



# CLIMATE EXPRESS

add your voice - save the future

green  
times

Indalo



Yethu

Issue 1 | Krugersdorp | 7 November 2011

## Rethinking the way we live

Addressing climate change is a crisis of global proportions that affects life - in all its forms - now and for unborn generations. This crisis requires a cooperative faith, moral and spiritual approach beyond the scientific and political interventions if we are to deal effectively with mitigation and adaptation strategies to climate change, which we call climate justice.

Under the banner - Mobilization, Dialogue & Climate Justice - the ambitious and exciting outreach programme, the month long train journey is aimed at consulting communities in 16 towns and the surrounding countryside on their climate hopes, aspirations, experiences and solutions. Indalo Yethu, the South African Environmental Agency, in collaboration with the British Council and COPART, with the support of the Department of Environmental Affairs, the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (PRASA) and the Embassy of the Republic of Germany, have joined forces to make the Climate Train journey a reality. This is your chance to make your voice heard...

Among the initiatives along the train route would also be the introduction of a climate charter discussion, aimed at finding an African response and contribution - especially listening to the wisdom, values and indigenous communities' language to make our values and rights audible in the climate discourse. While the time before COP17 is too limited to conclude a credible consultation, it is hoped that voices along the route would be able to feed into a longer term process to inform an African People's Charter. While there is an overall focus to ensure a united voice among South Africans, the train is specifically highlighting the plight and struggles of vulnerable groups, such as the children, youth, women, the working poor and indigenous communities.

At the Cape Town station leaders from various different ethnic groups discussed the development of an African Climate Charter and their concerns about what the modern world had done to Mother Earth during the first of a series of teach-ins around this topic.

Dr. Willem Langeveld, coordinator of the Koi and San people, said his group is the oldest civilization in the world. They are in Southern Africa for the past 150 000 years. "We, the Koisans, are the pigmies of Central Africa," he said.

## Most egalitarian society in the world

In the Kalahari, he said, the Kumanisan is the most egalitarian society in the world today. "Indigenous people love Mother Earth and Father Sky. We believe that what you take, you must give back to nature."

"Today is important, as it will take a long time to heal the damage that we've done to the environment. Indigenous nations want the focus to be on organic food production and the water to be purified and conserved. We also have a keen interest in renewable energy and tidal wave power."

Cormac Cullinan, our country's foremost environmental lawyer, said it's important to start a national conversation about healing Mother Earth. The damage to the earth started long ago. Yet the indigenous nations have retained the wisdom of how to restore this.

## Indigenous people know the world as alive & animated

They have always seen the world as alive and animated. Everything is part of the community of life - including the humans alive now and their ancestors, the spirits of the rivers and mountains. The web of life is created through relationships of generosity. "I don't exist except through my relationships," is the mind-set. To remain human you need respectful relationships with nature. The first rule is to live with appropriate respect. Our society has forgotten so much of this.

The irony is that we lost this during the 16th and 17th century's "Age of Enlightenment." This was when Europe decided that the universe was like a giant machine. So if we could take it apart and study the bits, then we can drive it as we like.

## Global apartheid against Nature

Instead of respect, we went into dominion and superiority over all other beings. So was Apartheid based on superiority. The same thinking that we human beings have entrenched between us and the rest of the world.

Colonial attitudes became hard-wired and entrenched by the Law. We are important and others are things - first called slaves and property. Relationships of exploitation never

lead to balance, respect or harmony. They always become exploitative. Soon the Law said everything but humans are now property, so you can exploit it.

Indigenous wisdom teaches that if you don't respect nature, bad things will come on you and your community. So problems emerged over time. Climate change is a symptom of the problem, not THE problem. It is not going to help just trying to stop the earth from heating up; you have to look at WHY it's heating in the first place.

## 6th mass extinction is here

We are now in the 6th period of mass extinction. The previous one happened 65 million years ago. All environmental problems have social consequences. The harm

will always come back to us. Because we had decided we are separate from the circle of life, and superior. We can only have peace once we heal that thinking.

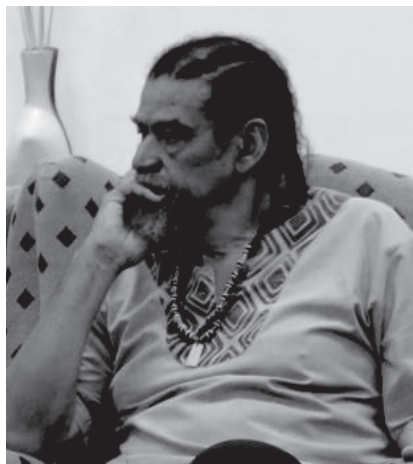
COP will not be able to deal with this issue successfully, said Cullinan, as the question is framed too narrowly. It emerges from a mechanistic world view, instead of a systemic understanding.

