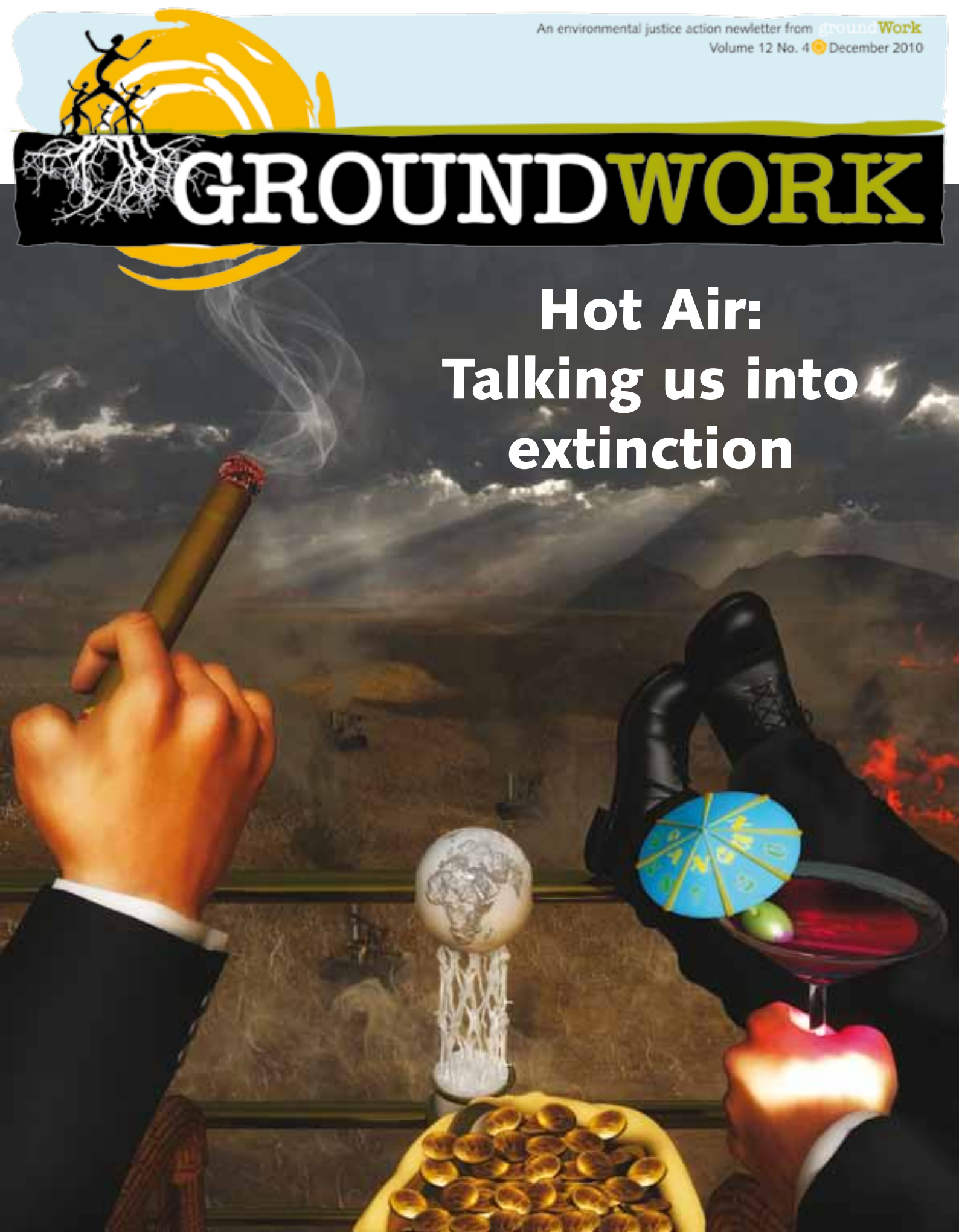




GROUNDWORK

Hot Air: Talking us into extinction



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

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

groundWork's current campaign areas are: air quality, 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, Thuli Makama, Sandile Ndawonde and Jon White.

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groundWork is affiliated to the following international organisations:

Health Care Without Harm

International POPs Elimination Network

Basel Action Network

Oilwatch International

Global Anti-Incineration Alliance

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

CREDITS:

Printed on recycled paper from Sappi Fine Papers

Layout by Boutique Books - Printing by ArrowPrint

Thousands of people met in Cancun from the 28th of November to the 11th of December attempting in vain to work on a globally acceptable system to ensure that human induced climate change is slowed and halted. It was a failure as corporate power and political elites continued with business as usual. Cover design by Barry Downard.



From the Smoke Stack



Photo by FoE

by groundWork Director, Bobby Peek

Dear Friends

Normally, getting to the end of the year is an exciting, albeit tiring, time. However, as many of you know by now, Nomcebo Mvelase, groundWork's Environmental Health Campaigner was brutally murdered on the 8th of October and this has placed a strain on all of us in the office. So this year ends with a heavy heart. We will miss you, Sister. During the days after this tragic event groundWork received more than twenty pages of messages from people globally, all shocked by her untimely death. From groundWork we would like to thank the very many of you who contacted us during this time and Bishop Ruben Phillips and others who, by the grace of God, were at her side during her last moments.

We also reflect on the life of Richard Goldman, philanthropist and co-founder of the world-renowned Goldman Environmental Prize, who passed away on the 29th of November. Many of us who are part of the environmental movement world wide have had the chance of being recognised globally because of his efforts. He was a man with a vision who realised that the future of the world is guaranteed not by the negotiations in international halls, but by the energy of those that resist, mobilise and provide alternatives for a new world on the ground, at a local level. We are all greatly appreciative of his actions in making his vision a practical reality for many of us.

Thinking about practical reality, groundWork continues to work with waste pickers from throughout South Africa, assisting in building a movement to challenge for better work conditions and environmental justice. Recently this work has been recognised when the SEED Initiative, which is a global partnership for action on sustainable

development and the green economy, founded by UN and International Union for Conservation of Nature, awarded the Mooi River Waste Pickers one of their thirty awards for 2010. This award recognised the coming together of the Mooi River Waste Pickers, the local municipality and groundWork. This is so exciting. It is amazing how fast the work with waste pickers has moved - from a policy level in Cape Town in 2008 to practical reality in 2010. Here we witness both quantitative and qualitative results, as well as technical and societal results, as people build themselves a better world.

As we talk of results we have to ponder on the major climate gathering that has just taken place in Cancun, Mexico. Once again, world leaders, corporations and global society activists met to try and save the world from climate catastrophe. And once again we have failed! Do we see a better world after two weeks in Cancun, Mexico? From speaking to people on the ground at Cancun, sadly the answer is no. We have to continue asking ourselves this hard question as the climate jamboree heads to the shores of South Africa in November 2011 – which we are not looking forward to. As civil society activists we have to develop a clear set of criteria that will guide our engagement or non-engagement with the United Nations Framework Climate Change Convention (UNFCCC) in order that the world can judge whether our participation is meaningful or not. Will we see a better world after Durban, South Africa?

In October 2010, the Inspection Panel (IP) investigating the World Bank's \$3.75 billion loan for Eskom's Medupi power station visited South Africa to kick start their formal process.



Local and international consultants are assisting the IP to better understand if the South African environmental and social systems are on par with those of the World Bank. The investigation will be completed in the first quarter of 2011. Questions of process around environmental impact assessments and enforcement were the big issues under debate both in Lephelale and when the IP met NGOs in Pretoria.

Our ongoing greed and dependence on fossil fuel have impacts all along the line. Sadly, despite various attempts at stopping the development of a new fuel pipeline from Durban to Johannesburg, Petronet, South Africa's liquid fuel parastatal was given permission to run its new pipeline through south Durban. The pipeline could have been laid alongside the present pipeline, which runs from Durban to Sasolburg, but rich residents in the west of Durban had the power to challenge Petronet and force them to look for an alternative route. The path of least resistance was taken through poor neighbourhoods in the south of Durban. Sadly, two children drowned when they fell into open trenches that filled with rain water after Petronet's contractors left the work place without securing these trenches.

