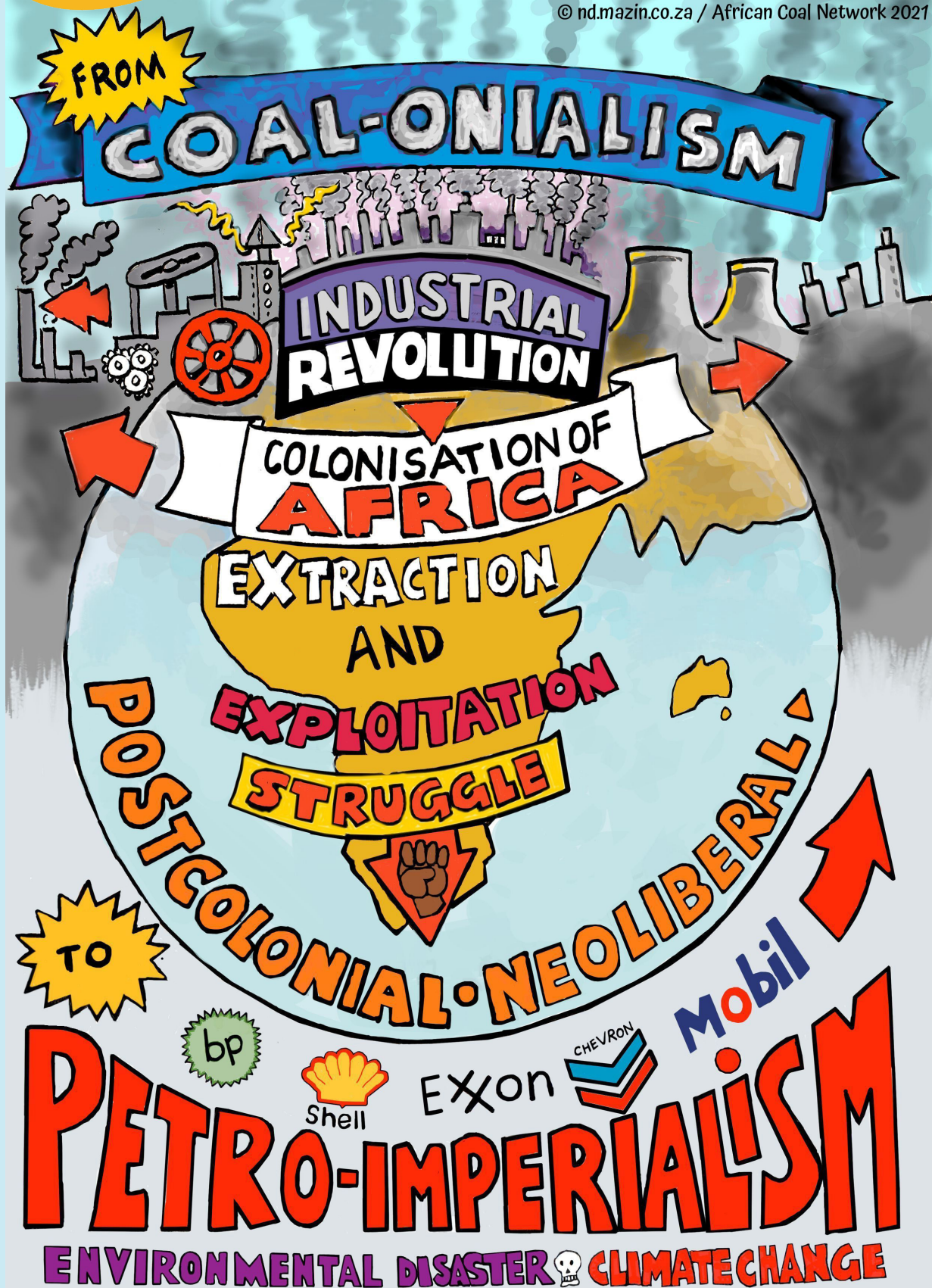


GROUNDWORK

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Cover picture by Andy Mason



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groundWork is a non-profit environmental justice 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. These campaigns are supported by the Media, Information and Publications Campaign and the

Environmental Justice Education Campaign.

groundWork is constituted as a trust.

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groundWork is affiliated to the following international organizations: Health Care Without Harm; International POPs Elimination Network; Basel Action Network; Oilwatch International; Global Anti-Incineration Alliance; groundWork is the South African member of Friends of the Earth International

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groundWork



From the Smoke Stack

by groundWork director, Bobby Peek



We live in a world of farcical, comical and indeed tragic contradictions. One has to ask oneself: how does South Africa have the political ability to pull off an “ambitious, long-term Just Energy Transition Partnership” to “accelerate the decarbonisation of South Africa’s economy”, and at the same time allow Shell to explore for oil and gas off our southern coast or have our Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy in the middle of the annual United Nations discussions on climate change push for the expansion of oil and gas? In the same month that we convince the world to consider an \$8.5 billion climate package, that is made up of “grants, concessional loans and investments and risk sharing instruments, including to mobilise the private sector to change course”, we also maintain our course towards climate disaster with the very same private sector. How does the president explain this? How does the Presidential Climate Commission explain this? One has to ask, what is ambition? Well, maybe it is not such a big deal. After all, pledges have been made in the past and were never delivered and therefore we can continue seeking oil and gas. Somewhat of a tragicomedy I would say.

But meanwhile, some real action has to be taken to challenge the end of fossil fuels. The last two coal-fired independent power producer proposals were stopped in the last 12 months, bringing an end to a long process of challenging 13 proposals across the country with the Centre for Environmental Rights and Earthlife Africa and very many communities. groundWork, the African Climate Alliance and Vukani Environmental Movement, represented by the Centre for Environmental Rights, challenged government in court – right after the confusion that emerged from the United Nations negotiations – to abandon plans to build 1 500 MW of new coal-fired power on

grounds that new coal-fired power poses significant and unjustifiable threats to constitutional rights. This is what groundWork always aims for: environmental justice action!

Reflecting back on 2021, it is so true what was said in one of the very many zoom meetings in recent times. The year has gone by so fast, but it felt so much longer than 2020. And this is indeed how it felt. Especially in the last two months, when getting strangely comfortable with that South African euphemism – going nowhere slowly – we tried to push in two years’ worth of physical meetings into two months. And now we are in our fourth wave of COVID-19. The forth wave was always expected. The rapid spread and novelty of the new virus is probably caused by the fact that in September this year a “miserly 1% of Covid vaccines injected around the world have been administered on the continent of Africa. Around 30 million doses have been delivered in Africa – covering barely 2% of the total population.

When Britain had vaccinated half its people, Burkina Faso had managed just 200 out of its 20 million population, according to Peter Hain, a former anti-apartheid campaigner who delivered the 2021 OR Tambo Memorial Lecture in October 2021. He further reminds us of the words of Thabo Makgoba, the Archbishop of Cape Town: “vaccine apartheid”. It was because of this reality that groundWork decided and pushed – where we could – our allies to not attend the CoP in Glasgow. As the anti-apartheid struggle shouted, “No ‘normal’ sport in an abnormal society”, when calling for a sport boycott against apartheid South Africa, it was our feeling that the same had to apply at one level to the Glasgow gathering.

But 2021 brought exciting change to groundWork. Firstly, we have brought on five new staff members – all women – to take on key roles in groundWork,




both at a project level as well as a senior campaign level. With growth we have recognised that the management structure of groundWork has to change, and Rico, groundWork's long time Environmental Health Campaigner, has stepped up and is now the Campaigns Coordinator. We developed our 2022 to 2026 strategy, we undertook an evaluation of our work, which was positive and highlighted the growth and changing organisational challenges we must address. Partners' voices were encouraging and supportive: "groundWork punches above its weight, works well with other groups and has the right motives for its actions" and "They may hold very strong positions, and yet yield to the majority. gW supports open debates and freely pushes its position. ... gW is open to counter ideas and decisions are very bottom up in the networks we both belong to."

