>th</sup> March where, amongst other things, incidents such as this will be discussed and a solution that will be much safer than the current situation will be sought.



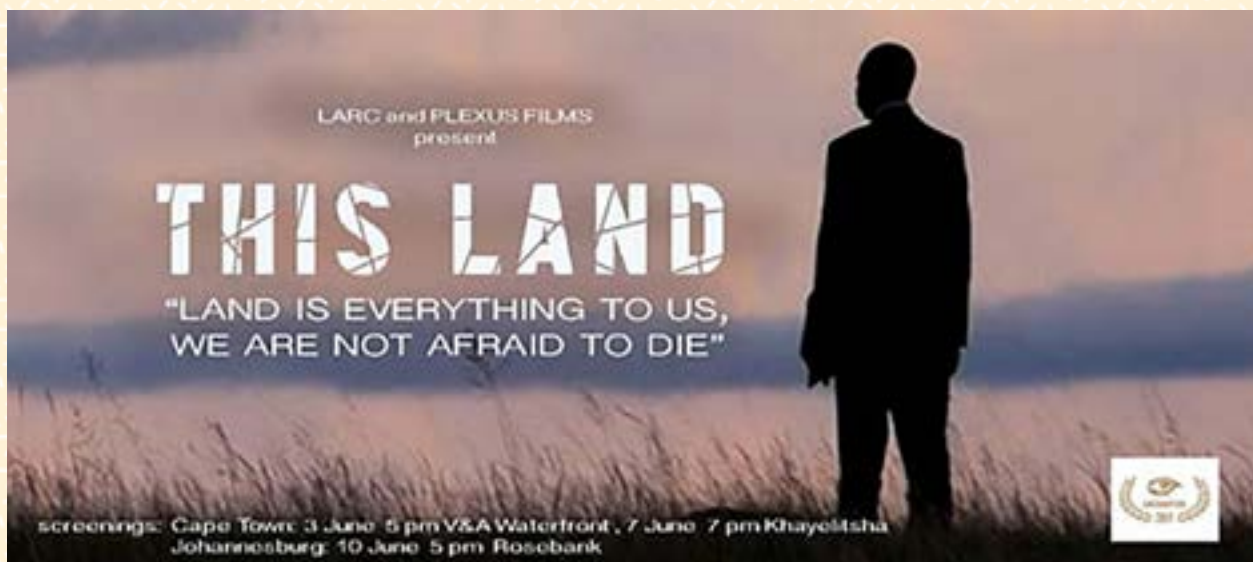
*Pietermaritzburg SAWPA members during a protest in 2015, where they demanded the municipality to deliver on their promise to build an MRF*  
Caption:  
groundWork





# This Land

Review By Nombulelo Shange



With the fall of Zuma and the rise of Ramaphosa, land has once again become a “hot” topic. Central to this discussion is to whom the land belongs, a theme that comes up frequently in LARC’s *This Land* documentary. The people of Makhasaneni, situated in KwaZulu-Natal, who were moved off their land during apartheid faced the same threat, as foreign mining companies explored the possibility of opencast iron mining in the area in 2011.

Our Environmental Justice School (EJS) participants, who were present during the screening that groundWork hosted at Red Acres in Howick, on the evening of the 18<sup>th</sup> of February, shared similar stories of how people have been tricked or forced into selling their land by companies that create conflict between traditional leaders and communities. This is often done to make way for

mining, agricultural or infrastructure projects that promise development and jobs. The EJS participants highlighted the Makhasaneni community’s spirit of #Asigiki #Asisabi as a motivational reminder that one day they too will win their environmental and social justice battles.

The EJS participants were also inspired by the use of culture and tradition as a form of resistance and mobilizing. They noted that traditional rituals are an important strategy that unites, but is often missing in, resistance movements. They noted that the ceremony carried out by the leaders challenging the iron mining not only united the community but, most importantly, also brought the ancestors to the fight. Now that’s a battle one is sure to win.

