

ENVIRONMENT YOUTH ACTIVISM - NEWSLETTER

MPUMALANGA MONITORS

ACTIVISM VOLUME: 1

2014 JULY

Monitoring School Project in Mpumalanga Province is being run by two organizations, Mpumalanga Youth Against Climate change (MYACC) and South African Green Revolution Council (SAGRC) supported by Bench—Marks Foundation (BMF).

1. Poor service delivery Mpumalanga province “ A place where the sun rises” known by its beauty, farming, timber plantation, mining and tourism.
2. Water pollution and air pollution crisis Today mining in Mpumalanga, Highveld region is dominating and causing the impacts of global warming and the Highveld region is rated as the High priority area because of the air pollution, abandoned mines causing acid mine drainage (water pollution) and the mines and factories being the major cause of all the environment issues surrounding the areas we are working with. The monitoring school project of 2014 is being run in the Highveld region by two organizations namely Mpumalanga Youth Against Climate Change
3. mining and abandoned mines polluting our Water and land
4. sinking land caused by abandoned mines living residents with a question mark



5. School dropouts vs Alcohol
6. kidney failure and the water we drink
7. Illegal dumping –what went wrong and the pollution in our area. Who is to be blamed



www.communitymonitors.net
0724908673– Sboniso
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(MYACC) and South African Green Revolution Council (SAGRC) jointly supported by Bench-Marks Foundation. Members of the Mpumalanga Monitoring school are from different organizations from Emalahleni, Middelburg, Carolina, Wonderfontein, Ogies-Kriel, Secunda, Delmas and Hendrina. They all come from different organizations in their communities. The groups are dealing with issues surrounding their areas and write articles about them so that people can be aware of them and be informed about the effects that mining cause towards their health and environment at large, they work together and make differences in the land by fighting man made emissions that destroys our health.



Monitors in class during the writing skills session where they learn about improving their writing skills, report writing and on how to do information gathering before they can start writing about the burning issues in their communities.

WHAT ARE SERVICES WE PAY FOR IF WE EAT AND SMELL DIRT

POTHOLES AND SEWERAGE PROBLEMS IN OUR COMMUNITIES

Potholes a major problem in Carolina
By: Loraine Kakaza

Potholes are a major problem that we are experiencing as the residents of Silobela in Carolina. These days people must always wear seatbelts, always service their cars and slow down on speed to avoid accidents due to the problem of our roads which is the potholes. Most of the time the drivers ignore road signs, overtake other cars where there are potholes without thinking of the accidents they may cause because not only cars, taxis and buses drive there but even big trucks which is a huge risk for the motorists who drive safely without overtaking. The municipality and the government must start renovating the roads before more lives are lost on our roads.



The Mall that brought sickness
By: Susan Moraba

The at Vosman circle was built and opened without being finished properly. What is amazing is that the sewerage of the malls toilets is running through the wetland just near it. The wetland stream was used by many different people for different rituals and use however after the mall was built or operated they no longer use the stream because sewerage water is running through it and polluting the water. The water was used for drinking when there is no water, baptism of church members by the ZCC church and the rituals by traditional healers. Today the water is no longer used and children are using the stream to play because they used to swim in the water when it was clean. The councillor is doing nothing about the pollution and is staying a few kilometres away from the mall. The construction people are also not doing justice to the people.

The services we pay for
By: Merriam Sibanyoni

The services that we pay our municipality are not being served to the people as required to. Should we no longer pay our bills what will we gain as we are suffering from now. The bills that people pay are always going up every now and then but they is nothing being done about it. The pensioners, the needy and the disabled families are being forced to pay high bills because they know they have no say and some are not educated that's why they rob them the little they have. They write unnecessary services which are not needed and not known to them. The municipality must correct them before the communities become angry. Help us help you to keep our city serviced.



The blocked sewerages
By: Freedom Masina

In hlalanikahle Emalahleni the problem of sewerage is as high as the pollution. The Ext. 1 sewerage is blocked every week and the municipality is doing nothing about it. The dirty water in the sewerage is fill of toilet papers, plastics, plastic bottles, faeces and papers. When the dirt flows children always play on the water without supervision of adults and they don't know the dangers of getting sick. Our municipal must do something before the life's of our community gets in danger of contacting diseases such as sinuses, skin cancer, TB etc. the problem is all over Emalahleni location areas and this services are being paid for.