But not all was excitement. We finally said goodbye to Luqman Yesufu, who joined groundWork seven years ago. He knocked on our door more than once to allow us to bring him in so that he could share his skills with groundWork. In the last seven years, we have been part of his professional and personal growth – his marriage and his young family. Luqman will always be remembered for taking on the exciting task of starting and building the Global Green and Healthy Hospital initiative in South Africa and the continent. From dealing with the difficulty of politics in South Africa to language barriers in Madagascar, Luqman slowly and quietly convinced senior government officials and clinic nurses to see the value of the work for themselves and for the broader health care sector. I will never forget the day when, sitting at an annual meeting with health care administrators and practitioners, they referred to themselves as a movement. The image of the very many landless peoples movements globally organising and resisting

juxtaposed to the very formal health care sector is the new world we live and organise in. People want to be build power and change together. Luqman has moved from the warmth of Nigeria to South Africa to Canada, where today he refers to 0°C as warm. We will miss you Luqman, and thank you for building and strengthening environmental justice work in the health care sector.

Finally, I want to end off with what I started with. What does \$8.5 billion deliver for South Africans? This is what I hope it does: We need the repurposing of Eskom's power stations as Just Transition centres – centres for new regenerative community economies that are linked to a new decarbonised industrial strategy – that link nationally and internationally – but first serve the local. A new Eskom must be based upon renewable energy and not gas. A decentralised Eskom on the roof of every household – rich and poor – must be our goal. An electric public taxi system for mass transport that is clean and safe and coupled with functional rail must be an urgent step to make transport cleaner and safer for the majority. We must not only build electric vehicles for the middle classes and export. Finally, we cannot move towards a new decarbonised industrial system that is focused on saving Sasol, which has benefited from having been set up during apartheid and has managed to escape with huge tax windfalls. We need a decarbonised industrial strategy that is not monopolised by Sasol or any other industry.

On this note, I do wish you all a pleasant break with family and may we unite stronger on the "frontline" in order to make 2022 a year of meaningful change. The frontline that Prime Minister Mottley from Barbados reminded us of. We do not want to mourn the loss of life because of the greed of a few.

Aluta Continua – 2022 





COP 26 - A Tragicomedy?

by Rico Euripidou

At the conclusion of the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of Parties (CoP 26), it is useful (once again) to reflect on the effectiveness of the framework established by the 1992 UN Convention on Climate Change, nearly three decades ago.

Most notably, the largest delegation of stakeholders at the Glasgow conference was the fossil fuel lobbyists, comprising over 500 registered delegates (numbering more than the combined delegates from the small island states most vulnerable to the climate crisis), who represent the industry sector that is by and large responsible for the climate crisis we find ourselves in. The climate crisis is, in fact, a health crisis that is damaging human health today and will have an even greater impact in future, posing the biggest global health threat this century, according to leading public health scientists. Of particular concern to groundWork is that the most vulnerable to the climate crisis are those least responsible for causing it in the first place.

The promise of this particular CoP was that participants were expected to bring renewed political commitment and optimism since the signing of the Paris climate agreement to limit global warming to 1.5°C against pre-industrial levels. The Climate Action Tracker reality check instead signals that the climate commitments put us on track for 2.4°C trajectory – for Southern Africa this is closer to 5°C.

Present day emissions and commitments are way above what is required to avert catastrophic climate change. This makes climate adaptation even more relevant for our region, but without adequate finance it is very difficult to meaningfully prepare for. The global South demanded that the global North should provide compensation for the damage already done from burning fossil fuels for over 200 years. The global North instead wants the global South to agree to abandon coal. In the end, neither group relented, leaving us with no firm near-term commitments to adequate financing nor a time-bound, clearly defined commitment to abandon coal. Rich countries also did not want to make commitments to phasing out their primary energy source: oil and gas!

Significantly, however, this was the first time in history that the parties formally acknowledged that we need to phase out fossil fuels. As some commentators observed, “The biggest enemy in the climate crisis has finally been named by politicians”!

During the negotiations, the global health community hosted a series of events to try and ensure that governments and their negotiators place health and equity at the centre of the climate negotiations. In partnership with the World Health Organisation, a health pavilion presented a visible footprint in the climate space. This growing mobilisation by health professionals to put health at the centre of the negotiations has been remarkable, but it still lacks the clout to work out the mechanics of including health cost savings in the climate agenda. The increased health burden caused by climate change impacts on the poor in two ways: at the point of extraction (like Niger Delta) and production (like south Durban) and when the poor are ill because of illnesses as result of extreme weather.

Before we get too far ahead of ourselves, we must reflect on the most obvious and most objective measure to determine how effective or ineffective the climate negotiations have been at addressing carbon emissions. The most objective measure of them all is to look at the concentrations of atmospheric CO₂ correlated with global average temperatures. Since 1992, the steady rise of CO₂ is measured by remote site sensors placed around the world and away from industrial hotspots, in Hawaii for example. The steady year-on-year rising ladder for these indicators is quite clear and indisputable. Looking at the historical record over the past 200 000 years – the concentrations of GHGs in the atmosphere has never been greater.

Similarly, over the past 15 or so years scientists have recorded year-on-year average global hotter temperatures (bar a few exceptions), along with unprecedented global disasters such as floods, droughts, wildfires, more intense hurricanes and the like, with countless tragic human costs along the way – and yet the political will to address the root causes has been lacking. This is evidenced by even more fossil



fuel use and year-on-year increases in CO₂ emission, bar the exceptions of sporadic economic slowdowns (2000/2001, 2008/2009, 2020).

Even the most recent mass migrations with massive geo-political implications from the Middle East to the EU and from the Americas to the USA have failed to garner the political will to tackle the corporations driving climate change.

This brings us to the most recent IPCC report, which essentially says we have to halve current emissions to 2010 levels by 2030, and halve emissions again every 10 years to 2050 to have even a slim chance of keeping global warming under 1.5°C. We are currently overshooting this target by more than 20%.

The COVID-19 pandemic and associated economic slowdowns also did not slow the relentless advance of climate change. All the talk of a greener post COVID-19 recovery is not backed up by any firm objective measure. In fact, fossil fuel subsidies during the global lockdowns far exceeded public spending to ensure a quick and healthy energy transition that would lead to cleaner environments and healthier people. We got nowhere close to reduction targets.

Of particular concern is the fact that greenhouse gas concentrations in 2021 bounced back, and continued to rise, amid severe human-enhanced weather events that affected health, lives and livelihoods with severe fires, extreme weather and floods, most notably in China, Canada, Europe and California. In the *World Meteorological State of Climate Report 2021: Extreme events and major impacts*, a summary of selected climate-related disasters includes:

Concluding remarks

We cannot afford repeated disasters on the scale of COVID-19 from mounting environmental damage and climate change. Going back to “normal” is not good enough. Our public health, environmental, and climate crises present unprecedented opportunities to invest in a just and healthy recovery for this generation, and a sustainable future for generations to come. Wise and bold leadership is required to seize them. Even the International Energy Agency, the mouthpiece of dirty energy companies, has said we have to stop fossil fuels. 🌞



Indigenous people at CoP26 in Glasgow. Credit: thenews2



Thor: the struggle continues



by Musa Chamane

Thor Chemicals is being cleaned up but ex-workers' struggle continues

In the 80s and 90s, the Thor Chemicals plant situated in Cato Ridge 30 kilometres outside Durban committed a very costly environmental crime by poisoning workers, who subsequently died as a result of mercury poisoning. Thor Chemicals moved its mercury incinerator plant from the UK in the mid-70s. The company then began importing chemicals to the Cato Ridge facility. The plant had a licence from government to import toxic waste such as mercury into the country, to be processed at the site. This has been the biggest mercury deposit globally, but calls for clean-up were ignored by both the plant and government.