South Durban is in the thick of things as usual. Over the last few months an intrusive 'cat wee' smell has filtered through Durban, reaching beyond the city centre and south Durban. After much community investigation it became evident that FFS used oil refiners were the culprits. The South Durban Community Environmental Alliance got to grips with the issue promptly and asked for the environmental permits for the plant. But, to date, nearly two months after having asked for the permits, they still do not have these permits, as the governance system pushes them from one person to the next. It is not that the city officials do not want to release them. Rather it is fear that there might be a political backlash from the politicians who no doubt are protecting corporations such as FFS.

Talking about corporate power and political protection, there is no more explicit example than the Oppenheimer family and their long history in shaping South Africa through their mining ventures.

They have shifted beyond the destructive practices of mining to toxic waste.

One of South Africa's corporate families, the Oppenheimers have recently been caught up in the ongoing medical waste scandal in South Africa. They own 30% of Wasteman, which was exposed last year for dumping tons of untreated medical waste around Welkom. Wasteman is also the owner of the Bul Bul toxic landfill site in south Durban which is finally to be closed next year.

The long awaited New Growth Plan was recently released. It recognises the facts on mass unemployment, poverty and inequality but, as the Alternative Information Development Centre (AIDC) comments, the document 'suffers heavily from a balancing act with the government between neo-liberals, Keynesians and some who even describe themselves as Marxist'. groundWork concurs with AIDC that this indeed is not a major paradigm shift and SA needs an employment plan rather than a traditional growth plan.

As I write this, mining has come to knock on the outskirts of Pietermaritzburg, with prospecting licences for shale being considered. Will the residents of Pietermaritzburg take this environmental justice challenge on with enough vigour to be able to stop mining in the area, and then also challenge all of Pietermaritzburg's other environmental injustices? Only time will tell. Come on guys, let us make sure we can get this crippled municipality to move. There has been a good start with the Msunduzi Innovation Development Institute, known as MIDI, which is made up of a small but dedicated team of individuals who are passionate about their city and all its people. Let MIDI ensure that the officials and the politicians within the Pietermaritzburg area are held accountable to answering to the people of Pietermaritzburg.

I hope we all have a good rest to prepare for what is going to be a busy 2011 when both Gill and Rico will be on sabbatical and climate justice and energy begins as a new campaign for groundWork.

Have a peaceful new year!

Bobby ✕



A Climate Circus in Cancun

by Siziwe Khanyile

Cancun Can proves to be Cancun Can't

Cancun Can is the new slogan for COP 16 in Cancun, Mexico. For Copenhagen it was *Hopenhagen*, yet Copenhagen proved hopeless and certainly Cancun can't!

Another COP

It is that time of year when we all descend on the United Nations climate negotiations. Our reasons for being here are varied. Some have come to negotiate intricate texts for their countries. Others advise on technical issues and others are lobbyists who aim to influence particular country positions within the negotiations (both from civil society and industry). Some want a hot lead story, others utilise the COPs as an opportunity to advance their field of expertise and areas of interest, while yet others position themselves outside of the UNFCCC negotiations to mobilise broader society and attempt to exert pressure on the negotiations from outside the official process.

Once again we face another COP.

Expectations

Even before we arrived in Cancun there were insinuations that we shouldn't expect too much in terms of concrete decisions on a binding deal, but that this COP was a process towards final agreement in Durban next year. Kicking off negotiations on such a low note not only lowers expectations, but also lowers the bar for what the process can achieve, and over the past week we have certainly seen much relegation of responsibility by some developed countries wanting to commit to even less than minimum.

It is worth reflecting that for some civil society groups, the Kyoto Protocol was not an ideal instrument to circumvent the impacts of climate change, so the question is whether it is acceptable to let it die and let a new set of weak rules imposed by developed countries emerge. Or do we ensure

that the treaty is strengthened and made to function as we continue to flog the proverbial dead horse rather than to dispose of it? Or is there sufficient energy and strength within social movements and civil society to discredit the process and chart a new way towards a future free of capitalist interest under the guise of solving the climate catastrophe?

I don't think there is an easy answer, but I suspect that after sixteen years of marriage, having put in energy, time and resources, it is easier for many to continue comatose in a dead-end relationship than to make the bold decision to file for divorce. However, trying to make a dead marriage work can result in another sixteen years of much of the same or worse. I would suggest that the third option is the one that could liberate us from the COP stalemate.

Inside the cold air-conditioned halls of Cancun

In the week and a half that I have been here, the power and cheque book politics have been as evident as they were at the end of COP 15 when developing countries were coerced by the US into supporting the Copenhagen Accord.

Some of the politics that have played out include:

- Japan and Russia threatening to back out of the second commitment period (how ironic for Japan from whence Kyoto originates) and, together with the US, they want China to take on legally binding cuts and use China as an excuse for their inaction.
- The EU has been pushing for an extended role of carbon markets;
- The increased role of the World Bank in climate finance and the EU wanting the Bank to have a prominent role in the global climate fund, as well as the Bank's own announcement to



set up a multi-million dollar fund to promote the creation of carbon markets in developing countries;

- The wikileaks which have revealed how the US manipulated the climate talks in Copenhagen, how Meles Zenawi was and is willing to sell out Africa by agreeing with positions taken by developing countries and attempting to bully the Africa group into conceding, and how Bolivia and Ecuador were threatened with the refusal of funds when they would not sign the Copenhagen Accord;
- The US senate climate denialism and proposed pledge-based Copenhagen Accord model that could lead to up to five degrees of warming for Africa;

Such is the nature of negotiations and it is clear that market based mechanisms are the order of the day. Market mechanisms are now the single most defining aspect that characterises this UN process. As Chair of Friends of the Earth International puts it, the negotiations are a carbon stock exchange. Here money is the bottom line.

There was a continuous and threatening police presence at marches and protests.

Photo: Sheila Menon and Marco Cadena



In the scorching streets of Cancun

Much of civil society recognises that the climate talks are a power game where the biggest lobbyists in the form of industry and corporate NGOs work within a system that is not inclusive and is in agreement with positions such as REDD, the carbon market system and the World Bank. As a result there are civil society spaces away from the main halls of the climate dialogue where, together with peasant and indigenous camps, they are gathering thousands of people, countering the negative proposals and false solutions in the negotiations and lending support to governments like those of Bolivia. Major protests and public gatherings have taken place in order to draw attention to these issues.

Characteristically, our marches and public demonstration happened under a watchful (police camera men outnumbered the press photographers at one of the protests), intimidating and heavily armed Mexican police force in full regalia, some camouflaged and blending in with the vegetation, ready to act if they needed to. We marched on different days, mainly in the city centre away from the main negotiating spaces, although attempts were made to get close enough, but that was many kilometres away. The messaging was clear that farmers, waste pickers, indigenous peoples and the poor will not be ignored.

COP 17 – Durban

The South African government has assured us that COP 17 will be a *People's COP*. Whatever government intended by that term, we have interpreted it and publicly informed our ministers and government delegation at a South African meeting that for us this means openness and transparency in all processes, equal opportunity to engage, and the space for civil society to be itself, able to protest where their presence can be felt both inside and outside the meeting venue without the now common arrests for legal and peaceful demonstrations.

We will work towards making Durban a success which means that social and labour movements are mobilised and can articulate people's demands and, most importantly, where people's power will finally shift the status quo towards a just outcome that results in the protection of people and the planet. ✕



CJN!SA Statement on IRP 2010

Government's Integrated Resource Plan 2010 – a disastrous future power expansion plan based upon a disastrous blue print from the past!