IS OUR WATER CLEAN ENOUGH TO DRINK OR TO USE AND THE AIR WE BREATHE IS IT BREATHABLE? WHO IS TO BE BLAMED!!!

Acid mine drainage really affects agriculture in Mpumalanga”

By: Susan Moraba

As part of agriculture, farming preserve land productivity, environmental quality and maintain desirable level of biological stability. It is a resources management strategy to achieve economic and sustainable agricultural production to meet diverse requirement of agricultural household (cropping and livestock). However the province is facing one big



problem in agriculture which is acid mine drainage (AMD) that is coming as a waste product from coal mines. Acid mine drainage affects communities and the agricultural sector. One may wonder and ask him/herself what is AMD and how It affects agriculture in Mpumalanga. AMD is a threat to people, plants and animals since it contains mostly soluble chemicals that removes soil nutrient which turn to affect our primary Produces. AMD in definition is a compilation of toxic waste in liquid form that get released as a waste product mostly from coal mine and other fossil fuel burning industries. In the Mpumalanga province it affects agriculture because there is too much coal mining activities in the Highveld part of the Province. Agriculture is affected in such a way that the more the soil is productive the more Coal mine removing it's fertility, that is why mining companies are removing high agricultural potential top soil in open cast mining. Once the coal has been washed with clean fresh Underground water AMD get released which turns to acidify the soil to the point that nothing grows and the rivers get more contaminated. Coal has been mined in Witbank and Middleburg for decades but **“what are the signs of AMD to Our domestic rivers, are they visible?**

Honestly the signs are visible immediately AMD is released. 78% of AMD's goes to our domestic rivers and cover them with a sulphuric crust and Red water.

This outflow AMD get released from abandoned coal mines ,when a coal mine is abandoned the Pumping ceases , water floods the mine and out flow the acid to nearby streams which turn to affects the growing of crops. with its long term impacts on biodiversity AMD is lowering the output of Agricultural products like maize and soya beans at the same time it Increases food prices to cause poverty and malnutrition. Government must act against illegal mining before its too late.



Sinkholes– burning hell

By: Thsepo Masilela

Coronation and Vosman has abandoned mines of which when its winter smoke comes out of them. People who live in Coronation during winter are in danger of getting burnt and in rainy seasons for sinking and its been many years living in danger. The municipal is building RDP houses but they are not moving the people instead Coronation is growing with more shacks being built and occupied. RDP houses are being sold to people with money and given to a few needy people. When are these abandoned mines going to be looked after because there are no fences and signs that indicate there is danger. Are we suppose to burn before we are moved to a proper land? Asked a resident.



Thabang Makua
WELCOME TO HELL

Where the life of a miner is very cheap and the mines owe apologies to all the people who died out of silicosis (PN tan) and all those whose lives have been taken away from their families in which the mines have collapsed on and all the people that the government and the police failed and sacrificed just like Marikana issue a man in a green blanket was standing up for what they believed in for a 12% increase.

A town which is covered by a thin black cloud that is even known by China where you will find Coal Mountains surrounding the entire town. Unrehabilitated mine stretching to the whole of South Africa with underground shafts that runs from various towns such as Middleburg, Denilton, Secunda, Clewer and most importantly the whole Highveld area and is still the highest polluted priority area in which the dams, the rivers and the tap waters are all exposed to acid mine sewerages which means that we no longer have access to clean water.

WE ARE BLIND FOLDED BY THE DUST & THICK AIR WHILST WE ARE SINKING AND BURNING AT THE SAME TIME. WE ARE IN THE MIDDLE OF EVERYTHING

Coal power plants
By: Collen Jolobe

The mines are harm to the environment and the people. The power stations situated close to the existing Kendal power station near Witbank, Mpumalanga would use an estimated 17 million tons of coal a year and generate 37 million tons of carbon dioxide in the same period, said by Melita Steele climate campaigner at Green Peace. These causes a lot of pollution, the community have to have a say on these particular matter that affect their lives. Without the environment we cannot survive. Kusile is a coal fired close to the existing Kendal power station in the Nkangala district of Mpumalanga Province.