South Africa had weak environmental legislation when this plant arrived in the country in the 1970s. All seemed well until a couple of workers showed the signs of being unhealthy and, when they were hospitalised, it was found that mercury poisoning was the cause of their ill health. Urine tests were conducted on the workers and it was found that 32 out of 36 had very high levels of mercury in their bloodstream. The facility was adamant that they were not responsible for the poisoning and the mercury levels in their workers. The facility insisted that they were below World Health Organisation (WHO) standards, until the Davies Commission, which was pronounced by

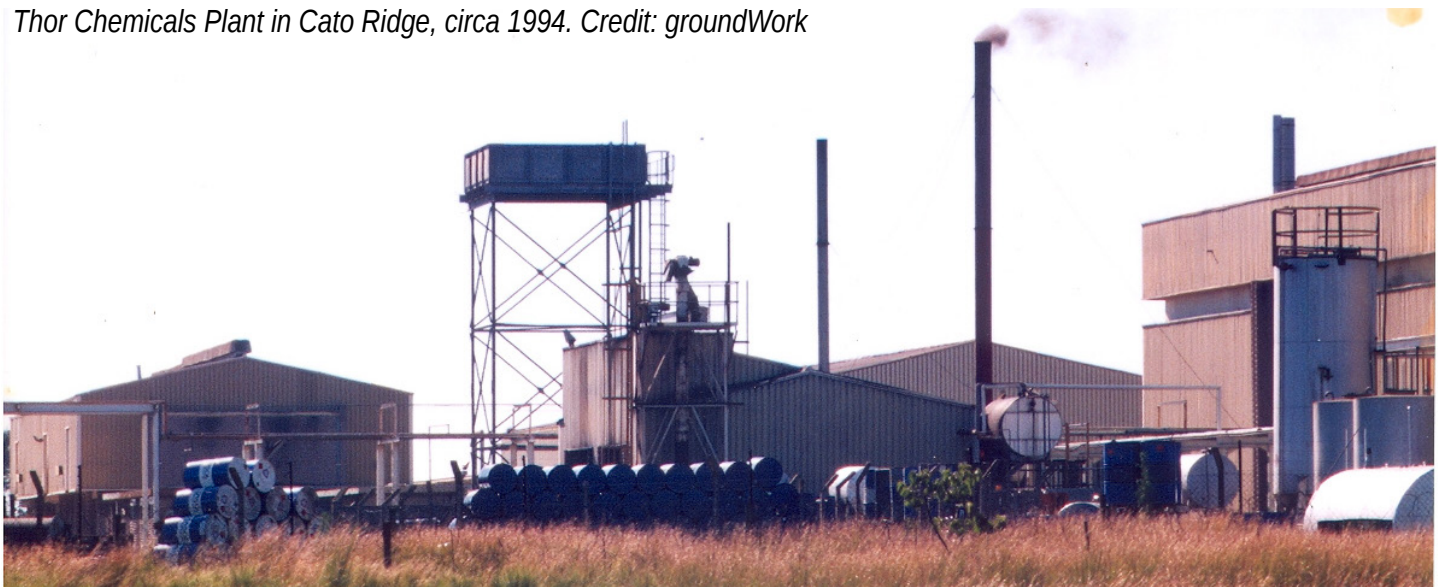
President Nelson Mandela just after 1994. The report was handed in in 1997. Amongst other things, the commission found that the worker's health was not taken into account while they were dealing with such dangerous chemicals. As a result, a number of workers died and some became paralysed due to chemical exposure.

The impacts of mercury on human health includes blurred vision, tremors, brain damage, coma and even death. Mercury is classified as a "neurotoxin", meaning it affects the nervous system, which can lead to brain malfunction. Even today, ex-workers and the families of the victims are still crying foul, and they often complain that the democratic government has not done the environment or the workers justice when it comes to this facility.

The last community meeting was convened by groundWork at Cato Ridge Hotel in 2019. The ex-workers, community people and leaders were part of the meeting. The meeting agreed that they would go to the 2019 African Ministerial Committee on Environment meeting (AMCEN), held in Durban, which they did. They spoke with the South African Minister of Environment about Thor.

Fast-forward a few months and the minister visited the site and confirmed that the clean-up would take place. This was not the first Minister of Environment to visit the site and make promises and we thought to

Thor Chemicals Plant in Cato Ridge, circa 1994. Credit: groundWork



ourselves, it's all just a political game. As civil society and communities, we kept pushing and we have even requested to be heard in parliament about this issue.

groundWork, together with TV programme *Carte Blanche*, processed samples through Talbot Laboratories taken from the Mngcweni River that stretches two kilometres from Thor Chemical and is the tributary to the Duzi River leading to Inanda Dam. High levels of mercury were found in ex-workers' hair in 2020, as well as on the river bed. Communities shared with us that their livestock were at some point not allowed to drink from the river since it was poisoned, and others even shared with us that they had lost their livestock due to poisoning. The community wanted the plant to relocate and make sure that clean-up and remediation occurs. Government has been pushed and advised by groundWork for decades to make sure that the clean-up does take place.

The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment must be commended for making sure that the clean-up is being conducted. The department started the clean-up in April 2021, hopefully to be completed by June 2022. They have reportedly

shipped half of the mercury waste to Switzerland for treatment. This is a huge victory for the community of Cato Ridge. The remediation will be the start of the long term remediation of the Thor site, and we hope that this will eventually result in Thor Chemicals' legacy waste not contaminating the local people's environment any longer.

Whether the plight of uncompensated ex-workers will be addressed is not yet known; the workers want justice for being poisoned as well as compensation. The Department of Labour has been approached in the past but attempts to resolve this were fruitless. The Environmental portfolio committee in the national assembly has invited groundWork, together with Thor communities, to present the case on the 11th of December 2021, but the Department of Labour portfolio committee shows no interest in hearing about the plight of the workers. We, however, hope that the portfolio committee on labour will invite ex-workers to present their case because this is a huge injustice which needs redressing.

In a meeting that took place on Wednesday the 10th of November 2021 in Cato Ridge, about 130 people attended, including the ex-workers and children of ex-workers representing their parents who are now deceased due to Thor Chemicals poisoning. The stories that were shared caused me to shed a few tears. Listening to those stories, it became clear that the workers and their families were still in pain and yearning for justice, which to date is yet to prevail. They requested that we escalate the workers' struggle and invite both labour and environmental affairs departments to come and explain to the community what should happen to resolve their plight.

The community leaders in the area made a commitment that they will resolve the issue of the workers with the support of groundWork. The meeting also agreed that Environmental Affairs has to come to the ground and explain to them how the clean-up is going and what is planned for the contaminated site. The workers feel that they are being undermined because money from headquarters of Thor has been made available and allocated for the clean-up but not for workers' compensation. They vowed that they will work at the issue of compensation until it is resolved. Aluta Continua. 🌞



1994: Funeral of Thor Workers. Credit: groundWork





From the markets of Warwick and beyond



by Asiphile Khanyile

The Markets of Warwick are a space where Waste Management, Urban Informality and Climate Change are intertwined. The project partners Asiye eTafuleni (AeT), groundWork (gW) and the Urban Futures Centre (UFC) from the Durban University of Technology (DUT), along with our informal workers (informal traders, street vendors and waste pickers), made it possible to complete Year One of the Warwick Zero-Waste (WZW) Project.



Deep dive into the bin. Courtesy of the WZW Project Team, 2021. Credit: groundWork

Through the participatory research activities led by UFC in collaboration with AeT and gW, the project partners and informal traders were trained by UFC on various methods to use. Then, from the 7th of April 2021 until the end of May 2021, the researchers from AeT, UFC – and myself included – conducted a series of qualitative research activities such as **photo voice** with informal traders, job shadowing with waste pickers and field visits to the market. As a result of this, the qualitative research became our base to start linking waste management and climate change.