The Integrated Resource Plan 2010 is disastrous. If carried through, it will:

- Contribute to accelerated global climate change and the destruction of local environments to the detriment of people's health and well-being;
- Drain the country's economy to the benefit of energy intensive users, most of whom are transnational corporations, and at the cost of people;
- Entrench inequality and poverty;
- Sustain the bias for coal and nuclear over renewables, for centralised over dispersed and locally controlled energy systems, and for capital intensive over labour intensive options;
- Impose impossible costs from nuclear waste on future generations;
- Privatised substantial capacity, mostly in the hands of transnational corporations.

The IRP was produced from a process that privileged industry participation – notably through the technical working group – and discouraged community participation. The result reflects the continued subordination of policy to the interests of energy intensive industry and Eskom.

This is not really an integrated resource plan but is better understood as a power expansion plan. It exaggerates future demand growth and tops it with a spinning margin of 30% - twice the international norm. This demand projection then justifies a build programme which, if carried through, will drain the national economy. It also suggests that the commitment to DSM will not survive the supply crisis. Demand projections in the Medium Term Risk Plan are particularly exaggerated and appear designed to induce panicked decisions. The costs will be placed on society as a whole and those with least power to defend themselves will carry the greatest burden.

We have been here before. In a context of global recession, Eskom kept building through the 80s to meet demand projections which did not materialise. The consequent debt was passed on to the state and contributed to the burden inherited by the post-apartheid government. This was then used to justify tight fiscal policies and the imposition of 'cost recovery' on services to the poor. Eskom meanwhile cut deals with intensive energy users, notably BHP Billiton's aluminium smelters, to soak up its surplus. The result was a below cost supply to some of the world's richest corporations which took their windfall profits out of the country for investment elsewhere. Global capital thus benefitted at the cost of poor South Africans.

The present global depression is much more serious than the recession of the 80s. The consequences of Eskom over-building will also be more severe. South Africans are already aware of the extraordinary costs of Medupi and Kusile. Treasury stands surety for R350 billion, mostly for these two plants, on top of the R60 billion equity provided in 2008. The IRP's big base load is designed for energy intensive industry, but the escalation of tariffs is imposed on all. For the poorest 60% of South Africans the MYPD2 tariffs are unaffordable. Eskom says that similar 25% annual hikes are needed into MYPD3 to sustain its new build.

The proposed nuclear fleet will compound the problem several times over. It is simply not affordable. The IRP itself comments, "There is a strong probability that the costs could be higher than those assumed" [p.20]. But even its 'higher cost' scenario allows only a 40% increase on its capital cost assumption, whereas the record of nuclear building shows cost escalations of 300% and more. Whereas the IRP is advertised as a work in progress, Eskom's demand for a decision on nuclear in 2011 indicates that the nuclear commitment will be written in stone.



The IRP takes no cognisance of peak oil and its impacts on fuel prices – coal, nuclear, gas and diesel for peaking plant. In consequence, the 'levelised costs' for these options are unrealistically low. An escalation of fuel prices will leave them as stranded assets well before the end of their expected life-span. This would compound the levelised cost, which calculates capital, operating and input costs per kWh over the life-time of the plant.

IRP 2010 massively expands Eskom's environmental footprint. The present new build adds over 70 million tonnes (mt) of CO₂ to Eskom's 2009 emissions of 225 mt. Projected coal fired power from independent power producers (IPPs) will add over 10 mt more. Air, land and water pollution will also intensify both from power plants and from expanded coal production. The Olifants watershed is already sacrificed, the Vaal is in serious jeopardy and the Waterberg is being lined up as the next sacrifice zone. Water demand from the new plants cannot be met without draining Lesotho.

*Women of the WECCF in Gauteng protest against the IRP2 process.
Photo: Makoma Lekalakala*



Nuclear is promoted as low carbon. This is true only at the point of generation. Carbon costs in mining, fuel fabrication and waste disposal are high and rise as higher grade ores are mined out. More immediately, several rivers on the western Rand are already poisoned by radio-active pollution resulting from gold and uranium mining. Government and the mining corporations have done nothing to address this and there can be no confidence that they will do so as the nuclear supply chain expands in the future. Nor is there any plan for the long term disposal of high level nuclear waste from the power plants.

South Africa already owes a massive ecological debt both to the rest of Africa and internally to the poor in South Africa. The IRP adds substantially to this debt.

The IRP appears, for the first time, to give serious consideration to renewables but finally reflects Eskom's traditional hostility to them. In contrast to nuclear, it over-estimates costs. Further, it shows that renewables are accompanied by a massive reduction in water demand but takes no account of savings on water infrastructure or reduced pollution. The favoured scenario makes do with the minimum renewables compatible with international credibility – which is itself a poor yardstick.

The IRP creates a privatised generation sector at public expense. Already, it appears that Sasol will be paid to generate power for itself. Other IPPs are lining up to burn coal and will be looking for cheap options at the expense of the environment. Renewables are left almost exclusively to the private sector. Civil society demands for people's power – small scale dispersed renewable systems under local democratic control and supporting local jobs – are entirely ignored. The considerable potential for household scale generation is similarly ignored.

The IRP displays the continued power of the corporations at the centre of the minerals-energy complex to shape development to their own interests. For the people of South Africa and the environment, it is catastrophic. It crowds out renewables in favour of coal and nuclear and obstructs the necessary transition to a low carbon future that provides for all. ✕

Climate Justice Now! South Africa is a movement of community organisations and progressive NGOs working for climate justice and energy in South Africa and links up with the Climate Justice Now global network that started at the UNFCCC Bali COP in 2008.



The Transnet Pipeline

by Desmond D'Sa - SDCEA

Children from Adams Mission have given their lives for the Transnet multi-product pipeline

The new multi-products pipeline, granted approval by the Department of Environmental Affairs, has resulted in the drowning of two children. Despite a comprehensive submission lodged by the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA) outlining the reasons why this pipeline should not be permitted, the government did not consider any substantial information provided nor did they look at key issues, raised by the organisation, of why the pipeline should not be routed next to poor black residents and vulnerable scarce resources such as water and food. The new multi products pipeline, permitted to pass through predominately black rural areas, was not the first pipeline approved by government. SDCEA has always questioned the rationality of placing hazardous pipelines alongside residential properties in other areas of South Durban.

We question the motive of construction of pipelines to carry petroleum products to quench the thirst for fuel rather than developing an integrated public transport system. Our concern is that the continuous expansion of the petrochemical industry as a short term solution has huge cost ramifications that society will have to pay. Those who benefit the most suffer the least when death comes through explosions, fires, gas leaks or, as in this case, when the pipeline trenches are left open.

Transnet knew that routing the pipeline through black rural areas in the South of Durban will have the fewest disruptions. Since the tribal chief and area councilors had already given a nod of approval, they would have no opposition, like environmental lawyers or rich folk who live in the affluent suburbs of Durban, to keep the company in court for a long time.

Poor rural black people would not understand the danger and the risk posed by the pipeline running

right outside their front door, vegetable garden or water resource. The councilors, in the meanwhile, after consulting with TRANSNET, turned down critical information presented to them by the SDCEA that showed examples of people dying from explosions, fires and gas leaks: examples from communities that had experienced living alongside pipelines in the south Durban area and elsewhere in the world. Even if it meant people of their community suffering, they would only attend a meeting if the management of TRANSNET was present for fear of being implicated in saying no to the pipeline route through their elected areas or wards.

SDCEA walked the pipeline route to discover that the public has not been kept informed of the TRANSNET pipeline and found that large tracts of agricultural land will be affected by the route of the pipeline. Its installation poses additional environmental and health threats in the form of leaks. SDCEA deems this to significantly affect the environment.

After talking to the local population in their homes, SDCEA discovered that the threat to people's environmental rights cannot be prevented or minimised.