The new coal power plants that are built in Mpumalanga: 2
By: Collen Jolobe

Witbank as it is known as a coal field, people are affected by the coal power plants and now what will happen if they start to build new coal power plants? The health of the people is affected from the pollution that comes from the coal power plants. We should start greening the environment, so that we can breathe clean air. The environment is a very essential part of our lives, so we need to take care of it. This shocking air pollution data makes the entire Witbank area an environment crime scene. Such high levels of air pollution create high risks for server health impacts like respiratory problems (including asthma), cancer, heart diseases, lung disease, stroke and even death. The threats posed by coal are real and we are living within them. Pollution is at its high rate at the moment this is caused by the coal power plants, we cannot live like this. People need to be educated about the environment. We need to plant trees so that we can conserve the environment.

'Vosman The Land of sinkholes'
By: Tshepo Vilane

What do you know about sinkholes that are smoking in flames mostly in winter in my community. Vosman one of the oldest township of Witbank and I also bet to you that it's where you find the oldest Sinkholes that are constantly cracking towards schools, homes and fields but in a concerning way People are desperately settle and build shacks. My community is aware but complaints about the dangers of sinkholes which leads community members not even engaging the local government to survey the area for safety before mushrooming with shacks. Since sinkholes are formed when water contains chemical dissolve underneath the ground and breaks till the ground becomes weak and fail to support the upper heavy top soil. At a slow process cracks are formed and the underneath heat reaction releases the chemical in form of smoke, In vosman the smoke with flames at a closer look are visible and the ground is constantly eroded, at outmost the blame for the land being degraded goes to abandoned coal mines that have circled my community, the sad part is that more mining rights are given and yearly the are new mines that are opening, when they are satisfied with their deadly activities they vacate without land rehabilitation or some considerations to the ground the only thing we are left with is pollution and sinkholes.



I think its high time we get hold of the Government and mines responsible for livings sinkholes unclosed. Working in solidarity we can force them to pay reparation not to us but to the unborn generation .

The only hope was for the people to know and practice their environmental rights but people who are ignorant and complacent toward pollution are laughing at environmental rights and end up living above sinkholes because of us not knowing our environmental rights we push the future of the unborn generation to a hole made by capitalist. existences of sinkholes in Vosman are a threat to children we know that they like to explore or Play anywhere and sinkholes and get tempted to see what is actually burning insides the sinkhole also cattle substance farmers are complaining of the threat that sinkholes are imposing to their livestock as victims of sinkholes.



Source: www.sabc.co.za

TODAY ITS GOVERNMENT vs THE COMMUNITY AND TECHNOLOGY...

Given Roestoff
Paying services for nothing

On the 24th of June 2014 a father at hlanikahle house no.213 complained about service delivery from the municipality. A sewerage drain has blocked for almost four weeks and it was not fixed. He went to the municipal offices to report and was promised that they will come and fix/ unblock it but they never showed up, attempts were made in calling the offices but a lady named Nomsa said 'they don't have transport to come and unblock the drain', we told her that it has been weeks now and she replied that "available transport is out fixing electricity faults. The worst part of it is that the drain is next to the house and its smelly, kids on the street play with the dirty water and the victim is afraid they will get sick and he is to blame since the sewerage is at his house.

Till today the drain hasn't been fixed. We pay services but we get no help on them, who should be blamed, do we still need to pay for services which are not rendered or should we start protesting for our services that we pay for? The sewerage water is running like rain water and toilet papers, plastics, faeces are also part of the dirty water. The residents who leave net to the sewerage complain of the bad smell and that they cant even open windows and doors because of the smell and cooking and eating is also not good with the smell. The municipal didn't even make efforts to come and have a look at what is happening.

We are sick and tired of this mess because we pay for this services but at the end of the day we don't get help, one community member said. This is really serious lets stand together and fix this problems without fighting.



Is our Justice / education system failing us or we are failing it?