Renewable energy could stop the temperature rise, but it doesn't address WHY it happened - due to an arrogant belief. We must learn to play by the rules in our community, or else our species will be excluded. We have the most incredible birth right that we are damaging by ignoring the rules of nature.

## Without the body the liver cannot live

Now the mechanistic world view is crumbling, as science is teaching that we are an integral part of nature, like the liver is an integral part of the body. On its own it cannot

## Healing the Mother



Above: Dr. Willem Langeveld

(cont. page 8)

## Karoo Learners talk about changes

On Sunday, 30 October the Climate Train bid Worcester goodbye and departed to the dry, yet beautiful Beaufort West.

Five hours later, the striped purple, yellow and turquoise train, draped in artwork by local artists arrived at its second destination. After such a good kick start in Worcester, the team was looking forward to continuing that momentum. Beaufort West did not disappoint and the Climate Train was again greeted by another enthusiastic and inquisitive group of community members.

During the day around 90 school pupils from Beaufort West Secondary School and Mandelenkosi Secondary School filtered through the train, participating in a series of activities, both inside and outside of the train; planting trees along side the platform, painting their interpretations of Mother Earth, watching educational videos and being exposed to the vast possibilities of recycling.

Once they had all completed the tour around the train, the Green Times asked some of the pupils their views around Climate Change. This is what they had to say.

Gabriel Adams (9): "Today I learnt that if we do not take good care of our trees and plants we won't be able to live and have oxygen."

Tiffany van der Linde (16): "I think the litter and the continuous pollution has lead to climate change. Here in Beaufort West the sun is suppose to be shinning already, but we still experiencing rain and wind."



Above: Tiffany van der Linde (16)

Gaynor de Koker (16): "I dream about becoming a geologist one day and I am inlove with nature. But with climate change becoming an increasingly bigger problem I sometimes wonder if I'll be able to achieve that goal. Everything is being affected by climate change. The plants, animals, sea life and even livelihoods. But on the other hand it also gives me more motivation to one day do something big and valuable for Earth so that I can give back."



Above: Gaynor de Koker (16):

Vernise Johnson (16): Everything is changing because of climate change. We experience it everyday here in Beaufort West. Weather patterns are changing, animals are dying and plants are no longer producing food like they used to. We as humans only have ourselves to blame because we have been selfish and have just been thinking about our own needs and wants."



Above: Vernise Johnson (16)

Russel Ehenreich (16): "Last year here in Beaufort West, we experienced a draught which was so unusual because we live in the karoo. At first no one knew it was because of the climate changes, but now that we're receiving more education and information about it, we can see the link. We are also dealing with issues around water scarcity. It's shocking to me because I wonder what the Earth would be like for my children one day."

Brandon van Wyk (14): "I wasn't to sure about what it meant at first, but now that I've learnt about it in the train I will take better care of my garden at home and stop littering so that I can also make a change here in Beaufort West."



Above: Brandon van Wyk (14)

Dhelechia Balie (12): "Today I learnt to appreciate our land and to keep it clean by recycling and picking up litter."



Above: Dhelechia Balie (12)

Project Manager of the Climate Train, Sandru Pillay said he is pleased with the positive reaction to the train. "This is a phenomenal project, reaching both the largest CEO's in the country but as well as the grass roots level. We can only hope that this journey will provide all communities with an educational experience so that the message is spread far and wide in addressing the issues of climate change." Ω



Above: Russel Ehenreich (16)



## Farm workers not giving up despite huge losses

Imagine a world without a glass of water to drink, where everything you once knew is stripped away from you without warning. Imagine a world where the memories of old are your only hope for a better future, where the smell of fresh air and blossoming fruit trees is all you long for.

Welcome to the world of Denia Jansen and many others from the Mawabuye Land Rights Forum.

Nearly the entire Cape Winelands District is now faced with potential water supply shortages. The Provincial water plan would negatively impact on both the delivery of basic services as well as on the potential for economic expansion.

Statistics SA's Community Survey (2007) found that, between 2001 and 2007, unemployment in the area ranged from 12.2% in Langeberg to 22.8% in Drakenstein. The unemployed comprise 44% African and 53% Coloured.

### harsh reality for many

This frightening scenario has become the harsh reality for many of South African citizens and places the Boland's farmworkers among the most vulnerable people in the country.

Climate change is further exacerbating their food insecurity, despite the wealth of fertile land surrounding them.