After this discussion with the residents of the peri-urban areas of South Durban, SDCEA raised its concerns in a letter to government about the lack of public participation and warned the government that the local community is upset about not having been meaningfully consulted on the development of this pipeline. Transnet has ignored the concerns of the people and government has approved the development even though people's legitimate grievances about the lack of public participation and the danger the development poses to their homes and families are clear. The appeal process, which



Climate Justice and Energy

puts the responsibility on the National Minister of the Environment to hear if there are substantial reasons, has been ignored with absolutely no response from the minister concerned .

This poor decision has resulted in the drowning of two children, aged six and eight, from one family in Adam Mission, south of Durban. The pipeline has been stopped for six kilometers by the local community who are angry that there were no safety measures installed by the contractor. Group Five compensated the family only to the extent of paying for the funeral. Group Five has released a statement absolving themselves and TRANSNET indicated that they would investigate the incident. The contractor, Group Five, and the client, Transnet, should be held accountable for safety of people upon whose lands their developments impact. Another trench was

found open that resulted in another child being rescued from drowning. Since the deaths and near-miss drowning of other children, the trenches have been closed after pressure from the families and the local community.

Affected communities allege that Transnet has used its money to buy the silence of councilors and tribal chiefs and has co-opted vocal community people to work in their interest. They question why the legislation that is available for rich people is not accessible to protect the families in rural neighbourhoods .

The pipeline is still closed pending the community agreeing on the development and the route. Umuntu, umuntu ngabantu - a person is a person by other people. ✎

This picture of the Transnet multi-purpose pipeline being laid, was taken near Pietermaritzburg. Photo: groundWork



Waste Conference in Buffalo City

by Musa Chamane

As a result of collaboration between the Centre for Municipal Research and Advice (CMRA), Leiden and Buffalo City Municipality, a waste conference was hosted by Buffalo City from the 9th to the 12th of November 2010. Municipal officials from as far away as Lesotho and Botswana were part of the conference, sharing their experiences in their municipalities. The focus, using Buffalo City as an example, was on why a municipality should deal with waste management issues. The meeting was also attended by the East London Mayor who opened the meeting with his address. He mentioned the importance of waste recycling as a common method of dealing with waste, especially in the developed world, and the need to learn from that experience.

The meeting had a number of working groups, which tackled a number of subjects relating to waste management. One of the groups was looking at the disposal site and its requirements. It was, however, highlighted that the local disposal site is not operating according to acceptable standards. The landfill site is being covered and compacted daily, but the issues of leachate, signage, and fencing were not adequately met by the local landfill. The groups made recommendations that were forwarded to Buffalo City Municipality.

Composting became an issue that the municipality has to consider so that waste destined for landfill is minimised. There was no one who was doing composting for commercial or subsistence farming and therefore no composting of waste was taking place in the city. Recommendations were made to the municipality to look at composting seriously. Food gardens were also part of the discussions. Local people should have household food gardens so that compost will be put to good use.

Another group looked at the stakeholders for waste management. It came out clearly that waste recycling is not yet something that is on top of the agenda for all the partners, even though South African municipalities are compelled to recycle by the new Waste Act of 2008. Municipalities that were represented in this meeting agreed to pilot

the UN-backed Pro-poor Public Private Partnership (PPPP).

In terms of waste recycling, Buffalo City committed itself to diverting 30-50% of waste by 2013. It was made clear that the resources will be allocated properly, with the aim of solid waste minimisation. It was also mentioned that the private sector has a role to play in this, as well as NGOs and informal recyclers. The municipalities agreed that implementing waste recycling projects will not be a walk in the park but will need huge commitment from the municipality and civil society. More and more resources will be needed for this to materialise.

In terms of finance and tariffs it was clear that the municipal budget is squandered by spending on unforeseen projects such as waste cleanup. Improperly dumped waste is not budgeted for but when a cleanup has to happen it needs the budget to cover the costs. The future budget allocation needs to consider such issues and at least have contingency in the budget so that issues that were not prepared for have funds set aside to deal with them. The issue of incentives for those who recycle was discussed in detail because, if one wants to succeed in recycling, then incentives need to be considered.

Most municipalities are holding green jobs and recycling meetings which I feel is positive for our environment. Waste recycling has so many benefits and if the municipalities and government in general are serious about waste recycling, that means we will see more and more jobs being created. The issues of Materials Recovery Facilities are good but the ownership issue is very important. If the MRF is introduced by the corporations, that is normally bad for informal recyclers because usually they are exploited for profit maximisation. It's good to see Southern and Northern municipalities combining and working together with an aim of improving the environment. The declaration that was developed at the end of the conference has promising potential when it comes to recycling and climate change mitigation initiatives, especially by Buffalo City. ✕



UNEP Seed Award Received Locally

by Musa Chamane

Mooi River waste recyclers win the UNEP Seed award for 2010

The Mooi River waste pickers, supported by groundWork, the Mpofana Municipality and Central Waste Paper, has won an internationally acclaimed award for one of the best environmental/green projects in the country.

From humble, bleak beginnings, the persistence shown by Mooi River based recyclers has earned them an environmental grant. The SEED grant is an initiative of the United Nations Environmental Programme, which annually nominates people and organisations who are excelling in their entrepreneurial activities in different countries. Mooi River was one of the applicants for the award but it never occurred to me that it would be awarded to them.

Mpofana Municipality in Mooi River must be proud of what has happen in their own area. There are about sixteen people who are entrepreneurs and who are operating at the local landfill site. The project recycles recyclables such as cardboards, plastic, glass and paper. This project started in hopeless times in terms of making money and making the project grow, but commitment shown by leaders at this landfill site sees them winning such an award.

The award involves entrepreneur support through business training, mentoring and coaching for

the success of the business. It also comes with \$5 000 which can be used in project activities. This project has challenges since the area of recycling is not concreted and the shelter that is there is in a bad state and needs improvements. With this money there is hope that these requirements of the projects will be fulfilled.

The municipality has been informed about the award and I am sure that the municipality prides itself on such an achievement. Most municipalities in South Africa are not accepting of waste pickers, claiming that they are not allowed to recycle at the landfill site. Municipalities who are progressive enough to see waste as a resource that can put food on a table for someone, have been brave enough to give the go ahead by authorising poor people to reclaim at the landfill. The waste pickers in Mooi River have got a formal agreement with the municipality which gives them the right to reclaim at the landfill site.

Mooi River is one of the rare small towns where waste separation at source can be easily piloted and implemented. groundWork has been contemplating the issue of being demonstrative. When we speak of zero waste, that needs to be showcased in Mooi River. Mooi River has got a population of less than 250 000, so therefore educating people about source separation would be relatively easy. If there is a town that deserves to be our model of zero waste, that should be none other than Mooi River.

Municipalities who have piloted separation at source have not been very successful since most of them, especially in KwaZulu-Natal, have been cherry picking the recyclables. Only paper and cardboard was being picked up. The intention in Mooi River for groundWork would be to create a holistic process that will be collecting and separating all recyclable types, as well as having a strong composting focus. The town will be cleaner and the communities will have employment opportunity in such a project. ✕

A waste picker at Mooi River landfill stands on a truck filled with baled paper ready to go to town.

Photo: groundWork



Always Challenging

by Bobby Peek

A tribute to Nomcebo Mvelase

On Friday afternoon, on the 8th of October, 2010, Nomcebo Mvelase was walking with her son to meet her husband so that they could all go home. She was passing the Cathedral in Langalibalele Street when a man stabbed her. She died shortly thereafter. To date, the police have not found the man who did this and there is no known motive for the murder, as nothing was stolen.

I write this article on Environmental Health in a form of a thank you and tribute to what Nomcebo had achieved with groundWork and in the environmental justice field in the three and a half years we shared with her.

It must have been difficult coming from a nursing background into the wildness of groundWork. From a structured 7-to-7 job, Nomcebo entered a place where structure was not what drove work. It is rather an intense, bubbling exciting process and place where each person is their own boss!