Strengthening partnerships

Partnerships in this project come in various forms from activists, non-governmental organizations, academics, civil society and government, especially through the

African Waste Management Learning Hub. The latter is a virtual space where experiences, knowledge and tools are shared. Through the Learning Hub, we managed to hold a total of six sessions. We engaged both local and international partners such as the Green Youth African Organisation (GAYO), Global Alliance of Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA), Nipe Faigo (Tanzania), South African Waste Pickers Association (SAWPA) and African Reclaimers Organisation (ARO), and Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising (WEIGO), to name a few. Finally, we also hosted our first ever Advisory Group (AG) meeting on the 3rd of September 2021, where we introduced our project to key stakeholders. Both informal traders and waste pickers/reclaimers organisations were also present.

We experienced the jumping in and out of the COVID-19 waves which temporarily stopped the fieldwork-based activities. Despite this, the project team came up with creative ways to manoeuvre around the “new normal”. For instance, we had to focus on desktop research on key waste streams found in the market, while I collaborated with UFC and AeT to publish a GAIA-Africa opinion piece that further introduces our project*.

In addition, on the 18th and 19th of November 2021, we co-hosted an exciting webinar titled Learning with Waste Pickers/Reclaimers, with the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), the University of the Witwatersrand, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). The purpose of the webinar was to showcase the exciting and insightful presentations from ARO and SAWPA members where they are actively involved in separation at source projects, and we managed to contribute towards capacity building through online power point and zoom training for the speakers.

* GAIA Africa Newsletter #Issue 6 (constantcontact.com)



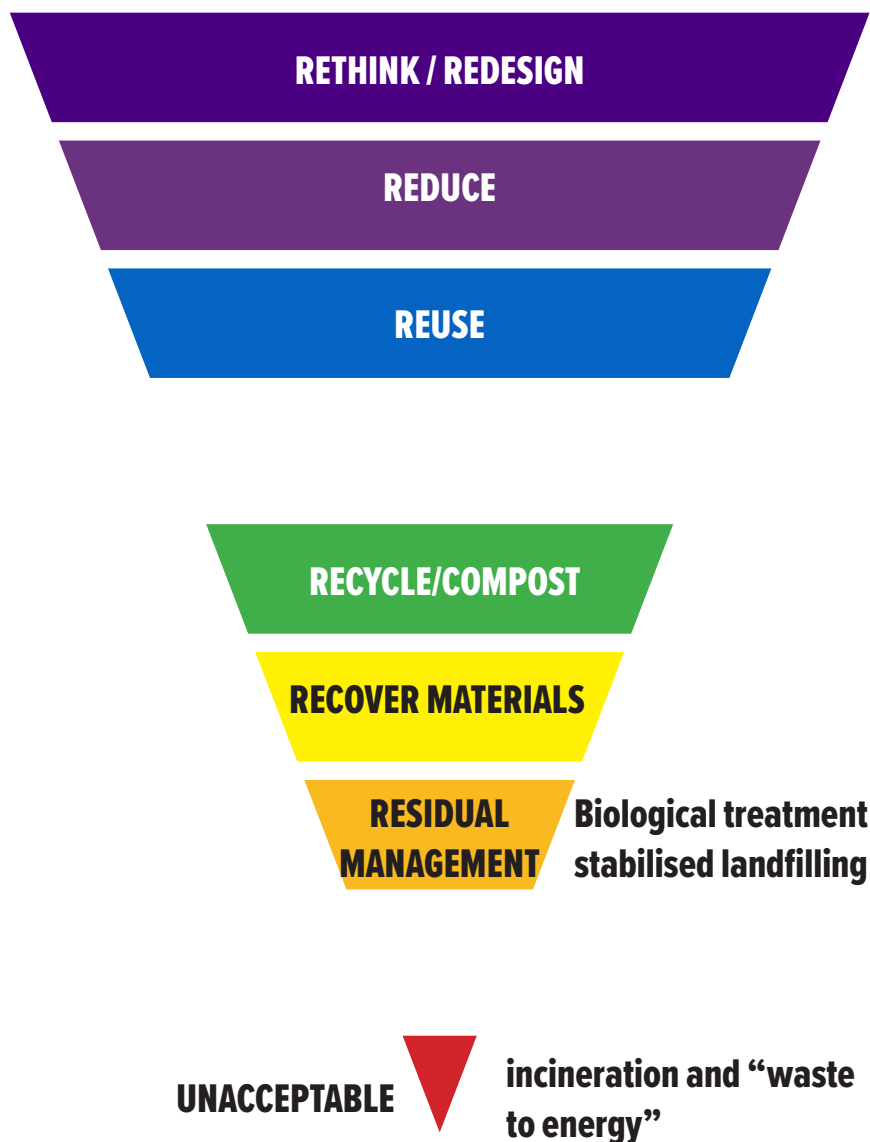
Back to the field

From the 22nd of September to the 6th of October 2021 the team – led by AeT, UFC, informal traders and vendors – assessed the volumes and types of waste streams. The team completed 116 surveys, which showed that 80% of waste is organic (fresh fruit and vegetable), which is a common feature in the African continent. Later, the gW Waste Campaign team of Musa Chamane, Carissa Marncé, Niven Reddy and myself visited the Western Cape Province, where we met the Cape Agulhas Municipality and the Zero-Waste Association of South Africa (ZWASA) in Bredasdorp. What inspired me was the fact that the Cape Agulhas Municipality aims to be the first zero waste town in South Africa. Through this opportunity I was able to introduce our WZW Project and our path to zero-waste. I felt a deeper connection as I realised that we share common interests towards zero-waste.

In order for us to have an in-depth understanding of the volumes and the types of waste streams we needed expert assistance from waste pickers themselves. Hence, on the 3rd of November 2021, we were visited by SAWPA members (Simon Mbata, Nonhlanhla Mhlophe and Xolisile Buthelezi), who came and demonstrated to the team what a granular audit looks like in terms of measuring, sorting and categorisation. From this engagement, Nonhlanhla Mhlophe agreed to be the project's team supervisor from the 10th until the 20th of November 2021.

As the project completes its first year, I can see that the path to zero-waste is unique but there is a shared goal of climate change mitigation and so far I say, let's go beyond the Markets of Warwick. 🌞

THE ZERO WASTE HIERARCHY



EJS Tracer Study: Sharpening thinking & building movements

by Tsepang Molefe

The groundWork Environmental Justice School (EJS) is an important pillar for strengthening movements in how they confront the struggles within their communities. It sharpens one's thinking, gives detailed historical background on the current setting, reinforces activism and offers support to communities through empowering and producing well-informed cadres within community organisations and movements.

groundWork recognises the importance of progressive resistance and advancing the struggle within the frontlines of environmental justice. The tracer study looks into assessing the value EJS contributes to individuals in the environmental justice space, what is learnt at the school and how it is being currently applied in the roles they play in society. The study will also serve as a reference in the development and continued shaping of the groundWork Environmental Justice School curriculum.

The first EJS was back in 2014. There have been five schools so far: in 2014, 2015, 2016, 2018 and 2019. Unfortunately, the COVID pandemic caused the 2020 school to be abandoned until it can be safely run. Some of the EJS graduates are now in important roles and positions in their communities and beyond. They continue to add value and are able to organise in their own communities on issues that affect their communities.



Promise Mabilo – Class of 2016 – and Vusi Mabaso – Class of 2019

Mabilo and Mabaso are coordinator and chairperson of Vukani Environmental Movement (VEM) respectively, a community based environmental organisation in Witbank, Mpumalanga. VEM is one of the complainants in the Deadly Air Case and is also a complainant in the #CancelCoal case recently filed against NERSA and the Department of Minerals and Energy. Both Mabilo and Mabaso are actively in the frontlines of environmental justice in their community in the Mpumalanga Highveld, where air pollution and coal mining is rife.

Madithlare Koena – Class of 2019

Madi is currently the Western Cape coordinator of the South African Waste Pickers Association (SAWPA). She was also part of the waste team group that visited Sweden in 2019. She currently leads the Qalakutsha Recycling Cooperation, which deals with sourcing waste for recycling.