In an insightful Earth Forum held on the Climate Trai in Worcester, Denia and 20 women of the Mawabuye Land Rights Forum (MLRF) with youth and small scale producers stepped on board the Climate Train.

Gathered in a circle, holding a handful of earth and eyes shut, they remembered the soil they were born on and shared their hopes and concerns for their land - land which has since been severely impacted by the looming consequences of climate change.

### Universal Declaration of Rights

They explored two issues around the Universal Declaration of Rights for Mother

Earth and People's Charter for Africa - 'Living well as supposed to living rich' and 'for every taking there should be a giving.'

"My hope for this Earth is that it can be restored," one of the ladies said.

"Most of us here are either farm dwellers or farm workers from rural areas in the Boland area. Climate change is no foreign term to us, because it has affected our entire livelihood. We used to have permanent jobs and a place to live and water to drink, but since climate change has been impacting the seasonal conditions so harshly, some of us are now back to being casual workers, earning a mere R65 a day," Dania, the spokesperson for MLRF, shared.

### scarcity of resources

According to Shirley Davids, who has been living on the Goudmyn Farm in the Boland area her entire life, the scarcity of resources has also impacted on crime in the area.

"I remember growing up to the smell of apricot and cedar trees this time of the year. We use to look forward to summer because we usually worked overtime as there was so much harvest. The Earth was our source of sustenance. As teenagers, we used to run through the green fields and eat off the trees when we got hungry. Things are no longer the same and people have become desperate. The animals on the farms we used to work on live better than us now. They have water, a plate of food to eat every day and a roof over their heads. When I look out of my window all I see are vineyards. We can no longer eat the fruit so carelessly, because it's filled with all sorts of pesticides and poison."

"People have become so desperate to put food on the table; they get involved in all the wrong things. Our forefathers warned us about this, but we believe that it's not too late to make a change," she said with tears in her eyes.

En route to COP17, we hope that these personal and touching stories people have shared will be the reason for change.

In order to survive and provide shelter, the group together with the help of NGO's have started their own organic vegetable gardens in

their own back yard.

"If we want to see change, we need to be the change. It's unfortunate that we find ourselves in this situation, but life goes on and we are not going to give up."

## Agents of change in De Aar

We could have heard a pin drop in the silent and seemingly unoccupied streets of De Aar early Wednesday morning when the Climate Train pulled up. Yet like bees shaken from their hive, hundreds of school learners, government officials and municipal workers descended onto the De Aar station.

As the group of community members excitedly gathered outside the historic station the Climate Train team was getting ready for yet another eventful and enthralling day.

After a quick welcome and introduction to the train, they lead the crowd to the community town hall down the road, where the day's events kicked off. Armed with refuse bags, learners, teachers, municipal and government officials dispersed into the dusty streets, collecting garbage along way.

Once the learners had reached the century old building, just 2 km away from the station, parents and interested community members awaited their arrival and joined them in the hall.

### Strive towards a green economy

In the opening address Pixley Ka Seme District Municipality Councillor Miriam Kibi called upon the hundreds of community members present in the building to preserve and take care of their environment, by striving towards a "green economy".

"Let us be agents of change in our community!" she urged the crowd who listened attentively. "There are so many benefits for everyone if only we can take hands and contribute to the change together. It is time to turn the tide on litter, pollution and irresponsible behaviour towards the environment. It is time for a brighter future and

(cont.page 4)

the future begins now! We can no longer deny the inevitability of climate change, because we have already begun to experience its consequences," she said.

Applaud could be heard echoing through the packed hall, as the crowd welcomed the Climate Train's resident poet and artists, Mbali Velakazi onto the stage.

### Poetry like honey spreads understanding

Her stirring climate poetry poured like honey from her mouth, as she captivated the crowd with her wise words. In a blue floral dress she paced up and down the high, spoiled wooden stage, spreading colour and understanding throughout the hall.

For Thandiwe Thomas (18) from Monwabisi Secondary School his excursion to the Climate Train meant more than just time away from the classroom.

"Only now am I starting to understand the meaning of climate change. In the past I heard people talk about it, but I didn't really get what it's all about. It was an exciting experience. I learnt so much in one day. Mbali's poem was also an eye opener to me as I myself am Xhosa and could get a clearer understanding while listening to her. I am very happy that I came."

### Learning outside the classroom is fun

For 12 year old Zikhona Fata from Emthanjeni Primary School the clean up campaign made her feel proud and happy. "I hate it when people litter and throw their dirt on the ground so it felt good to clean up the litter. When my teacher told us about the climate train that was visiting our area I was very excited. It was a lot of fun to learn outside of the classroom for a change," she enthused.