I remember the early months of Nomcebo's work with us when, after repeated attempts at getting the Department of Health people to respond to her, she was reduced to tears of anger as they just ignored her. They simply would not respond meaningfully. It did not stop her, however. She persevered in the environmental health outreach work she planned and before we knew it she was regularly working with nurses in training institutions bringing the very important issues of waste and chemicals in the health care setting to their curriculum.

This work with nurses led to her engagement with Health Care Without Harm international and the International Council of Nurses based in Switzerland. Soon she was off to Belgium, India and Switzerland, engaging with nurses on environmental health and health care waste. But this did not only happen at a distance. She worked



with regional Southern African nurses by bringing them together for workshops and gatherings on mercury and environmental health. This was done with our partner HCWH and the United Nations. Her work manifested itself in places such as the Caluza Clinic when, after her death, I visited to present her work to one of our funders. Upon getting to Caluza, it was clear that Nomcebo had made a big impact and she was considered very fondly by her peers. Here, well established, older nurses trusted this young woman who was guiding them to a health care process that was not harmful to people's health and well-being.

This was not the only terrain Nomcebo was busy in. Over the last year she was the lead person in groundWork responding to health care waste incinerators. One health care waste incinerator battle that stood out was the 'Battle of Barberton' where a company started building a health care waste incinerator without permission. Nomcebo



went to Barberton at the invitation of the community and took part in a fiery meeting between the company and the community. The company demanded that Nomcebo retract her statements regarding their process, which she refused to do. The company was forced to scrap its plans. At the other end of Gauteng she was involved with people in Klerksdorp challenging another health care waste development. She was getting around and people were listening.

One of her final pieces of work, that will lay the foundation for future work for groundWork, was getting small farmers and agricultural extension officers together to work on strategies to move away from pesticides. This was extremely successful and lobbying government to get stricter legislation on synthetic chemicals was her next challenge. Never one to miss an opportunity, she then started linking rural health facilities with local organic farmers to train hospital staff in composting and organic farming so that these often impoverished hospitals can grow their own organic food towards healthy self reliance.

Nomcebo was the voice of environmental health in groundWork and the future was exciting for her and groundWork. She was full of emotion and full of challenge! Full of gusto! A groundWorker of note!

We miss her. ☹️

Some of the many tributes that were received after news of Nomcebo's death:

I don't know what to say. I am in shock. She was so vibrant. Peace,

Jamie - HCWH Food Coordinator - USA

We have received with great shock the unbelievable message that Nomcebo Mvelase is no longer with us. It is difficult for human beings to believe this! She was a person for us all, a woman of our future and one for GAIA to be proud of. Though Tanzania is far from SA, we always felt that we are working in the same office with groundWork because of Nomcebo. But we stand firm and believe that the Creator's order is a grace for us all. We have the same path as Nomcebo. We will follow her! We

pray for God's shadow to enfold her family in this difficult situation. We cry together with her family!

MAY ALMIGHTY PUT HER SOUL IN ETERNAL PEACE - AMEN

Mwadhini O. Myanza IRTECO, Tanzania

We at Health Care Without Harm are deeply saddened by the loss of Nomcebo Mvelase - our colleague and friend. Many of us from around the world had the privilege to get to know and work with Nomcebo over the past several years. She inspired all of us with her dedication. She impressed all of us as she grew into her job - working with South African health care workers such as nurses like herself, to stop the pollution generated by hospitals and help create a more environmentally healthy and socially just world. We know she gained their respect, as she did ours. We met her in South Africa, and she came to work with us in places like India and Geneva. Everywhere she went she brought with her a positive attitude and warm smile. All of us, her colleagues in the Philippines, Latin America, India, Europe, the United States and Africa will miss Cebo deeply. We send our most sincere condolences to her family and our solidarity to all of her community in South Africa. With much love on behalf of the HCWH Global Team,

Joshua Karliner - International Team Coordinator, Health Care Without Harm

I still can't believe Nomcebo is no more, I've been shaking with shock since yesterday. I remember very well I spoke with her at 16h00 on Friday. Sadly that was my last conversation with her. What a friend, colleague and sister.

Phumlani Mkhize - Senior Environmental Health Practitioner eThekweni Municipality

I cry for our country and our world that we treat the unique gift of life with such disdain. Is nothing sacred? Only when we are filled with the awe of life - all life - will we live in peace and harmony. Our deep sympathy to Nomcebo's family and to groundWork.

Bishop Geoff Davies - Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute



Volte Face

by Sunita Dubey

On the 4th of November 2010, the United States Export-Import (Ex-Im) Bank approved the Kusile coal-fired power plant proposal based on the greenhouse gas impacts and their own climate policy. This was a crucial decision point in the bank's overall decision on whether to finance the project. This position was diametrically opposite to the United States Treasury's decision to abstain on the USD 3.75 billion loan by the World Bank to build the 4,800 MW Medupi coal power plant. In a statement about that loan, the US Treasury said that the decision "reflects concerns about the climate impact of the project and its incompatibility with the World Bank's commitment to be a leader in climate change mitigation and adaptation". Without measures to offset carbon emissions, "the project is incompatible with the World Bank's strategy to help countries pursue economic growth and poverty reduction in ways that are environmentally sustainable".

While a few months back the US rejected the coal power plant in South Africa based on its climate impacts, today the same administration is all set to approve Kusile project despite its climate and environmental impacts. If built, Kusile would be one of the largest greenhouse gas-emitting power plants in the world, and would also spew other forms of toxic pollution into the local environment. Kusile would increase South Africa's total greenhouse gas emissions by nearly ten percent. Ex-Im Bank's financing of Kusile would preempt South African strategies for low carbon growth embodied in the country's incomplete second integrated resource plan (IRP2) and Climate Strategy Processes. This violates Ex-Im Bank's policy for highly carbon intensive project financing, which requires that "[t]he host country shall have developed a Low Carbon Growth Plan or Strategy and the project must be consistent with the results and objectives of that Plan".

The project, and the South African state energy utility, Eskom, are the focus of growing opposition from local communities who would bear the brunt

of the impacts from such a disastrous decision. While Ex-Im Bank approved the Kusile coal power plant based on carbon implications of the project, controversies surrounding the finances of Eskom continue to mount. With public anger over financial bailouts to failing industries and banks still fresh in the minds of many American voters, civil society organisations are also questioning the financial wisdom of Ex-Im Bank bailing out Eskom.

Eskom has thus far only secured eleven percent of the \$19 billion price tag required to move the project forward. This is despite the billions in direct loans and loan guarantees from the South African government. With project delays and costs rising every year, a shadow of doubt has fallen over this troubled project, which has consequently been unable to attract adequate private financing to fill the enormous financial gap. Ex-Im Bank's financing has been sought to help prop up this fiasco. In addition to the risks posed by Kusile, large capital needs for another enormous and highly controversial coal power project in South Africa – Medupi – have contributed to the drain on Eskom's finances. Medupi was met with a firestorm of local and international opposition and required a loan of over \$3 billion from the World Bank, despite a \$6 billion dollar direct loan from the South African government. However, the South African government has made it clear that it cannot directly contribute any more funds, creating a total cash shortfall of \$25 billion according to Eskom's 2010 annual report.

Meanwhile, President Obama's National Export Initiative, which seeks to double exports over five years, has created a perverse incentive for Ex-Im Bank to prioritise large-scale fossil fuel financing at the expense of the nascent clean technology sector. The volte-face by the US government on supporting huge coal power plant in South Africa, shows the lack of commitment to combat global climate change. This support by the US is pushing South Africa along the path of "carbon intensive" growth and on a future coal binge. ✕



Mining vs Jobs

by Melissa Fourie - Centre for Environmental Rights

Melissa Fourie, Executive Director of the Centre for Environmental Rights, discusses the need for environmental compliance within the mining sector

In an address to the annual general meeting of the Chamber of Mines last week, the Minister of Mineral Resources told Chamber members that “there is increasing tension globally between growth and socio-economic development on the one hand, and the environment on the other. We in South Africa grapple with the same challenge, as espoused by the sustainable development framework. The recent closure of a coal mine in Limpopo which resulted in the loss of jobs for more than 500 people in one of our poverty nodes, amplifies the nature of the challenge that lies ahead.”