The study also surfaced the idea of a more organised alumni group. While the EJS facilitates networking links between different environmental justice groups around the country, it also sees the need for a more sustainable form of maintaining relations between comrades and movements. This is crucial for the sharing of information, support, and solidarity with grassroots organisations.



The process of actually conducting the study brought to the fore the importance of an alumni association. A strong alumni association would play a crucial role in fostering an identity as an EJ activist and EJS graduate and work to build the EJ movement. EJS as it is conceived of presently fulfils the broad aim to foster a cadre of activists linked to grass root environmental justice organisations and movements to act as change agents and activist leaders in their communities.

The study has also spotlighted the need for additional relevant and accessible resources. They should be part of the resource pack participants receive. They would serve both to consolidate the knowledge developed and be accessible in style and language for the communities the activists engage with. groundWork has anticipated this need and has begun a concerted resource development

programme with accessible print materials to be included in the resource pack of student in the future.

In conclusion, the EJS has produced and strengthened activists and movements alike, that are more strategic and are able to apply knowledge and make informed decisions about challenges within the environmental justice space and how they confront these challenges. 🌀

This piece of writing is dedicated to Moipone Kwana, Vuyo Papa and Monki Msimanga, Environmental Justice School alumni who have since passed on. We remember them and the contribution they made in their communities.



Vusi Mabaso, an Environmental Justice School alumnus, addressing the protesters at the Sasol 2021 AGM.

Credit: Chris Louw



Third Annual Africa Coal Conference

by Lorraine Chiponda and Nerissa Anku

The Africa Coal Network convened their Third Annual gathering at the end of September 2021. Twenty-six countries were represented during the gathering, with an average of 140 connections. About nine countries got together in their countries to provide support needed for local activists to attend the conference, taking the number of participants attending the conference to about 240 people. Activists, experts and partners who are in the frontline of the climate and energy justice struggle spent three days sharing their coal and energy struggles, stories of resistance and victories, and took time to understand the struggles that lie ahead in Africa's struggle with coal and fossil fuels. Dynamic conversations were facilitated by experts working in Africa and abroad who covered topics such as coal and climate diplomacy, health and climate, just transition, ecofeminism and dismantling patriarchy and finance. To strengthen South-to-South solidarity, colleagues from Asia shared how we can strengthen collective impact.

The theme of this conference was **In memory of Mama Fikile Ntshangase, murdered for her resistance on coal.** Mama Fikile Ntshangase was vice-chair of the Mfolozi Community Environmental Justice Organization (MCEJO), which challenged a planned expansion of the Tendele Coal Mine and publicly condemned the impacts of the coal mine

on local health, water, livelihoods, land, housing and climate. The objective of the conference was to review and build a common regional agenda for coal phase-out in Africa and chart a plan for supporting coal resistance struggles.

The gathering saw an uplifting of African voices and elaboration of demands by existing struggles. Activists from Tete, Mozambique, highlighted their struggles with coal and the transition of energy finance to gas in the context of ever increasing human rights issues. Frontline defenders fighting coal in Lamu and Kitui in Kenya shared their struggles and victories We heard

about coal mining struggles in Tete, Mozambique, to resistance to coal-fired power station proposals in Lamu, Kenya and the resistance to a Chinese-financed development in Sengwa, Zimbabwe to Ekumfi, Ghana. Women's voices from across Africa made it clear that a just transition must be one that is rooted in democracy and gender justice.

Remarkably, Activists received news of China's pledge to stop funding "new coal-fired power

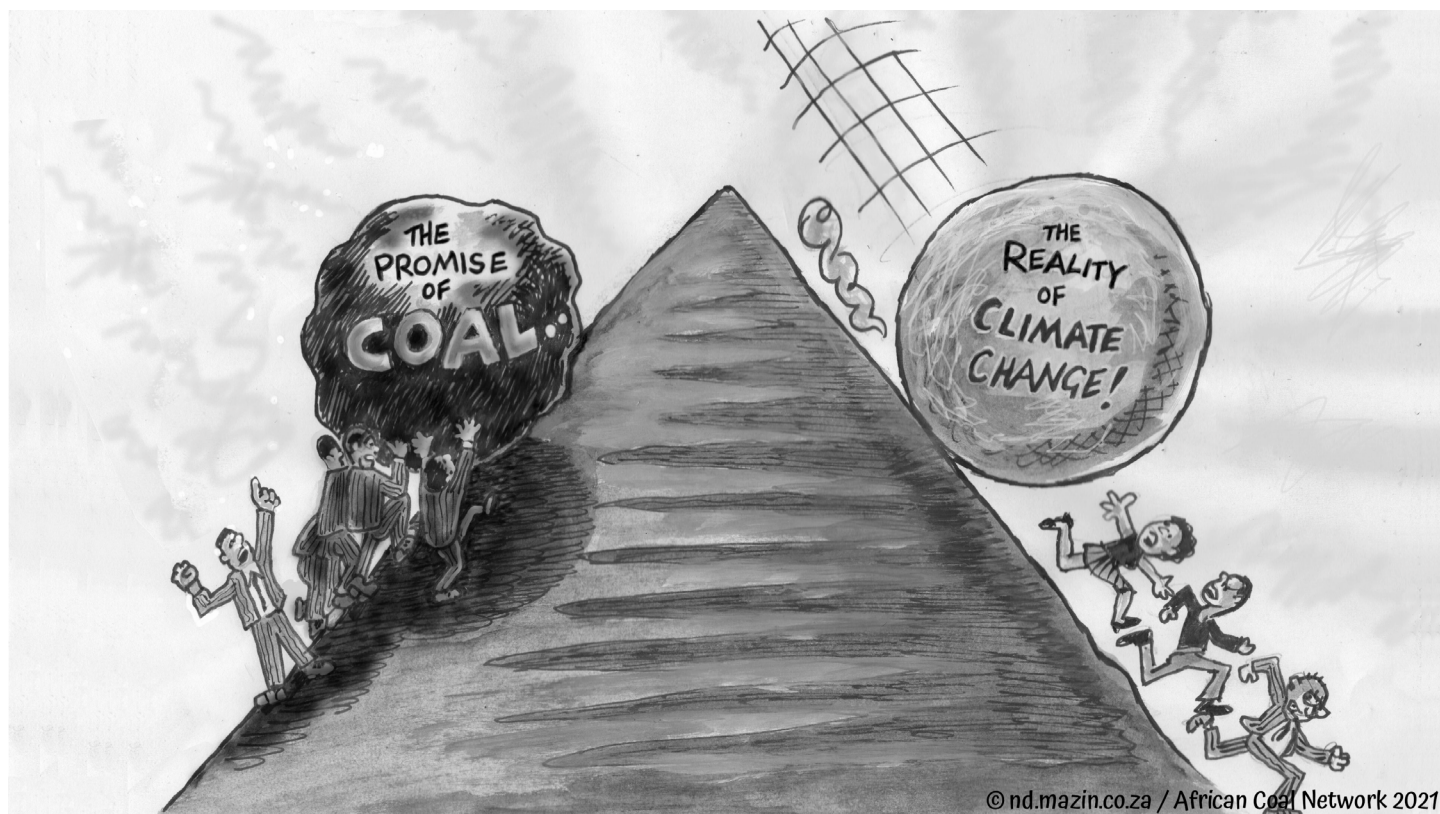
projects abroad"* during the conference. The meeting welcomed President Xi Jinping's statement as a significant victory for the thousands of community

* https://estatemnts.unmeetings.org/estatemnts/10.0010/20210921/AT2JoAvm71nq/KaLk3d9ECB53_en.pdf



activists in Lamu, Kenya; Sengwa and Hwange, Zimbabwe; Ekumfi, Ghana; Senegal; San Pedro, Ivory Coast; Makhado, South Africa and the many other sites across the Global South who have challenged their governments and China by saying no to coal. The gathering celebrated the victory by issuing a press release to challenge China and President Xi Jinping to end coal finance in Africa from all Chinese institutions – private, state, parastatal, finance, insurance, importers and proxies. Delegates also called on China to be a responsible partner in supporting a Just Energy Transition to Community-led Renewable grids delivered via an open democracy in Africa.

