



# Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance

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## Vaal Community Monitoring School

Domestic coal burning

by Mpho Selemela– Tsebo Community Organization

The domestic coal burning is one of the impacts made by individuals within our environment. It includes coal-stoves or fire-pots which is usually known as (Paola/ Imbaula) in African languages.

### *The Fire-Pot*

The Fire-Pot is made out of old boilers/empty 20l tin of paint. It is usually found used at informal settlements where there are no means of efficient energy access in South Africa. Parts of the reasons why people use this form of energy is that it is hassle free and most people are found with no electricity connections in their shacks; so they use it to cook; boiling water and warming up their homes during cold seasons.

According to my research the truth is: about ten to fifteen shacks are always on fire every year, in every province because of fire-pots. The dangerous part of this dilemma is that because of its indoor pollution “Smog” it takes a lot of families health. The sad part is that these people think that they don’t have other alternatives not unless the government provide proper electricity to their supply. Now the problem faced by people who reside near this informal settlement is the problem of air quality. They say that this smell of smoke out of their fire-pots is dangerous for their health even from the polluters too. So the

government must intervene and try help out people that are being long marginalised of access to proper energy.

54 President Kruger str.  
Office no.25 2nd floor  
Russells Building, Vanderbijlpark  
Tel: 016 9339 079  
Cell: +27 74 5307 427  
e-mail: mdu.bbteg@yahoo.com

### Special points of interest:

- VIVA Ma’Volo Volo
- “Sharpeville, the community of Kensington”
- Strike of Metsi Maholo Municipality workers
- Schools Closing Down

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Volunteer

by Sthuntsha Mokoena– Botle Ba Tlhaho Environmental

My name is David Sthuntsha Mokoena from a township called Sebokeng, and I am a volunteer at Botle Ba Tlhaho Environmental Group. I started volunteering from 2011, and we are working without being paid as volunteers. We usually offer our services for free to our communities. This is a commitment one does and we do it willingly, but often volunteers are not given full recognition from all their different participating platforms i.e. communities and government and due to such volunteers are not even respected by the communities they are coming from. This is how they are often perceived from where I come

from: “these are people whom have either lost direction or may be bored as we know that they are trying to find something to keep them look as if they are busy. Hao tswahane ntho eo o e etsang e bohlokwa hofeta le ho dula fela, mesebetsi ha e yo and who really cares? While we volunteers are serving communities and we all know that we are the only ones fighting injustices within communities and we are about change for the betterment. At the nearby local clinic where I am from, they have volunteers whom go door to door looking out for the elderly people who are not well in their health and they bath them and give

medicine where necessary and still these people are not respected much as they should be and nobody else is willing to take over what they are doing in giving it a valuable recognition.

We collect empty bottles for recycling and we clean our streets and local dump sites taking care of the environment, and still we are not protected by the ones

Volunteers of Botle Ba Tlhaho Environmental Group at their office in Sebokeng Zone13



## Strike by Metsi Maholo Municipality workers

by Moleboheng Mathafeng- Sasolburg Air Quality Monitoring Committee

It started on the 17<sup>th</sup> May 2014 where the SAMWU members held a meeting with the municipal manager and demanding increase of their salaries. But that did not go the way they were expecting which lead to the suggestions of involving ordinary community members, with the municipal workers calling public meetings from one section to another section and people came in numbers in hearing their grievances. Other community members whom were not really impressed of other service delivery issues took the matter to their advantage and continued by looting public and private re-

sources i.e. Somalians small businesses.

The situation continued until it became unbearable with municipal workers switching off electricity supply and water supply to residents, and the people then became angrier and that municipal workers came to them asking for their support although the people claim that the municipality has been failing them for long. The people then went to the mayor's office raging concerns of such and urging that the mayor should just give the workers what they demand. It is alleged that the mayor told the people that it is not in his responsi-

bility that workers went on strike and therefore he knows nothing of such which then lead the mayor's decision in calling on the Red Ants to deal with the matter.

It is also alleged that the Metsi Maholo Local Municipality re-trenched its three hundred workers and were replaced with the new people whom were hired from the same community. Right now as we speak it has been almost three months now and our community is dirty but the municipality had hired the Red Ants where else millions of rand are spent and no progress.

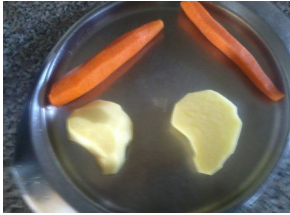


Photo of fresh vegetables

## Food Related Issues

by Mpho Selemela- Tsebo Community Organization

There is a study that reports since from 1990 the people of South Africa have been sick because of food related issues and it makes me wonder and asking me weather it may be the way food companies processing food or is it the government, the media or social networks that would not want o promote nor advertise healthy food.

when I was growing up; I am talking about documentaries like the Supreme Master Television where it is a lot emphasized about a plant based diet. Also when one check the demographics of people depending over animal based diet is predicted high in cholesterol, hence I was saying that is why food promoters are always promoting animal based diet.

as Hemp which cans also multi-produce like body lotions as alternative to petrochemical cosmetics which are flammable, it is also used to make garment cloth/ robe, clothes, medicinal purposes and most famous use for its religious and recreational use.