Mkontwana Appolis Toto said even though they are a small community, if they do not act now, the impacts of climate change can be severe. "We have always enjoyed fresh, clean water in abundance, but now there is a serious threat with regards to water scarcity. There has also been an increase of motor vehicles in the town, which as we learnt today, is one of the main contributors to the problem.

We need more events like today, to teach us and show us the way forward in addressing this issue before it's too late."

### Youth keen for solutions

After the presentations in the town hall, the learners made their way back to the Climate Train, where the on-board artists and facilitators took them through a detailed tour around the train. Later they participated in paintings, tree planting and conversations around climate change.

Quinton Smith (17), grade 10 pupil from Orion High School said he was happy to be part of the day's activities. "I really enjoyed learning everything about climate change today. The activities such as the movies we watched and paintings made it fun and easy to understand."

Clearly the youth are concerned and keen to learn more about solutions to ensure a just future for all of us. Whilst climate is a learning curve for all of us, we can only resolve this together.



Above: Melanie Wepener displaying a colourful quilt on the creative carriage

Below: children at the resource centre learn about green technology



### Wake up Gauteng ...

The Climate Train has reached Gauteng and is scheduled to traverse the province for a week to engage the public on climate change and COP17. Several structured discussions are being finalised, but the public and media are invited to join the on-board and platform activities at the various stops – Krugersdorp, Nasrec and Centurion Stations – before the train departs for Limpopo next Sunday night.

Today the train will linger in Krugersdorp. The train is open to members of the public between 10h00 and 17h00. Journalists are invited to join the one-and-a-half hour journey from Krugersdorp to Nasrec Station tomorrow night, departing at 22h00pm.

The train represents the most extensive country consultation yet, in advance of any of the UN Framework on Climate Change Committee UNFCCC's Conference of the Parties (COP) meetings.

Media, schools, activists and members of the public are invited to come and share in the films, industrial theatre, and round table discussions on climate and environment topics. Off the platforms there will be tree planting to off-set the carbon footprint of the journey, guerilla gardening, social sculptures, music, poetry and art as well as lively town hall meetings and Earth Forum discussions on people's relationship with the earth.

The train is scheduled to arrive in Durban on the 27th of November, just ahead of COP17, where it will be parked at the station for visits by delegates, learners, the public and activists.

### Train Highlights

The Climate Train activities are designed to give communities a sense of hope about what is possible, and empowering them with information to act in a changing climate environment. The train has three special carriages for interactive events, learning and entertainment:

- The Knowledge Carriage: A resource centre set up with learning materials and learning tools to create space to spend time applying and developing all of what is absorbed during the interaction with the Climate Train. The resource centre showcases green technologies, biodiversity and climate change resilience practices through interactive displays and learning tools like climate for classrooms
- The Conference Carriage: A space where roundtable dialogue sessions, conferences, seminars, film screenings and theatre performances are hosted for the public.
- Creative Carriage: This carriage will be a learning space where creative cultural practitioners, artists, children and members of the public create pieces of art with their climate pledges, and commitments to act as well as their artistic representations of their climate needs.

## All aboard for climate conversations

The journey to South Africa's climate change restoration is officially on track, literally on a new green train. Scores of dignitaries, Members of Parliament and ordinary people alike, gathered at the Cape Town Station to celebrate the launch of South Africa's first ever Climate Train as it departed on its month long journey to the international climate talks in Durban.

With the United Nations' 17th Conference of Parties (COP) climate talks in Durban just weeks away, South Africa's national environmental agency, Indalo Yethu and several sponsoring partners joined forces to ensure this train would travel an estimated 5000 km via some of South Africa's most remote and far-flung communities - educating them about climate change in the lead up to this anticipated conference.

The partners are COPART, Federal Republic of Germany, the British Council, National Lottery Fund and Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (Prasa) and the Environment Department...

### Inspiring technology & dialogues on board

The train is fully equipped with two exhibition and educational coaches, showcasing some of the nation's most inspiring eco friendly technology, as well as a conference coach which will be used for roundtable discussions and dialogues on burning climate change issues, and an in-house garden and theatre coach.

CEO of Indalo Yethu, June Josephs-Langa said that the objective of the Climate Train is to mobilize communities and towns who are left out of the main stream of information.

### Climate is moral and ethical issue

"Climate change is not only a scientific and political issue, but a moral and ethical one too. We are embarking on a massive national outreach to create awareness and understanding about climate change in people and communities who are not able to attend the conference, so that they too can be a part of the

change."

"Through this train we hope to encourage a national conversation about the dangers of climate change and present sustainable solutions to map a socio-economic transition to a climate resilient and low carbon economy and society," she said at the launch on the Cape Town station.