The Africa Coal Network issued a second press release* and a short video** capturing graphical documentation of the 3rd Annual Africa Coal Conference proceedings. The second communiqué called on President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa to act with urgency and sincerity in tracking down and bringing to justice those implicated in the murder of MaFikile Ntshangase. The captivating conference video was produced by “Azania Mania Art Kolektiv Studio” and has been translated into French and Portuguese and posted online for public viewing. 🌍

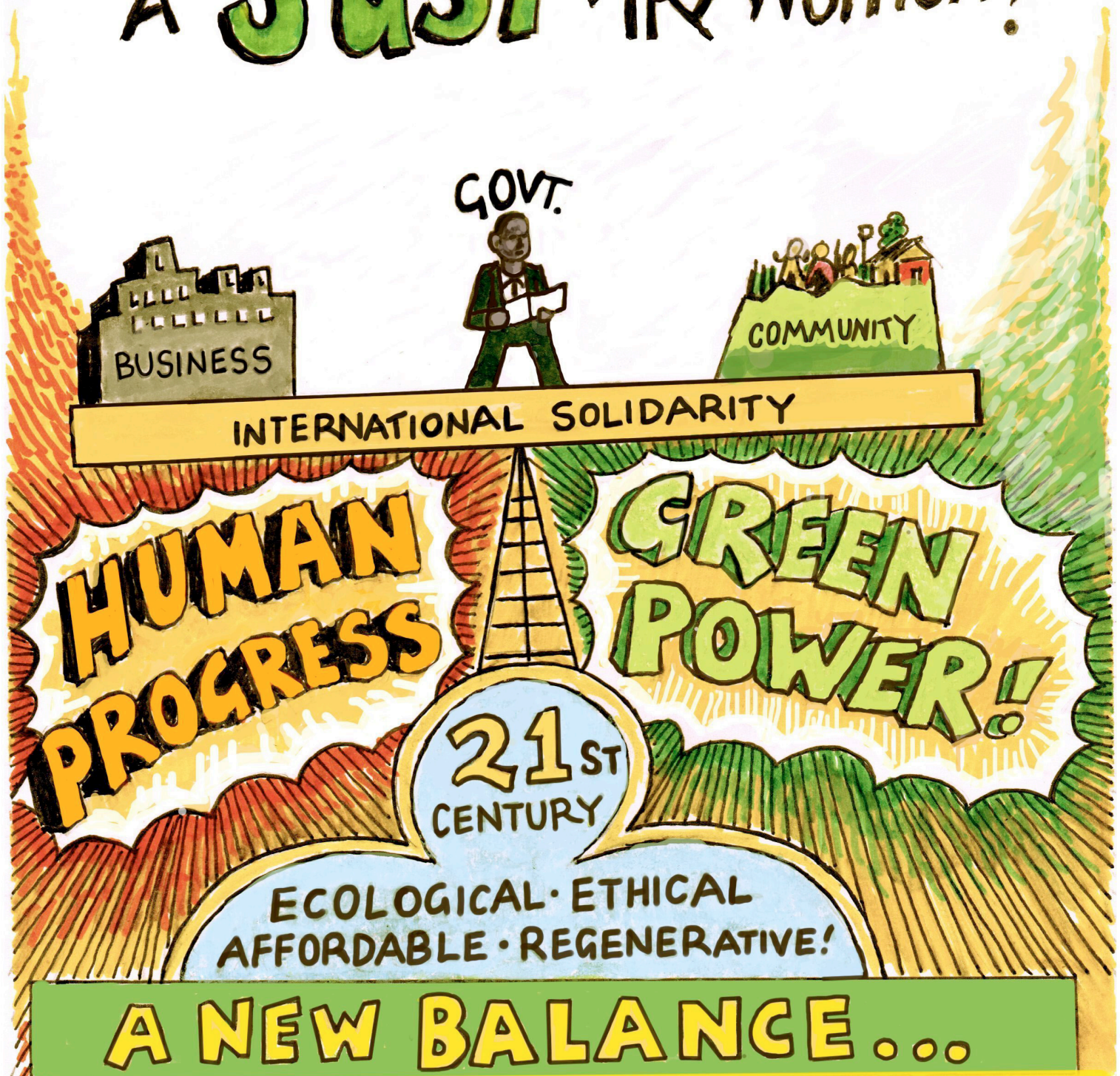


* <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1thXu5qzSDNdoaOIak735pywBW66enkB3OZ2CdSaRcnA/edit?pli=1>

** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INZRXgTfUWE>



NOT **JUST** A TRANSITION - A **JUST** TRANSITION!



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Justice for the brutal murder of Mama Fikile Ntshangase



by Robby Mokgalaka

Environmental activists are not enjoying protection from the law enforcement. On the 20th of October 2021, community formations and civil society organisations around the country flocked down to Somkhele to demand justice for the brutal murder of Mam Fikile Ntshangase. They were not only going to demand justice for Mam Ntshangase, but also call upon the KZN Police Commissioner to protect environmental activists, as things are brewing in Newcastle, where people fear that the activists might get killed as they receive threats for opposing Ikwezi coal mine.

It is more than a year since Mama Fikile Ntshangase was gunned down in October last year in her own home by four men, in front of her thirteen-year-old nephew. She was killed for opposing the expansion plan of the Somkhele coal mine, owned by Petmin (Pty) Ltd. Until this day, no one has been arrested for the brutal murder and the police have no suspect.

Mam Fikile Ntshangase was the deputy chairperson of the Mfolozi Community Environmental Justice Organisation (MCEJO), a community-based organisation representing the communities of Somkhele and Fuleni on their environmental rights violated by the coal mining development. She was one of the strongest opponents, who stood firmly against the coal mine expansion on the basis that the community have been living on the land for many years and have enjoyed the benefits of feeding off their land undisturbed. A few days before she died, she called her colleagues and told them that she was seeing signs that there were people who were after her blood. She told them that she was scared.

A similar incident happened in March 2016 when Sikhosiphi 'Bazooka' Radebe (51) was gunned down outside his home in the Lurholweni township in Bizana, Eastern Cape, in front of his teenage son. The attack was allegedly committed by two men dressed as officers of the South African Police Service (SAPS). Bazooka was the chairperson of Amadiba Crisis Committee, a community-based organisation

campaigning against the proposed titanium mine by the Australian company MRC in the area. No one has been arrested to date.

In March 2021, Newcastle community people were protesting peacefully against the Ikwezi coal mine for failure to address the coal impacts affecting the community. Police officers shot at the peaceful protesters, beating them up, arresting them and holding them behind bars for three nights. In the same months, the victims opened a case against the police officers for assault with grievous bodily harm through application of excessive force and still no police officers have been held accountable.

In 2018, a collaborative research project (*We Know Our Lives are in Danger*), carried out by groundWork, Earthjustice, Centre for Environmental Justice (CER) and Human Rights Watch (HRW), was conducted in the mining-affected communities of South Africa to establish the threats and intimidations directed at social justice activists. The research discovered that activists are indeed receiving death threats and intimidation for standing up against mining corporates. The research also established that the activists were aware that they had been targeted and remained resolute that they would die protecting what they feel is worth their lives.

In mid-November this year, the Ingonyama Trust Board (ITB) officials decided to respond to the Newcastle community's cry for help against Ikwezi coal mine violating their rights. It remains to be seen whether the ITB will indeed take action against the mine to protect the rights of the community. So far, ITB has never been known to effectively resolve conflicts between the mines and communities in the KZN province.

The government of South Africa is also failing to protect the poor who are standing up against the rich. This means poor people have fewer rights under the same constitution. Being poor in South Africa seems to be a curse that reduces people to being less than human beings to the rich, and voiceless and invisible to the government. 🌱





Introductions



Azeeza Rangunwala, The Scientist



Firstly, I am an intersectional feminist (from the Free State) and that is the lens I apply to my life, which includes the work I do. My previous role, as a public servant, was as an Assistant Director, Research, Policy and Capacity Building at the Gauteng Department

of Health. I mainly focused on policy formulation, research into streamlining the public health sector into the circular economy and managing projects of a similar nature. I am looking forward to being on the other side of the fence: still serving the public, but through groundWork – a fertile change platform.