The question one should ask is: why promoters always want to promote food that does not even provide anything beneficial for human consumption and health sake. For an example if one take a closer look at advertisements from any TV channel food adverts are always that of reflecting cholesterol which is more of animal fat. They sometimes display a lot of G.M.O [Genetically Modified Organism] products.

When I watched Dr. Lila Africa, I have learned something that they never taught us at schools which is more about dietary. As I quote Dr. Lila "the human body have vitamins, and what you eat doesn't give you vitamins but activates vitamins that you have". We have plants like soya that can produce a lot more by-products as replacing that of meat based diet. i.e. soya mince, soya burgers, soya sausages etc... and it can even produce clean fuel for our cars. Also we have a plant known

One could swear that even people who promote these products that are unhealthy they don't even use them. As a young and concerned youth, I would give people an advice of changing their diet because what is being fed to most consumers is doing or having a negative health impact and the environment. e.g. the meat industry has long and historical uncensored environmental impacts.

In my conclusion I perceive people should start now by saving the earth.

I always watched documentaries

## Unemployment in Sasolburg

by Moleboheng Mathafeng

It is amazing how we are suffering to find jobs here in Sasolburg, but people from other places they get jobs easily while the rest of our local residents suffer the most.

The way things happen here they have turned for the worse that even one has to pay bribe for one to get employed. If you don't pay then you will never get employed, and if you don't have money to buy the job then you will defiantly "stay at the forum" so they call it, where people are supposed to be met for recruitment purposes. It's not easy for people to find jobs because one has to be early in the morning at the forum, and sometimes one is likely to wait the whole day until

afternoon. People have to wait until the company calls for a meeting and only people appointed to convene the meeting are allowed inside the meeting. It has been years that people have been trying to stop the corruption that has been happening for such a long time, and it seemed to have been a losing battle.

In South Africa most of the things have prevailed that it only takes a person who has enough money to get something in return (e.g. a job or drivers license, etc.) people in Zamdela have been complaining about this whole thing and companies are not either hearing them

out of which it had now turned into a norm that companies hire people from outside of the town but yet they keep preaching that people in the local would get employed if they attend forum meetings and only to find that there is corruption there.

The one million dollar question is that how possible is it for the local youngsters to get opportunities of development and employment within the local companies? Now I believe it when they say "money talks" because here in Zamdela "ntho e buang ke mashala" there is nothing for mahala!

"The question one should ask is: why promoters always want to promote food that does not even provide anything beneficial for human consumption and health sake"

**SORRY NO JOB**

### Residents Reluctant to move

by Iloane Mashaile– Mollo Arts Development

“Sharpeville, the community of Kensington in is up in arms after hearing that they have to be moved from where they are currently staying now and the unit is to be developed into government town houses”. That is the quote from the Vaal Weekly, 2-8 July 2008 and still now the place is still underdeveloped with no proper streets and no street lights. The section is former hostels which then use to house municipal workers, and was said to be redeveloped according to parts of the government program of revitalising of the hostels, although six years down the line nothing had actually happened as yet.

What bothers the community even more is that they will now have to pay large amounts of rentals for the newly intended house units, regardless of their renovated places. And what also bothers the community is that they don’t have title deeds as for now and the land is of municipality.

A pensioner by the name Mahlodi Mcelu who has been living in the area for 31 years says “this is our place, our kids were born and raised here and their kids were also born and raised here. Where do they want us to go? They wanted to come and destroy our houses so that they can build what they want us to pay more which we can never afford, let us meet them in court.”

The local municipality claims to not recognise the section as housing units but rather as municipal land. “What will happen to us?” says the community of Kensington.



Photos showing one of the schools closed down in Sebokeng. The school was already left dilapidated, but with a show of gathered efforts from some of the active youth managed turning the school building into a useful community center.

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Community Monitoring Action

### Schools Closing Down

by Shimmy Letsatsi– Botle Ba Tlhaho Environmental Group

Many schools around Sebokeng and surrounding kasies are being closed down. This might be results of young learners are being moved to multiracial schools in the nearby suburbs such as Vanderbijlpark; Vereeniging; Three Rivers, etc. and it is assumed to be where the best education is offered. Most of these closed down schools are primary schools which now are either used for community centres and local business hubs or vandal and criminal activities if neglected. It is in the most likely of ngo’s and npo’s by doing justices to these neglected schools by engaging the locals with youth and development programmes. Even older people benefit because there are ABET schools for the elderly and enough space to develop food gardens in the school yards.

The only bad part is that some of these schools are now being used by drug users and they do all sorts of things to or in destroying their lives and even to an extend of damaging school property. The yards will not be cleaned which is one of the things that BBTEG is against. The other bad thing is that young African youths need to learn their mother tongue which is something that is not done in these so called multiracial schools, where else in return the repercussions of this is discouraging the youths to learning their cultures and traditions. Talking your language at home is good but basis need to be there and one is to get it through studying at local schools.

### Kwa Masiza Residential Injustice

by Shimmy Letsatsi– Botle Ba Tlhaho Environmental Group



The old Kwa Masiza hostel, going under refurbishment.