### Faith leaders pray for Mother Earth

The launch was graced by several members of the South African Faith Communities Environment Institute (SAFCEI) who spoke about the central importance in each of their faiths of looking after the earth and delivered individual prayers for the earth's restoration and a safe train journey.

On the platform people were asked to write or draw their own personal messages to Mother Earth on a white large canvas, and place their hand prints in green paint next to it. This will be exhibited at COP 17 in Durban. Ω



Above: Pledges to be exhibited at COP 17

## Change coming to Beaufort West

When Municipal officials of Beaufort West congregated at the Weigh Bridge Wall for a Climate Change mini summit, one thing was clear - they all wanted change.

The Climate Train team was in town and invited to sit in on the provincial summit, about 10 km from the station where the train was stabled. The team delivered a short presentation on its journey.

Altogether 10 municipal councillors and local government members, including the Central Karoo District Municipality Mayor, Edward Njadu attended the second round of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning (DEADP) summit, which was hosted by South African Local Government Association (SALGA).

### Municipalities to focus on sustainable development

Department Director Helen Davies addressed the audience and gave a detailed overview of climate change - its global causes and impacts in South Africa, with particular reference to the Western Cape, and their pending baseline research into where municipalities need to focus their attention with regards to sustainable development.

Mbali Vilakazi, resident poet and artist on the train performed a moving poem entitled "Is there a Xhosa word for climate change".

Dylan McGarry, coordinator of the COPART movement of creative practitioners on-board, delivered a short presentation about the Climate Train and the creative education programme the train offers. He also briefly introduced the 'People's Charter for Africa,' the local process responding to South America's 2010 'Universal Declaration for the Rights of Mother Earth'.

### We are not fixing a broken toaster

In a response to the Department's presentation Dylan cautioned the councillors and local government to carefully consider and critique the forms of sustainable technology they establish in low income communities. He suggested that the technology should not inhibit their basic valued beings and doings, but rather enhances their wellbeing and the wellbeing of the environment.

"We can't keep responding to climate change as if we are just fixing technological problems, and not cultural ones. We are not just fixing a broken toaster."

The District Mayor said he was very pleased with the positive engagement and looks

(cont.page 6)



forward to working closely with the Department to roll out new climate change projects.

### Open to changes and new knowledge

"This was a great opportunity for us to learn more about climate change. I believe, with the right structures in place and enough information, we are more than capable to make a difference and roll out new projects within the community in addressing climate change. We are open to new changes so it's just an issue of raising awareness and broadening our knowledge," he said after the presentation.



Above: Mbali Vilakazi preforms a moving poem

Councillor David Willemse, who was also present at the summit, agreed with the Mayor:

"The time for change is now. There is a definite need for awareness and education around climate change and we are very grateful that the train saw fit to stop in Beaufort West to introduce our youth to this pressing issue. Our duty now is to carry out this message into the communities and try to find ways to implement it through much needed projects and programmes."



## A train of hope to stop the madness

South Africa's first Climate Train was warmly welcomed by the community of Breede Valley Municipality at its first stop en route to Durban for the annual Conference of Parties (COP).

The train had hardly opened its doors, when the community members and school pupils descended on the platform to participate in the train activities.

At a welcoming ceremony Town Executive Mayor, Mr Basil Kivedo, expressed his appreciation for the train's visit to Worcester, calling it a "train of hope."

### Our beloved Earth is at risk

"With an increase in global warming affecting many parts of the world, changing the sea levels and weather patterns, there is no doubt that our beloved Earth is at risk."



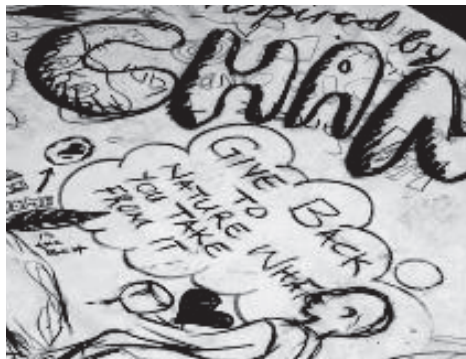
Above: Climate train delegates and members of the community of Breede Valley Municipality  
Bottom Right: Town Executive Mayor, Mr Basil Kivedo colours in a call for change

"Electricity for instance is generated by the burning of fossil fuels; in the process harmful pollutants, so called 'greenhouse gasses' are sent out into the air. A cycle of madness is what has occurred and we are all guilty. This climate train is more than a promotional tour for COP 17 - it is about creating awareness of one of the biggest threats to mankind ever. It's about mobilizing action."