I have adopted the motto “Drive it like you stole it”, meaning that you should take every opportunity that presents itself and make the most out of it. I have pursued knowledge and skills to avoid figuratively crashing and have also remained fluid in linking what I learnt with the goal of making a difference. I am currently an Atlantic Fellow for Health Equity, based at Tekano in South Africa, which has been an enriching experience as the goal is to develop leaders for social change. I have a Masters in Medical Science and more recently received a postgraduate diploma in Public Management. Having previously worked with groundWork since 2016, I am excited to be working for the organisation as the Africa Regional Coordinator for Global Green and Healthy Hospitals with HealthCare without Harm.

It has been a privilege to apply what I have learnt in various sectors, including the National Institute for Communicable Diseases and the University of Pretoria. Synergy has been an important aspect of my career trajectory as I believe that there are various factors that determine how impactful your work is. I love nature, all forms of art and autumn. I am aware of my positionality, lived experience and the environment I live in. Health is one of my top five core values and most health knowledge is rooted in science. I regard myself as a proper millennial who strongly believes in social justice too – hence the title, *The Scientist*. 🌟

Mafoko Phomane



My name is Mafoko Phomane and I hail from the beautiful Mountain Kingdom of Lesotho. I have been living and working in South Africa for eight years. I am passionate about public health and creating health solutions for communities in remote areas.

I hold a Master’s in Public Health (MPH), specialising in Rural Health from Wits University. I also hold a psychology degree from UCT. I have previously worked for the Ministry of Health in Lesotho, in the field of District Health Management, HIV Prevention, HIV Counselling & Testing, HIV Treatment and Psycho-social Support. My passion for working within the Primary Health Care system was cultivated and nurtured while working with community health workers on the Know Your HIV Status campaign in Lesotho.

I then moved to Johannesburg, where I joined the Rural Health Advocacy Project (RHAP). I was involved in the Voice Project, focusing on developing health care workers as advocates for strengthening health systems. While at RHAP, I participated in advocating for mental health service provision at primary health care level in the Eastern Cape in OR Tambo District by promoting and creating awareness about the lack of implementation of the South African National Mental Health Policy and Strategic Framework. This was in partnership with the Rural Mental Health Campaign. I most recently worked as a Project Specialist for the Panagora Group in the field of Monitoring Evaluation, Research and Learning.

I am an Atlantic Fellow for Health Equity based at Tekano, a global leadership program where as fellows we endeavour to promote health equity by addressing structural and social determinants of health. Tackling issues of social justice and human rights has always been close to my heart and environmental justice is no different. I am excited to join groundWork and the Environmental Health Campaign! 🌟





Sasol's dirty tricks

by Avena Jacklin

Sasol's dirty tricks continue with no signs of climate change reform

On Friday the 19th of November, share activists and environmental groups including groundWork, Earth Life Africa, Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance (VEJA), Green Peace, 350.org, Justiça Ambiental (JA!), Just Share and the Centre for Environmental Rights (CER) joined the Sasol AGM and gathered outside the Sasol head office in Sandton to challenge the fossil fuel giant for inadequate climate change commitments, continued use of coal and heavy reliance on gas as a “transition” replacement feedstock.

Civil society organisations highlighted the flaws in Sasol's plans and asked shareholders not to endorse the company's climate change ambition, strategy and actions, as all signs point to Sasol's continued use of fossil fuels to transition from coal and its intention to dramatically increase its use of fossil gas (with methane emissions 84 times more potent than carbon dioxide). Petrochemical giant Sasol remains the world's second highest emitter of GHGs, after Eskom, and its pollution is a serious threat to human health. Sasol is among the 100 companies estimated to be responsible for 71% of global GHG emissions, and one of the 90 corporate entities responsible for two-thirds of global carbon emissions between 1850 and 2010. Fleetwood Grobler, Sasol's CEO, was however at pains to point out that Sasol is “not simply going

from one fossil fuel to another”, and was also of the view that is too early to speculate whether Sasol's transition plans could support concrete coal-phase out commitments beyond 2030, and by 2050.

The statements from the CEO and the board made it clear that Sasol will incorporate fossil gas in the preferred form of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) from Mozambique, all while failing to address concerns that LNG projects in Cabo Delgado have led to mass displacement of thousands of people. Sasol's involvement in Mozambique set the precedent for the gas grab in South Africa. Since Sasol's presence in the Inhambane Province, the electricity cost to people has increased and electricity access to people in the province remains lower than in the rest of the country. There is no benefit to communities and people have been negatively impacted by water shortages, soil pollution and the nightmare of losing their lives, dignity, land and livelihoods to the onslaught and violence brought on by gas-related insurgency. Southern African governments are left to pay the price of Sasol's legacy in Mozambique. The deployment of South African National Defence Force (SANDF) members to Mozambique during our post-Covid recovery came at a cost of R984 368 057 to South Africa.

Sasol and the state-owned Central Energy Fund (CEF) forged a partnership in September 2021 to



Protesters addressing Sasol's executives during the Sasol 2021 AGM in November. Credit groundWork



accelerate the development of gas resources in South Africa. Sasol executive Priscilla Mabelane's false claims of gas being a critical component of the country's just energy transition journey, ensuring security of supply and domestic job creation, are myths worth busting. Gas is expensive, hazardous, resource heavy, destructive to people and ecosystems and a climate change accelerator. Sasol's plans do not fit into the goal of a just transition to a low carbon economy and are not needed. There are better pathways to achieve a just transition. With the prioritisation of community driven and owned renewable energy systems, the energy trilemma of addressing energy sustainability, energy security and energy equality can be met, ensuring that we are well on our way to a fair and equitable just transition for all. 🌞

Busting Sasol's myths about gas

Sasol's Myth: Gas is cheaper and ensures security of electricity supply

The Truth: Gas is expensive and it is not needed

All our energy requirements can be met with a fast build out of renewables, connected to the existing grid infrastructure, while building storage capacity and more grid infrastructure, according to Meridian Economics' final report *Accelerating renewable energy industrialisation in South Africa, 2020*. This is not only the least cost pathway, but a cleaner, safer pathway that can create more and better jobs. What is glaringly lacking is the political commitment to renewable energy in South Africa. Infinite resources like the sun's radiation, wind and wave action are sustainable. South Africa averages more than 2 500 hours of sunshine per year with average solar radiation levels of 4.5 to 6.5kW hours per square metre per day. The global solar radiation average is much higher than parts of the USA and Europe, making South Africa one of the most favourable countries for solar energy production in the world. The feedstock resource for Sasol's gas and coal-based energy generation is finite and, worst of all, dependent on extremely high quantities of clean water throughout its life-cycle from extraction to production to combustion. This strain on water resources intensifies vulnerabilities such as displacement of communities and works against water conservation and ecosystem strategies required to build climate resilience.

Sasol's Myth: Gas ensures domestic job creation **The Truth: Renewables generate more and better jobs**

The renewable energy sector with local content creates not just more jobs, but decent jobs. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) in a recent brief *Green jobs and renewable energy: low carbon, high employment* stated that renewable energy has a *demonstrated job creation effect*. And that energy created through solar photovoltaic cells, for example, have a higher number of jobs created per unit of energy than energy produced through fossil fuels. The positive job creation effect of renewable energy is the result of longer and more diverse supply chains, higher labour intensity, and increased net profit margins, while providing the benefit of less hazardous working conditions.

Gas, on the other hand, requires a limited number of highly specialised jobs throughout its life-cycle, subject to market volatility.