By: Sicelo Mathunjwa

Today our youth even the young children from primary school no longer understand the standards of being a child, they violate their rights and disrespect their parents and teachers at school. They drink alcohol and smoke in front of their teachers and parents have no say about that, in fact some parents allow their kids to drink indoors and give them lots of pocket money to school.

A dropout from primary school when asked why he left school he said ' school is boring more especially when you have friends who are not at school, you feel like you are missing out and the things they do when you are not around its interesting and tempting. When they give us homework its like they are punishing us and another thing is that people get employment without matric so why cant I '. Peerpressure is playing a big role in our life's and we better watch out.

When it comes to June 16, they wear school uniforms when they know they are going to drink. Where is our future generation going? Many scholars are drop-outs at primary level when some at high school level, all they do is busk in the sun and some females are pregnant, using drugs and others are behind bars. As the youth of Mpumalanga please lets love ourselves and start thinking of the future. We are the future of tomorrow lets go to school and be proud.



RENEWABLE RESOURCES OF ENERGY:

By Rudolph Sambo

-Since the beginning we were always concern about time and now that has been replaced by money or should I say these two work hand in hand. We claim to know the unknown; we lack certain abilities and skills to identify the solutions and lack of non-renewable resources of energy. Solar energy is capable of powering cities and cities but ideas like that are rejected instead of piecing perfected like the invention of the electric car or the fuel cell car which uses water to run up. The fuel cell car which uses water to run up, the fuel cell splits shock, you can receive hydrogen as an explosive gas that can power up a normal fair stroke engine of water nor diesel or petrol saving you money and time when it comes to filling up. Things can be simple as dragging a hose pipe from your front yard to water your plants.

Coming to fuelling fossil however the fossil is costing people's lives because of the generating billions and trillions of dollars while where it found the people are still suffering with things and the most of it all are suffering and dying.



CANCER, TB AND OTHER DISEASES...WHAT IS THE CAUSE OF ALL THIS SICKNESS? IS HERE A CURE OR WE JUST GALLOPING THE TABLETS FOR BEING IGNORANT AND UNEDUCATED...?

Kidney failure is mostly caused by toxins in water”

By: Sboniso Dlamini

The human body is made out of system, inside each system we find organs like in the excretory system we find an organ called kidney, two remarkable bean shaped organs with the size of a fist that manufactures important chemical for the body and retain substance we need for our health, lastly also it eliminate toxic waste from the body via urine but “**why do kidney ‘s fail’?**”

The kidney might be damaged and start to fail for a number of reasons but mostly kidney fail due to toxins in Water that is the reason I had to write this article! As awareness about water pollution grew instantaneously the feeling that something wrong remain a notation, the common notation is that the water we are drinking here in Witbank (Mpumalanga Province) is impure which makes kidneys to fail. The water contains impurities from industries and from us, the level this impurities are is so high to cause Chronic health effects like kidney failure. These impurities are microbial pathogens (diseases that produce micro Organism which includes bacteria, viruses and parasites), second impurities are organics which includes Thrihomathane (THMs) which are formed in water where chlorine in water combines with naturally Occurring mattes, third impurities are pesticides including herbicides, insecticides and fungicides and lastly We are having the Volatile Organic Chemicals (VOCs) which includes solvents and adhesive like benzene, Glue and fuel that goes along with inorganic’s which toxic metals out of this impurities . The VOCs are the major cause of kidney failure because they contain compounds like benzene which cause deterioration of the kidneys till the are permanently damaged by this toxins that poison the body as they build up as Waste, once the kidney gets damaged, special machines are used to remove toxins from the blood or the affected patient may go for a kidney transplant.

Since deterioration of the kidney is a slowly process. What I believe can be the solution is not a Kidney transplant or some dialysis but adopting all the wetlands and all underground water sources that are not yet intoxicated by acid mine drainage and also set procedures within hand with monitoring Systems for better water conservation and lastly whilst this process is under-going people must do monthly kidney check ups in nearest clinics and hospitals.



IGNORANT SOCIETY: By Lucky Maisanye

-Living in a society that is ignorant is hard to organise. A lot is taking place before our eyes without us acting, we live in an environment which is highly polluted and we are neighbours of open cast coal mines. Vibrations from mine blasting and inhaling of dust is our daily experience and the majority has taken it as normal and that’s how we suppose to live. We live above soil which is rich of coal and export electricity to SADC region while we fail to have access to electricity 24/7 in 365 days a year, it is a blasphemy.