The coal mine referred to is, of course, the Vele Colliery proposed by Australian mining company Coal of Africa Limited outside the magnificent Mapungubwe World Heritage Area and National Park. By its own admission, Coal of Africa had commenced various activities at the proposed colliery without the necessary environmental authorisation. (The company has since applied for rectification of certain activities, thereby admitting that it had committed criminal offences under the National Environmental Management Act). Coal of Africa has also admitted that it does not yet have a licence to use water and therefore cannot yet lawfully commence mining.

Yet, when both the Department of Water Affairs and the Department of Environmental Affairs stepped in in August to stop illegal activities from proceeding, apparently causing the company to lay off some of its workers, CEO John Wallington blamed government for a “lack of clarity and consistency in the application of regulatory compliance”, which, he says, “negatively impacts on investment in SA”. No mention was made of the fact that the company’s inability to continue to

employ these workers was due to the fact it had no authorisation to start these activities in the first place.

Wallington has been quoted as saying that, “if the principles of applying this ruling are consistently applied across the mining industry, nearly every mine in this country would be forced to close” (Business Day, 4 November 2010).

The frightening fact is that Wallington is right. The contraventions at Mooiplaats are the tip of the iceberg, and mining companies all over South Africa know this.

What do we know about mines’ compliance with environmental laws? Very little and it seems as if both the mining industry and the Department of Mineral Resources would like to keep it this way.

Minister Shabangu told Parliament in July this year that the Department of Mineral Resources has taken action against “numerous mines in various provinces of South Africa for a wide variety of transgressions... relating to environmental matters”. However, she refused to divulge the names of these companies “due to the sensitiveness relating to information and the potential impact it could have on, for example, share prices of listed companies”. This despite the fact that listed companies have obligations, under the listing rules of the JSE and other exchanges, to make public any information that may affect their share price in a material manner.

What we do know – and this only because of information provided to Parliament by the Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs - is that, by mid-2010, 125 mines were extracting water



from boreholes, dams and rivers and discharging wastewater into rivers and other watercourses without authorisation – a criminal offence under the National Water Act.

Mining companies are quick to blame the Department of Water Affairs for slow processing of licence applications but, according to the Minister, seven of these 125 mines had never bothered to apply for a water use licence, and at least twenty-six of the 125 mines had submitted incomplete applications to the Department, requiring “further information for processing”. Water Affairs was forced to issue pre-directives to twelve mines to get them to apply, of which five had to be issued with final directives.

One of the mines whose application had been sent back “to address shortcomings” for lacking “important technical information” (according to the Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs) was Mooiplaats, the Coal of Africa mine now under fire from environmental authorities for a range of alleged contraventions. This is the same company whose Chairperson argues that “the attitude and relationship between the mining industry and government has to change from control to enabling” (Mining Weekly, 28 October 2010). If “control”, as Coal of Africa perceives the somewhat feeble attempts by authorities to regulate the environmental management of mines, means that a multinational company cannot even submit a complete application for a water use licence (while continuing to mine and use and discharge wastewater illegally), what is in store for South Africa in an “enabling” relationship with the mining industry?

Contrary to Minister Shabangu’s view, the problem we face with the environmental impact of mines in South Africa has nothing to do with “tension” between growth, development and jobs on the one hand, and the environment on the other.

The problem is simply one of an unwillingness by mining companies to incur the capital expenditure to control pollution, as is required by law. It is the problem of executive management making a calculated decision to contravene environmental laws and to destroy a large wetland in the interest of shareholder profits (and possibly executive

bonuses), as mining giant Exxaro recently admitted to having done at their Mooifontein mine (Beeld, 3 November 2010).

Coal of Africa says its foreign direct investment “has the ability to be economically transformative for the impoverished Limpopo province” (Mining Weekly, 28 October 2010). But what will be left for the residents of South Africa after mining companies that fail to comply with environmental laws close up shop? Already South Africa has 6 000 ownerless and derelict mines to clean up, and the massive challenge of toxic acid mine water starting to decant in large parts of the Witwatersrand has required Cabinet intervention.

Let us be clear: without mining, none of us would be able to live the lives we do. Even for those of us who watch our carbon footprints, every time we switch on our energy-saving light bulbs, start our hybrid cars, or shower with water from our solar geysers, we use the products of mining activities. And, unquestionably, mining has been and will continue to be a vital contributor to South Africa’s economic growth.

However, now more than ever before we can see how mining without proper environmental management poses a threat to the lives and health of South Africans, particularly poor South Africans who cannot afford to move away from the degraded environment and polluted water sources.

Therefore the challenge for South Africa is not to choose between mining, growth and jobs on the one hand, and environment on the other. The challenge is how we decide to manage and mitigate the impacts of mining to ensure an environment that is not harmful to the health and wellbeing of our people. Are we going to create a more “enabling” environment with even less oversight so that shareholders (many of whom are foreign) can be enriched at the expense of the lives and health of our people? Or are we going to start requiring mining companies and their shareholders to incur the cost of compliance with our environmental laws, just like everyone else? ✕

An edited version of this article appeared in Business Report on 8 November 2010.



Greenfly took a look at the world at large and came up with ...

No-one in the mining business has been much bothered by legal niceties like environmental and water permits. When their mates at the Department of Minerals give the go-ahead – well then you go ahead. And if you already went ahead anyway, the rubber stamp is sure to follow. Never mind the political lightweights at the other departments. They never counted for much and didn't count themselves for much beyond the odd free lunch.

So Coal of Africa (CoAL) is evidently miffed at officials telling them to stop operations because they hadn't bothered with environmental permits. Half the mining operations in the country would be halted on these grounds, they said. Which is to the point – if not exactly the point CoAL wanted to make. Mining minister Susan Shabangu was reportedly not amused. Don't the juniors in environment know that there's money to be made here? And who do they think they are, butting in on her patch?

Meanwhile, the rising tide of toxic groundwater – known as acid mine drainage – is still rising. The inter-ministerial task team convened by planning supremo Gumboot Trevor has given the matter deep thought and came up with ...

More toxic stuff is blowing bubbles through the global economy. The august managers of capital, also known as the G20, met in Seoul to give the matter deep thought and came up with ...

No surprises there. In the good old days of good old boys, the US could tell the IMF who to blame and then make them pay for it. The first bit still works. The IMF said it was a matter of 'global imbalances' which is deep code for 'blame China and don't mention the banks!' The problem is the second bit. Instead of handing over the dosh, China told the US to piss off.

Things are looking happier on the circus front. As the climate circus heads for Cancun for the 2010 round of recriminations, the cabinet announced the 2011 round will be held "in the province of KZN". Ulundi, perhaps? The large chamber built to stage the interminable speeches of His Excellency the King's Prime Minister is empty. Otherwise known as Mangasuthu's Folly, this seems an appropriate venue for a message to the world that our leaders have come up with ...

OK. So it's actually going to be in Durban and the local grandees are preening themselves for getting 'the big one'. Copenhagen, said one, attracted 40 000 people and "unprecedented global publicity". Never mind the baton charges, trumped up charges and Denmark's resemblance to a police state. There's no such thing as bad publicity. Which is just as well given that the Durban refineries are prone to explode, the fish in the Bay periodically turn belly up, and the place tends to smell of cat wee.