This is an area with contaminated land and water, a place where former Iscor employees resided with a land fill in the nearby. In the past few years the place has changed management frequently and this had lead to some of the residents losing their shelter, with the end results being that the government is intended to rebuild the housing units into privately owned town houses. The land has by very far degraded for its value due to its geographic situation bearing the historical Iscor plant and its environmental impacts.

There are people and animal leaving within the area and it has been said by one of the residents whom grew up within the area that at some incidents the newborns don’t have legs of both humans and animals. Just in the nearby Kwa Masiza across the Old Potchefstroom Rd and Golden Highway lies Steel Valley, there is

an old farm known as Steel Valley whereby residents who stayed at the farm stead and were working at Iscor were bought out of the land by the same steel industry and that the toxic chemicals were starting to surface within the landscape and animals were severely threatened. But after some of the residents got retrenched from the now ArcelorMittal they bought back their farms and still reside there.

Adding to the waste impacts within the area there is sewer pipe challenges from the Sebokeng and Kwa Masiza hostels which usually burst and overflows into the nearby storm water channel due to lack of capacity; the mismanagement of the waste disposal from the community which tempers with the storm water channel which is now turned into a sewer stream and wetland flowing directly into the Reitspruit and then Vaal River.

The government, community members, interested and affected parties and the industry responsible of the environmental damage should have at least meet and resolve the issues. This should not be a hear say situation but to every department and institution that is concerned and affected should avail themselves to attending the matter here. The development of the place should benefit the ex-workers of Iscor and the indigent within the surrounding.

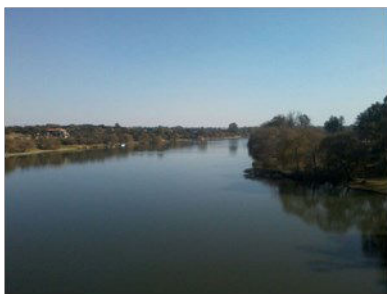


Photo showing the Vaal River, the most significant River stream that plays a critical role in the country's economy.



## Proposed Panfontein coal mine

by Mduzuzi Tshabalala: Facilitator Vaal Community Monitoring School

Early this year we have found out about the newly proposed coal development which is identified to be happening at Panfontein farms, along the corridors of Meyerton and Three Rivers in Vereeniging. The proposed mine project is believed to be on its Environmental Impact Assessment [EIA] scoping period. According to the N.E.M.A. Sec.24G, the applicant of any proposed mining project must at least have placed an advert to be circulated through national news paper or two local news papers.

On our concern as VEJA had found out through a local news paper Sedibeng Ster. Unfortunately we could not attend the first public hearing which was held in Bantu Bonke public school, and it was mentioned in the first draft of EIA scoping that Interested and Affected Parties who attended the meeting were automatically registered for the commenting period.

As we may know and also quoting from the National Water Resource Strategy [NWRS2], that the Vaal River is one of the key strategic River resource within the economic landscape of the country, but already the upper Vaal River is a stressed area from the acid

mine drainage escaping from the Highveld coal fields down the Vaal reefs.

Should the minister at Dep. Water and Environmental Affairs issue further Water Use Licenses within the jurisdiction of the Upper Vaal, then the application should be that of stringent compliance and best be monitored effectively so as to sustain the national key water resource for future purpose, unless otherwise.

## Vaal Monitors in Action

by Mduzuzi Tshabalala: Facilitator Vaal Community Monitoring School



Photos showing Vaal Monitors picketing outside Sasol plant at Sasolburg.

VEJA has built a campaign against Sasol and the issue around is more likely in opposing Industries not complying with the N.E.M.A particularly the Air Quality Act which has its Minimum Emission Standards expiring in March 2015. Where else Sasol and other industries whom have been tabling applications at the minister of Water and Environmental Affairs' office, and that they would rather postpone complying with the 2015 standards. The minister had instead declined such applications pending on its pro-legitimacy of the processes.

As though Sasol had by this far taken the minister to court against its application prior to the minister's decisions of not granting the postponement. The Vaal Monitoring School is now taking it to the streets with a series of pickets to follow throughout the year by alerting the public in naming and shaming the ones that are intending to be acting superior than the law of authority.

The Sedibeng District and its neighbouring districts Fezile Dabi District and City of Johannesburg were long declared the Vaal Triangle Airshed Priority Area, according to the Air Quality Act National Framework of 2007, about priority areas: "if the area is declared an Airshed priority area, the minister with the help of national air quality officer

known as the Multi Stakeholder Reference Group Meeting [MSRGM] comprising of industries expected to be in compliant within the jurisdiction of the declared area to intervene on its issues. And it explains that it should not take the MSRGM more than three years to have the area un-declared". Now here in the Vaal eight years down the line no progress is been made but instead the industry players are hard on the field breaking the rules just in the name of maximising profits.

VEJA will continue showcasing its efforts through campaigns that speaks directly to the industries about the affected communities, and the Community Monitoring School is one vehicle of back tracking and archiving the course. "THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES, PHAMBILI NGO M'ZABALAZO"