### Us custodians are responsible

"Thank you for reminding us of our

custodianship and our responsibility towards Earth. I pray people will take notice of its messages, especially the vulnerable communities and apply measures to curb pollution and reduce their carbon footprint. As local government, we acknowledge our responsibility towards our people and future generations."



He encouraged the community to start the change.

"We are just ordinary people, but I believe in the power of an ordinary man, because that one person has the power to make a difference. Change can start with me, with you and it can start today. I fully support this initiative and wish you a safe and successful journey. May our heavenly father help us to protect and preserve that which he has entrusted to us."

The community came on board and participated in industrial theatre and film, and discussions on climate and environment topics. Off the platforms they planted trees to off-set the carbon footprint of the journey and painted their personal climate change messages on canvases which will go to Durban.



## Youth debate Mother Earth's rights

"The Earth Forum and exploration of the Charter enabled me to gain a deeper appreciation for nature, making me realise the desperate need for environmental education in vulnerable and poor communities," said Youth Forum leader, Sofuthi Balungile (22) about his experience on the Climate Train at its first stop in Worcester.

Sofuthi described the afternoon in a round table discussion surrounding the Universal Declaration of Rights for Mother Earth. "It's not everyday that we get such platforms to voice our opinions and engage in meaningful discussions about environmental issues.

It's seldom that we get educated about the Earth's rights. All we talk about is human rights, but it's vital to understand that Earth is also entitled to her own rights. We have become so selfish in our actions and thoughts towards Earth.

The Climate Train's conference coach was host to a passionate group of the Zwelethemba Youth Forum. The group, together with Dylan McGarry, Doctoral student in Environmental Education and Social Sculpture and contributor to the COPART movement of climate artists, sat down for an exchange about the true values of the country's indigenous cultures, the most ancient on Earth.

### Adopting fundamental values of indigenous peoples

Collectively they explored their inner concerns and values around the current status of life in the impoverished community of Zwelathemba. Engaged with practical responses, they contemplated their own fundamental values needed for meaningful

change.

The Declaration was adopted last year in South American countries after intensive consultations following the failure of COP 15 in Copenhagen in 2009. It encapsulates the aspirations and fundamental values of 32,000 people including many groups of indigenous peoples from around the world. A complementary process for Africa is being embarked upon on the Climate Train to Cop 17 in Durban.



Above: Zwelethemba Youth Forum and members of the COPART team (image courtesy Dylan McGarry)

instilling a capacity to empathize, to really listen and imagine what someone else is experiencing. The Earth Forum allows a group to explore together how they are living in a climate changing world."

### Understanding the link between social & environmental issues

"I think a train is the perfect vehicle to reach people who do not have access to this kind of information. Walking out of the train today I felt so happy and fortunate to have been a part of a change and I am excited to go back into my community and relay the message. I wish all the youngsters in

Worcester could have been a part of it, because it has broadened our understanding about serious environmental and social issues. We want to see our land prosper! I hope it's not the last time that this train will be seen on Worcester's train tracks," said Sofuthi.

For Alex Ndzima (23) the afternoon exploration of the "People's Charter for Africa" was an eye-opener. He explains: "As we sat in the train carriage, filled with all sorts of beautiful trees, listening to everyone as we sat in one big circle, I began to understand the link between social and environmental issues. I now have a clearer vision of my purpose and responsibility as an individual towards Earth. I realised that no matter how rich or poor one is, we are all equal in fighting the battle against climate change. We need to work side by side if we want to see a change."

As part of the Earth Forum Social Sculpture the group explored the surrounding grounds of the Worcester train station to gather a handful of earth. Using their imagination as an instrument to observe their own inner thoughts, feelings and values, they were able to 'unearth' their own inner insights of what was significant to them and their community.

Mindful youth are concerned about their land



Alex collected a piece of broken glass and two leaves, which signified the misuse of alcohol. "It's the simple things in life, such as nature, that goes unnoticed in society," he said.

Dylan said he was moved by the group's sensitivity, leadership abilities and gentleness.

"It was an amazing experience working with the youth of the Breederivier Valley. They spoke so mindfully about their concerns about their land and community. To me it was far more profound than any COP17 negotiation."

from page 1 ...

function – only in context and submission to the body can it live. We are an aspect of the earth. So teaches all wisdom traditions.

We need to abandon our delusions.

Cullinan spoke at COP 15 in Copenhagen, where people were marching and stood outside in the freezing weather. Inside the building negotiations took place, each wanting their best deal – even at expense of the rest. This was where they decided to limit the rise in global average temperature to 2°C. This would mean that Sudan would be uninhabitable, as the temperature is not spread evenly across the planet. So they are prepared to sacrifice people!