Readers who have followed the climate negotiations of course know that the delegates are there to haggle over not-carbon. This is an entirely new commodity invented by Al Gore and Team US at Kyoto. It has some magical features: it can be traded for real money – or what used to appear as real money; and, by definition, it is not carbon. So Global Corpse Inc. can make loads of money trading not-carbon while emitting as much carbon as it likes. And then it gets a badge saying 'carbon neutral'. Whatever else happens, you can bet the Durban nobs will award themselves a badge and wear it with pride. Just like they did for the World Cup. ☹



How to close a landfill site

by Rico Euripidou

In a step towards undoing environmental racism, the Bulbul hazardous waste site is set to close

How to close a landfill dump...lessons from the Bulbul dump Monitoring Committee.

The Wasteman Bulbul dump site, situated in Silverglen, Chatsworth, has been a constant reminder of apartheid-era discrimination and planning to the local community who still experience this form of environmental racism on a daily basis in a democratic South Africa. The Chatsworth community, which lives adjacent to the site and experiences its foul pollution footprint, have, since the late 1980s, tried to 'negotiate' a closure of this dump site.

This hazardous waste landfill site is the last in a series of hazardous dumps that were purposely placed in Umlazi, Isipingo and Chatsworth from the 1970s. In February 1997, the Umlazi Wastech IV dumpsite was closed by the then Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, Professor Kadar Asmal. This was after the community people from Isipingo and Umlazi said "enough is enough" and took their protest to the streets. This had the effect of forcing the ANC-led government through public embarrassment into action... Something that is ever so difficult to do today.

The most recent twist in this ongoing saga was an EIA proposal that came from Wasteman for a site upgrade and 'work to closure project'. This is industrial speak for seeking permission from the regulator and conning the community into extending the life of the dump for another nine years on the false promise that the dump will close once this phase of work is completed, implying that the site cannot close until its life is extended for a further decade. This development, however, had the opposite effect and galvanized an invigorated and coordinated civil society and community response which has led to the beginning of the closure phase of this site!

The universal forum for affected communities to get an opportunity to have a say in the management and operation of a landfill site is the Monitoring Committee which, as part of a landfill sites' license, it is required to constitute. However, while immersing the community struggle in the bureaucracy of government stakeholder committees is not always ideal and efficient, sometimes it does work to the advantage of the community. By engaging in the Bulbul Landfill Site Monitoring Committee meeting we, in partnership with the community representatives from Chatsworth, were able to leverage the closure of the Bulbul landfill site. At the MC meeting of Saturday the 17th of July 2010, Wasteman Holdings voluntarily disclosed that they



Trucks trundle around the Bulbul site. The community can be seen on the fenceline.
Photo: groundWork



Waste

only have approximately one year's air space left (180 000m³) on the Bulbul site and for this reason urgently needed to expand. This disclosure, we speculate, was made to strategically try to scare the regulator and eThekweni City into allowing Wasteman an extension on the life of the dump. What they did not realise, however, was that their permit clearly states that as soon as this threshold on airspace is foreseen, the permit holder must immediately begin an EIA process towards site

closure and remediation (twelve months before this threshold is attained).

The monitoring committee, wise to the surprise technicality that emerged to us, then immediately requested the KZN DEARD to initiate the following legislative processes as a matter of urgency:

- To issue a directive to Wasteman Holdings (forthwith) to authorise them to initiate and submit to the National Department of

An aerial view of the Bulbul dump site shows clearly its current extent.

Photo: groundWork



Environmental Affairs (DEA) and the KZN DEARD a closure and rehabilitation plan as stipulated in their permit as a requirement when they approach one year before their anticipated closure date.

- As indicated by Wasteman Holdings in their Bulbul Drive Landfill – Closure Date: (Statement @ July 20), which was distributed at the said Monitoring Committee meeting, the closure and rehabilitation report plan must include the following:
 1. A design plan for the capping of the completed phases to date
 2. An end use plan, to be agreed with the authority of the Bulbul Drive Landfill Monitoring Committee meeting
- This closure and rehabilitation EIA must under no circumstances be linked to, or be conditional on, Wasteman Holdings' proposed expansion of the Bulbul Drive Landfill and is a specific requirement of the Bulbul Drive Landfill permit.
- Under no circumstances must Wasteman Holdings be authorised to excavate the soil required for the closure of phases 1 – 3 from their adjacent properties where Wasteman Holdings have previously expressed an interest in their BID titled "Bulbul drive landfill site upgrade and work to closure project, Background information document, Application for environmental authorization, (Ref Number DM//0078/09)" to apply for an extension of the life of this landfill site. To do so would be tantamount to authorising the extension of this site without regard to the EIA regulations and the community sentiment.

We requested that the DEARD provide a clear statement on the status of the above mentioned BID (Ref Number DM//0078/09). At the Monitoring Committee meeting the DEARD stated this process was suspended. Our understanding, however, of the EIA regulations is that an EIA application cannot be valid indefinitely and has an expiry date after which the process must be re-initiated.

Subsequently, in the months that followed July and the monitoring committee meetings that have

occurred since then, the following developments have occurred:

- Wasteman have formally withdrawn their EIA application to expand the life of this landfill site and have formally initiated an EIA process towards the closure and remediation of the Bulbul landfill site.
- The Waste Licensing Application Process in terms of the NEMWA (for closure) must be lodged with the National Department of Environment. Bulbul Drive Landfill Site is a hazardous facility and therefore the licence application and BA will be lodged with DEA.
- In terms of the new EIA Regs, 2010 and GN 719, the process to be followed for the closure of a landfill site is a Basic Assessment (BA).
- The Closure Licence application form (Part 4) specifies all the information that must be submitted in a closure report.
- The draft BAR must be submitted together with the preliminary Closure and Rehabilitation Plan to all I&APs. Any comments received / issues raised are to be included in the final BAR and the final Closure and Rehabilitation Plan.

However, as always, no process involving multinationals, profit and communities is ever clear cut and simple, and in this instance it is no different. Wasteman, it appears, will not just "walk away" from Chatsworth and proposals for landfill gas extraction and energy facilities, and materials recovery facilities (MRF), are already afoot.

Does this mean the closure of the apartheid relic? Does this mean that the people of Chatsworth will not have hazardous waste trucking through their community? We believe that it is the beginning of the end. But vigilant, bureaucratically hawk eyed and militantly active the people of Chatsworth have to remain if they are to see the end of Wasteman in their community. ✕



Africa to feed Saudi Arabia

It is the strategy of Saudi Arabia to out source food production. On the 4th of December 2010, high level delegations from African countries met in Riyadh to discuss the further acquisition by Saudi Arabia of farmland within these countries. At the moment, according to the NGO GRAIN (www.grain.org), the Kingdom's most powerful businessmen are brokering deals in Senegal, Mali and other African countries that would result in them controlling several hundred thousand hectares of the regions most productive farmland.

As they severely undermine each country's own food security and destroy the livelihoods of millions of farmers and pastoralists, such deals are of grave concern. These agreements are, however, generally secret and are reached without the knowledge or agreement of the people affected.

The end of water privatisation?

Despite huge opposition throughout the world, water privatisation became the fashion about twelve years ago and governments and economic elites were pushing the idea that the only way to expand drinking water supplies was to involve the private sector. Developing countries in particular entered into public-private partnerships (PPPs) with private water companies. This was facilitated by the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) who were, at the time, providing official development assistance funds for water PPPs.

Over the past two years, however, several cities in Hungary, the Ukraine, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have taken back control of their drinking water supply systems and, in Paris in early 2010, the water system was re-municipalised. In addition, although there is disagreement about whether a definitive break with the old policies has taken place, recent advocacy of public-public partnerships (PuPuPs) might indicate a shift in thinking.

The rights of nature

In 2008 Ecuador adopted a constitution which recognises the rights of nature. The fact that the rights of nature are universal provides the fundamental basis of a legal case filed at the Constitutional Court of Ecuador against British Petroleum (BP).

When BP's Deepwater Horizon rig exploded on the 20th of April 2010, a massive environmental disaster ensued. Their drive to maximise profit, with complete disregard to nature and its rights, was exposed and, exacerbating the situation, BP lied about the scale of the problem and used very high amounts of toxic chemical dispersants to cover up the spill. Because of the movement of water and air, the disaster was not limited to the Gulf Coast.