Our town have different mineral resources underneath like coal, chrome, vanadium etc. and coal fired power stations which should create employment opportunities but we find high rate of unemployment amongst young people who live in frustrations. Poverty is the result as many people move in our town for employment; we become squatters in the ghettos that make it highly impossible for the local municipality to deliver services for all as illegal dumping increases daily, waste water leakages forms streams and illegal connections of electricity gets worse.

It is a blasphemy for those who were born and bred in this town as they are unemployable for most permanent positions in many industries because they fail medical fitness tests to work in the mines or industries. This is caused by the same mines and industries by emitting their toxic gases into our lungs and refusing to employ us or compensate us from damaging our environment and also our piece of pie. The constitution of country says “it’s our right living in an environment that is not harmful to our health and to have the environment that is protected from capitalists greed investments”. In achieving this one of human basic right, more collective effort is needed.

LIVING WITH POLLUTION IN OUR EVERYDAY LIFE AND ILLEGAL DUMPING NEXT TO OUR HOUSES, WHAT DO THIS PEOPLE HAD TO SAY FOR THEIR HUMAN ACTIVITIES!

WE BETTER CONTROL OUR WAYS OF LIVING BEFORE ITS TOO LATE

POLLUTION CRISIS BY: THABO NCUBE

The dry clean has been operating for approximately 16 years and is situated at Ext. 7 Biyela Street. The community has been complaining about the pollution caused by the dry clean, they are using boiler machines to iron and washing the clothes etc. the owner opened the dry clean as a way of creating job opportunities and as a way of living at the expense of people's health. The community began to suffer from dizziness, headaches and sinuses from years back till now. The dry clean causes a lot of black smoke just like Highveld Steel daily from 07H00 in the morning until 18H00 in the evening. The community members stated that, when they wash their clothes they must wait until the dry clean closes so that their clothes don't become dirty.

A community member Mr Joseph said "the dry clean makes us and our children sick with its pollution. I have a child suffering from ulcer because of inhaling the Smokey air from the dry clean and Highveld and the child's health is getting worse instead of getting better", we've been staying her at Emalahleni for more than 10 years now and we are tired of this smoke, he added. The dry clean is not needed near people said concerned community members.

As community members we met the owner of the dry cleaner, when confronted he said "people who complain are the ones who bring their clothes to my dry clean, some years back they complained about the smoke and I managed to extend the chimney of the boiler because at it was short, so I don't know what they want, they must go and complain against the pollution caused by Highveld Steel and Vandra Mining, he concluded by saying the complainants must stop bringing their clothes to the dry clean to avoid the smoke".

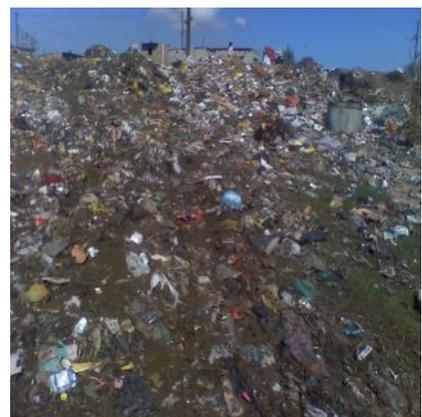


According to Ozarks Clean Air Alliance (OCAA) 'the air pollution from factories such as dry cleaners the pollution can be solids, liquids or gases, air pollution can cause adverse health effects in humans and animals, damage trees, lakes, streams, crops and influence climate change. Although we may not have control over natural sources of air pollution, we do have control over man-made sources. Federal state and local regulations agencies create air quality regulations to require the reduction of pollution from man-made sources; however regulations can only do so much. It is also up to individuals to understand how the decision that they take every day can contribute to air pollution. Once we understand how we contribute to air pollution, we can effectively work to reduce it. The dry clean owner should change and use a better source not a boiler as it uses coal in order for the community around there to stop suffering from the pollution caused.