Copenhagen was a failure in 2009. Bolivia is the poorest country in South America, where Evo Morales, an indigenous person, was elected as president. He understands humans as integral parts of nature and declared 27 April as the International Day of Mother Earth. It is no good we only focus on human rights, we need a declaration of Rights of Mother Earth. We need to defend not only people, but Mother Earth too.

### Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth

President Morales created a People's Conference to hear 35 000 people speak about the earth. This became the Bolivian Cuchabamba. There the people can see that the snow is melting faster than normal on the mountain tops. They know this means they won't have water soon. So they created a Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth, which people commented on for 2 and a half days.

Main stream climate change negotiations are all about determining how far we can push it before it will collapse – and how everyone can benefit. Now we need to ask 'what must we do to heal Mother Earth?'

There was recently a court case where people took a company to court in the name of a river in Ecuador. And won! This wisdom is spreading through South and North American peoples. They have now created an Indigenous People's Organisation.

Strong commitments at COP 17 are unlikely, as too many are focused on economic growth. We need to start the deeper conversation. What is the disease at the heart of it? We have destroyed the balance by taking carbon from deep inside the earth and putting it into the atmosphere.

Stories by Sonia Koopman, reporting for the Green Times aboard the Climate Train

### How are we going to leave earth for our children?

African ethics carry these ideas too. We need to route activism in these indigenous people's knowledge. The deeper discussion is around what it means to be human. How are we going to leave earth for our children?

By looking at history, we see that great revolutionary movements fought for rights. We need to draw on the deeper motivations of people and reknit the bonds of respect. We need to fight for what matters most and for relationships with the earth.

The Freedom Charter liberated people, who expressed what they dared to envision. Now we are at the beginning of a new conversation about what our society would look like. How do we bring wisdom into being? There needs to be discussions taking place everywhere.

### People's Charter on Climate Rights and Values

At this event we were given a document to start off this conversation, called a draft People's Charter on Climate Rights and Values, crafted by Cullinan. This is a contribution to start the conversation, a starting text to build the talks around. Perhaps Africa wide. Only if we address deep issues, will symptoms dissipate.

This discussion has now been started on board the Climate Train, where Earth Forums are held. Representatives of indigenous people and faith communities will join the train at various places.

The charter is due to be discussed at two more teach-ins – one in Johannesburg and another when the train had reached her destination in Durban. Ω

Follow the train:

<http://www.climateatrain.org.za>

[www.facebook.com/indaloyethu](http://www.facebook.com/indaloyethu)

<https://www.facebook.com/ClimateTrainCOP17>

[www.thegreentimes.co.za](http://www.thegreentimes.co.za)

<http://www.indaloyethu.com>

or write to us:

[christelle@indaloyethu.com](mailto:christelle@indaloyethu.com)

[elma@thegreentimes.co.za](mailto:elma@thegreentimes.co.za)

follow ...



THE CLIMATE TRAIN

on her maiden journey

#### Nasrec Station

Arrives: Wednesday, 09 Nov 2011

Departs: Thursday, 10 November 2011

#### Centurion Station

Arrives: Friday, 11 November 2011

Departs: Sunday, 13 November 2011

#### Naboomspruit

Arrives: Monday, 14 November 2011

Departs: Tuesday 15 November 2011

#### Polokwane

Arrives: Tuesday, 15 November 2011

Departs: Wednesday, 16 Nov 2011

#### Louis Trichardt

Arrives: Thursday, 17 November 2011-

Departs: Saturday, 19 November 2011

#### Johannesburg

Arrives: Sunday, 20 November 2011

Departs: Monday, 21 November 2011

#### Standerton

Arrives: Tuesday, 22 November 2011

Departs: Wednesday, 23 Nov 2011

#### Ladysmith

Arrives: Thursday, 24 November 2011

Departs: Friday, 25 November 2011

#### Pietermaritzburg

Arrives: Saturday, 26 Nov 2011

Departs: 27 November 2011

#### Durban

Arrives: Sunday, 27 November 2011

Departs: 11 December 2011



With appreciation to our sponsors – Read more about them and their involvement in The Climate Train programme in our next issue.







# CLIMATE EXPRESS

Save tomorrow, today

green  
times

Indalo  Yethu

*It is up to civil society to prevent a potential "genocide" or "ecocide" being agreed to at the Durban Conference of the Parties (COP17) which starts in Durban this week.*

These are the weighty words of Pablo Solon, one of the world's top climate change negotiators, who had stood his ground firmly against the world at last year's COP16, held in Cancun, Mexico. There he believed the deal on the table would do more harm to the developing world than good.