Protesters addressing Sasol's executives during the Sasol 2021 AGM in November. Credit groundWork



Demand justice for EJ Martyrs

by Vuyiseka Dosi

The 22nd of October 2021 marked the one-year anniversary of the murder of environmental rights defender Fikile Ntshangase for opposing the expansion of Tendele Coal Mining in Somkhele, in the north of KwaZulu-Natal. The commemoration of Ntshangase's assassination took place in Mtubatuba, where various organisations (VEM, MCEJO, VEJA, SEJ, Amadiba and MACUA) gathered to demand justice and marched from Ntshangase's home to the Kwa-Msane police station to hand over a memorandum concerning their grievances. It's been a year since the killing, and no one has been arrested by the police or even named as a person of interest. Activists from the Vaal, Mpumalanga Highveld, Xolobeni, Newcastle and Mtubatuba joined the protest action.

In Cape Town, Fikile Ntshangase was remembered in a vigil on Saturday the 23rd of October 2021, which was held in Salt River. Comrades lit candles and viewed a short film about the Ntshangase. Professor Eugene Cairncross delivered the keynote address on human rights defenders and environmental justice.

Through support from Afrikagrupenar, Ntshangase was also remembered in a picket that took place in Sweden. 🌍



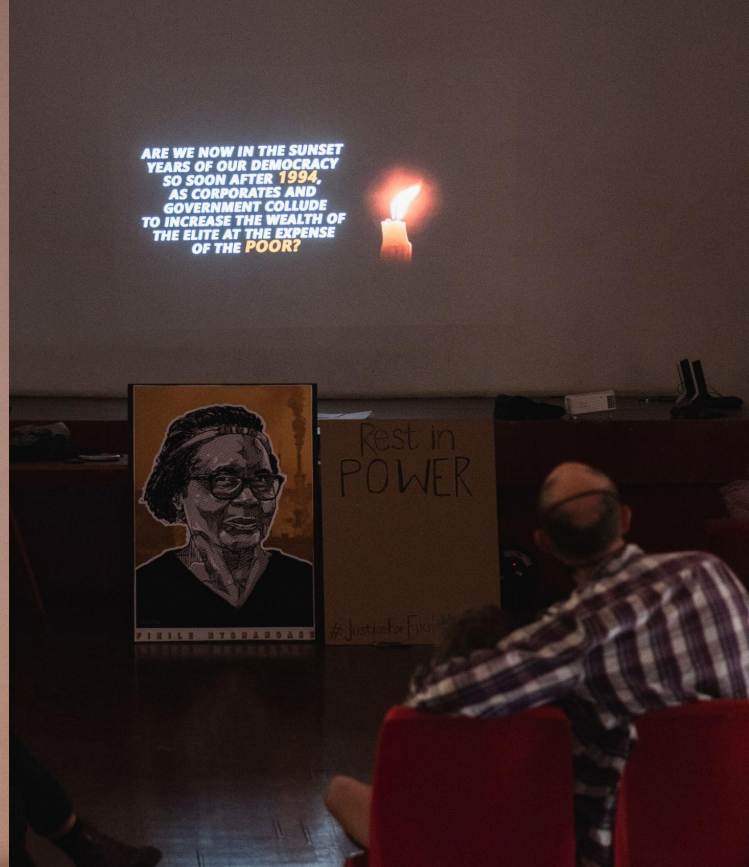
Figures released this year by Global Witness showed that 227 people were killed in 2020 while trying to protect forests, rivers and other ecosystems that their livelihoods depended upon. There's still a long way to go before environmental defenders can feel safe and protected in their own communities.





Environmental activists protesting outside KwaMsane police station during the first year commemoration of Fikile Ntshangase's passing. Photo credits: Lunga Bhengu

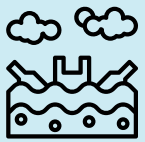




Left: Prof. Eugene Cairncross speaking at the Fikile Ntshangase vigil in Cape Town; Above: Viewing of the Fikile Ntshangase short documentary during the vigil; Below: Members of the Life After Coal campaign light candles during the Fikile Ntshangase vigil in Cape Town. Photo credits: AstroClutter



Plastic fuels climate crisis



by Niven Reddy and Carissa Marnce

As the world descended on Glasgow for CoP26, there was little expectation that any significant changes would be made to get us to where we need to be in reducing emissions and slowing climate change. For our work, in waste in particular, we have started to intersect a lot closer with the climate justice movement to ensure that we see the issue of plastic as a climate issue.

Across the world, 99% of all the plastic produced is derived from fossil fuels. While the production of coal, oil and gas is catastrophic for the environment and well-being of people, the fossil fuel industry is a masked villain responsible for the unmanageable plastic waste drowning our cities. While the current situation is a severe threat to the environment and well-being of people, the petrochemical and plastic industry are planning a massive expansion in production, and the problem is on track to get much worse.

When we look at plastic across its entire life-cycle, it is evident that the problem is much bigger than just the plastic dumped in our oceans and streets. The impacts of extraction, production and transportation associated with plastic illustrate how the true cost of plastic has been externalised to affect vulnerable people.

The plastic industry often promotes the narrative that individual consumers are responsible for the plastic crisis, which in turn creates the misconception that, if consumers act more responsibly, there will not be a problem. They use these tactics to let themselves off the hook so that they can continue producing plastic at unsustainable rates while taking little accountability for the problem. But this narrative is shifting!

Brand audits, a citizen science initiative that involves counting and documenting the brands found on plastic waste collected at a cleanup to help identify the companies responsible for plastic pollution, have consistently been conducted by members of the Break Free From Plastic movement. Together, they highlight the brands most responsible for the plastic crisis and demand that these corporations stop shifting the blame and play a role in fixing this problem. And the only

real solution to the problem is to stop producing so much plastic in the first place.

Reducing the amount of plastic produced is essential if we want to adopt a zero waste system. The climate benefits of zero waste are not only apparent in first world countries but here in Africa too. Communities are separating their waste at source, managing organics on-site and diverting up to 60% of their waste stream in the process. When mixed waste is sent to the landfill, it releases high amounts of methane. Therefore, it is essential to prioritise activities like composting and biodigestion, to prevent greenhouse gas emissions and effectively manage waste in the process. Furthermore, separating the wet waste from the dry waste also helps support easier recycling for waste pickers.

Waste pickers are the cornerstone of recycling in the African region and have an excellent knowledge of materials. Their integration into municipalities will ensure their involvement in policy discussions around Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) with the plastics industry, as they know what recyclable materials can be returned to the economy. It is essential that waste pickers organise themselves to ensure that their voices are heard at local, regional and national levels. To support waste picker organising across the region, GAIA Africa has developed a four-part video series on the benefits of waste picker organising. Watch it here*. 🌞

Mooi River, KwaZulu-Natal. Credit: groundWork



* https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1sWY1ttswVtkj3d23KiVZai2XNcWw_YmA?usp=sharing





Elana Greyling: Climate Warrior Award and Recognition



During the Ecologic Awards held on the 3rd of November 2021, Elana Greyling received a silver award for her work on Climate Change as well as a bronze as an Eco Warrior. Elana was nominated by Earth Life Africa (Johannesburg) for her work in the community with various groups in and around the Lephalale area in Limpopo province.

For Elana, the fight started with the plans for the construction of Medupi Power Station and its associated power lines. Working on her own for some time was not easy. After noticing her won appeals, articles and work in the community, Bobby Peek contacted her for some information on Medupi. Shortly after that, things started to happen: the fight against Eskom and Medupi started in earnest.

Later, Elana started working with Earthlife Africa as a consultant. She worked with various women's groups, such as Bopanang Bangalong, Matjoba Young Women's Organisation and started groups such as Phuduhudu, Women of Change, Ithuteng, Itireleng, and Girls'Night Out.

"I love working with people. We have so much to teach each other. There are such a lot of skills that can help us to survive sustainably. We can share so much knowledge. We just have to make the effort!" she says.

We congratulate Elana on her awards and recognition for her outstanding work. This will surely serve as motivation for her and the communities she works with. Mbokodo! 🌞