Our lives being in danger because of illegal dumping
BY: Pretty Masilela

The illegal is caused by our community members and as a result it brings diseases to our citizens. Illegal dumping during heavy rains it can teach hazardous chemicals into water ways and potentially block drainage ways, making areas more susceptible to floods. It also affects people's health. Most of our children carries a disease from playing in our near the illegal dumping site. According to our community members the main reason for illegal dumping it's because the municipality trucks are always late to collect garbage bins also the depopulation plays a huge role in encouraging people to use illegal dumping sites. The people who has just moved in doesn't care about our community they only here for jobs and what's happening about and around the community it's not their problem said one of our community members . MR BUTHELEZI who live near the illegal dumping site Blaming and pointing fingers to one another it's not a solution but working together is the best option. We as a community we need to come together and make a awareness about the danger of illegal dumping. We need to clean the site and make something good on it for example parks but currently we have lots of parks on our hood so we can make shops or play grounds for our children.



Poetry: Human activities killed our earth and now its time to face reality



“EARTH DON’T DIE”

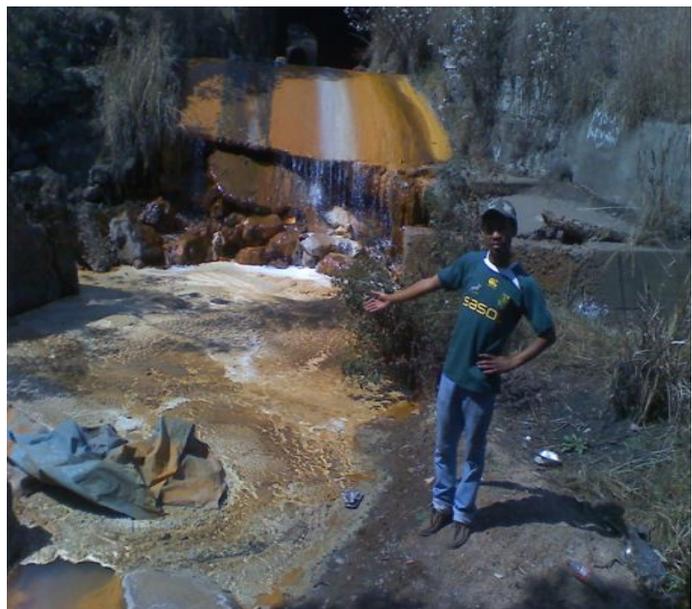
By: Sboniso Dlamini

I see you and I see me
Our earth is in ICU
Because of me and you
The universe is a hospital
I paid earth a visit
Government is doctors
Giving I falsely prescriptions
Mines are nurses keeping
On injecting our earth with Emissions
Listen I poet our
Earth is a patient it needs
Green tablets and renewable
Of energy not conferences and delegates
I shout, Wangari Maathai shouted the trees
Sprouted Ken Saro Wiwa commented I saluted
Myacc started...oh oh sons and daughters
Environment immorality it's a seed to infant
Mortality not humanity prosperity.
Young minds stand up, it's an ecological war
The earth was once a dessert but now a desert
Once a pasture but now a parasite
Once a garden but now a garbage
Once full of species now with deadly spices
Once a savior but now any enemy
I cry, we cry toxic tears who do I call whom
Do you call we are turned destroyers not creators
We can pollute the earth but not God.

ACTIVISM IS THE RENT I PAY FOR LIVING ON THIS PLANET

By : Melody Maseko

they insisted the climate has encountered no toxic
crash
They scripture plans unimplented with no intention too
Attempting to convince the voice if nature that paper
could buy oxygen
Took the decision to self indulge at the price of breath-
ing.
It's a critical kind of illness that which the masses are
not exposed to
Terminal and bruising that which I tirelessly effort to
alert
Government's proposals are of no impact to the ever
destroying dragon of nature
For you will fail to impose indoctrination on Mother
Nature
The skies are field with wounds of their acts
Bleeding unto the beings, guilty and innocent
And that's a fact
Take a sight into your own daily routines
Up rise fellow victim
On this earth a cent will produce no beauty, no health
An illusion is your wealth
With no ability to work sufficient to your survival
Activism is the price I pay living on this planet



Know your community, the issues around them then make a change. Lets work together for the better!