Since the harm done to nature cannot be compensated for in monetary terms, the defenders of nature bringing the suit are not seeking financial compensation. Instead, their key demands include that BP should release all data relating to the ecological destruction caused by the spill and that they should leave as much oil underground as they spilled. They have also urged the US government to extend the moratorium on offshore oil drilling.

Find your nearest recycling point

My Waste (www.mywaste.co.za) is actively seeking recyclers, buy back centres and everyone in the industry with drop off points around South Africa to join its ranks. It is their goal to have a comprehensive database of every drop off point and collection site made available to the general public. My Waste say that they are dedicated to a cleaner South Africa and will always remain a non-political and a non-activist initiative.

Using this system, you can find your nearest recycling centre using the power of Google maps.



African Nickel withdraws from Groot Marico

On the 8th of October, 2010, African Nickel announced at a public meeting in Groot Marico, that it was withdrawing its application for prospecting rights in the Groot Marico Area.

Members of the audience had arrived geared up for a fight. The local crime prevention unit had been called in by the environmental consultant for the project who had apparently received death threats. Legal counsel had been hired. The redoubtable Mariette Liefferink was in attendance. Emotions were running high in the town made famous by Herman Charles Bosman.

Unfortunately, there were people in the audience who were in favour of prospecting and, regrettably, the race card was drawn and television cameras were given a treat as black and white slagged each other off at the close of the meeting. Positively, once each side had aired their grievances, rapprochement soon followed.

Scientists honoured

Scientists of integrity are often assaulted by the petro-chemical industry when they publish findings that go against the industry. This year, three winners of the 16th Annual Heinz Awards are scientists who are distinguished "by their courageous willingness to communicate the implications of their work, often in the face of determined opposition" from the chemical industry. These scientists have been at the fore of efforts to reduce the use and emissions of endocrine-disrupting chemicals such as dioxin and phthalates, associated with PVC plastic, and BPA (bisphenol A) which is used in epoxy-based building materials and also as a liner in food and beverage cans.

The scientists are Professor Terry Collins, Professor Frederick von Saal and Dr. Lynn Goldman.

World's largest Waste Incinerator closes

As a result of the increased risk, cost and growing public opposition, the incineration industry is experiencing an economic downturn. Because of this, the world's largest waste incinerator, situated in Detroit, was closed on the 8th of October 2010. The closure was marked by a rally at Hart Plaza, in downtown Detroit, by those who have been opposing the incinerator for many years. During this rally the mayor of Detroit was encouraged to introduce a comprehensive plan for recycling the waste that used to be burned in the facility.

Rosspoint Update

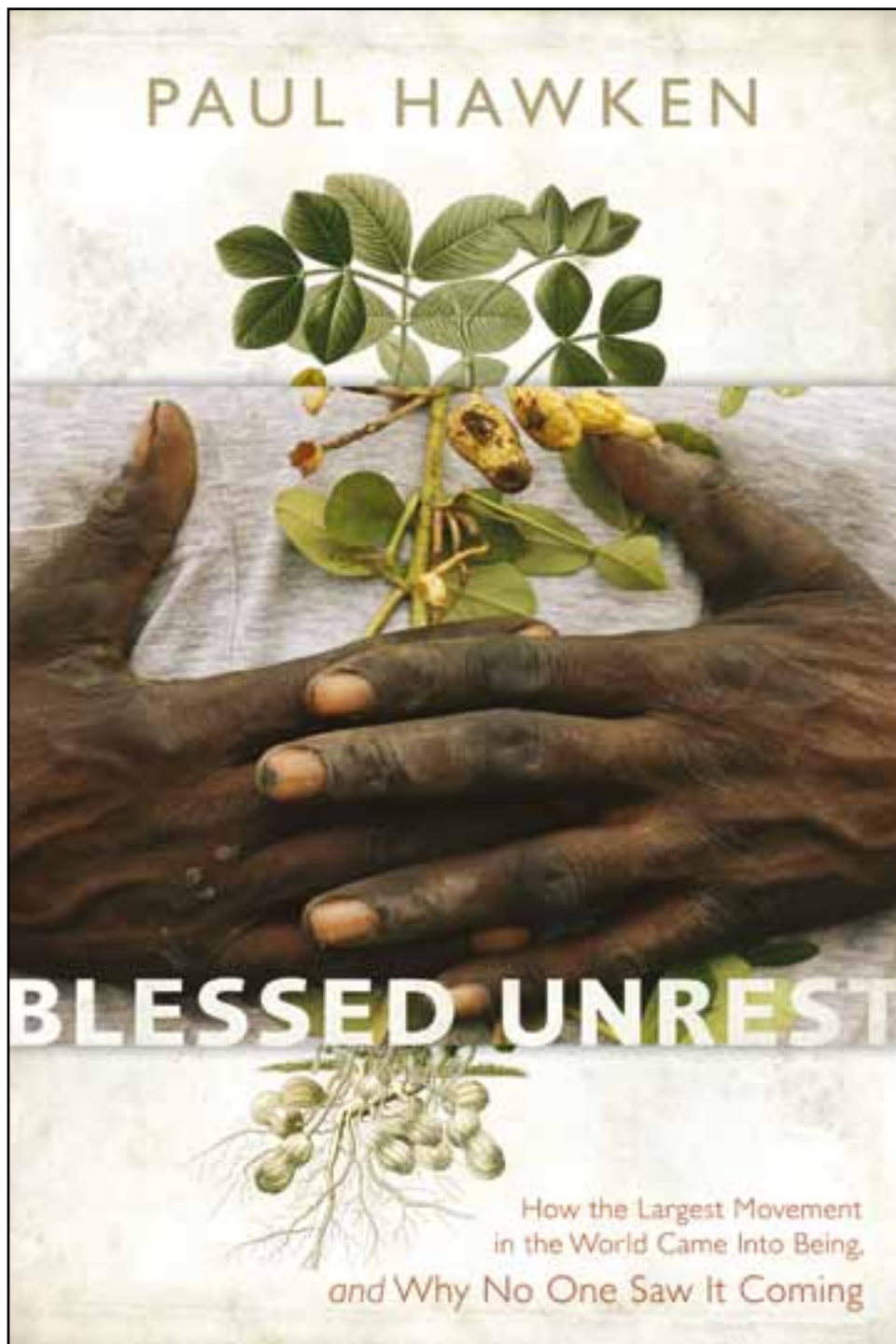


Despite the strong action taken against them by the Irish government and Shell, activists in Ireland continue to fight Shell, which has recently begun drilling in a Special Area of Conservation and the community campaign is taking continuous action to delay the work.

The weekend advertised here included workshops on:

- Non-violent direct action training
- Blockading techniques
- Sustainable Campaigning
- Wind turbine maintenance
- Building quick low impact structures





A leading environmentalist and social activist's examination of the worldwide movement for social and environmental change, Paul Hawken has spent over a decade researching organisations dedicated to restoring the environment and fostering social justice.

From billion-dollar nonprofits to single-person dot.causes, these groups collectively comprise the largest movement on earth, a movement that has no name, leader, or location, and that has gone largely ignored by politicians and the media. Like nature itself, it is organising from the bottom up, in every city, town, and culture, and is emerging to be an extraordinary and creative expression of people's needs worldwide.

Blessed Unrest explores the diversity of the movement, its brilliant ideas, innovative strategies, and hidden history, which date back many centuries. A culmination of Hawken's many years of leadership in the environmental and social justice fields, it will inspire and delight any and all who despair of the world's fate, and its conclusions will surprise even those within the movement itself. Fundamentally, it is a description of humanity's collective genius, and the unstoppable movement to reimagine our relationship to the environment and one another.

To read what people are saying about this book, go to <http://www.blessedunrest.com>.