Solon spoke in Cape Town at a Harold Wolpe Memorial Lecture shortly after landing in South Africa for the international talks, regarded as make or break time for a global deal to reduce harmful greenhouse emissions.

**Ordinary people must bolster negotiators' hands**

His was a clarion call for all South Africans to be involved in bolstering the hand of negotiators of vulnerable countries and especially our government to ensure a deal that would set a path for climate justice and restore the dignity of Africa and others whom development had so far eluded. He also proposed a novel solution to tax rich countries 0.75% of their GDP. This could render \$600bn next year to help developing countries leapfrog to greener development paths – a suggestion that is bound to raise controversy.

Solon suggested that the formal negotiations could fail the developing world, given his experience "inside." "The key thing is not the talks inside, but those outside... It is to inform the public that there is a need for reform. We must do everything to stop an agreement that would burn the world and especially cook Africa."

He emphasized that the current deals on the table would not prevent a world average rise of 4 degrees Celsius in temperature this century – which

could mean that Africa heats up by a staggering 8 degrees, according to the UN Environment Programme's latest predictions. This would be "genocide", as it would wipe out human living conditions on the continent.

Solon, who was Bolivia's ambassador to the UN for three years, is at COP17 in Durban. This time not as a formal negotiator, but in his personal capacity to lead a civil society bid to pressurize negotiators to come to a fair, legally binding and ambitious agreement, and agitate for a new approach to the talks – one in which the Rights of Mother Earth takes precedence.

**People's Climate Charter piloted on the train**

He had helped spearhead the consultations that led to the adoption of the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth in Bolivia and in Ecuador last year. This has since sprouted a Global Alliance for the Rights of Mother Earth. The Climate Train engagements across South Africa has participated in piloting a local declaration, in the form of a People's

Climate Charter draft document – intended to result in a solidarity declaration from an African perspective.

Solon said that since Cancun, most developed countries have "softened" their earlier promises. Neither has much come of commitments for funding to vulnerable and poor countries to help them reduce emissions and adapt to severe weather events. He said many of the pledges, vaguer promises and carbon market mechanisms made recently actually shifts carbon reduction burdens to developing countries. Thereby, he said they were "cheating".

"I have been inside COP15 and 16", he said. "What is the discussion about really, the most key issue? (It is) what is going to be the emission reductions

*Continued on page 11*

**Civil society is the king pin to COP 17 success**

## YOUTH CARAVAN COVER 15 COUNTRIES FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE



**NASREC: Zambia, Uganda, United States of America, Canada, Cameroon, Kenya and South Africa. These countries were all represented in one room to make their voices heard in the fight against climate change.**

Though the 17th Conference on Climate Change is only starting on Sunday, 28 November in Durban, a group of passionate youth from around the world created their own platforms to address their concerns about climate change.

During its last day in Gauteng, the Climate Train was host to 150 youth from around the world and Gauteng MEC of Agriculture and Rural Development at the Nasrec Station.

**150 youth journey for climate**

It's been a long and tiresome journey to South Africa, but the Act Now for Climate Justice Campaign and the youth caravan made their way in large numbers to the station to meet the MEC to spread their message for climate justice. The Pan-African movement of people, faith communities, faith leaders and 150 youth are on a three week long road trip throughout Africa to share the need for a just and robust outcome of the climate negotiations at COP17.

On their travels through five countries, they hosted a series of events, concerts, rallies and actions linked together by a convoy of buses travelling from Kenya to bring the message across that COP17 must deliver a fair and ambitious climate treaty that secures the future.

Nancy Njeri (22) from Kenya said this project has been a dream come true for the youth of Africa.

Youth teaching each other

"This project was conceptualized by the Kenya Youth Climate Network and together with NGO's and faith based organisations we decided that this would be the perfect time to travel through Africa and raise awareness about climate change as COP17 is being hosted in SA for the first time."

She said the aim of the caravan is to sensitize youth and get them to act on climate change.

"We as the youth are the future and most vulnerable to climate change, so it is vital that we reach as many people as possible so that they are empowered," she explained.

**Through 15 countries for climate awareness**

The four caravans travelled through 15 countries hosting awareness campaigns about climate change to finally reach South Africa, just in time for COP17.

Alphazard Gitau Ndungu (21) who has been on the caravan since its departure in Nairobi the 7th November, said although it's been a tiresome journey, filled with challenges, it has opened the door of possibilities. "The caravan is a fusion of 18 different cultural



Pablo Solon

*Continued on page 8*

## Diamonds in the rough

**KIMBERLEY:** Today we figured out from first hand experience why Kimberley is known as the city of diamonds. We might not have found a hidden bag of jewels, but what we did find was something far more valuable.

A diamond in the rough, unspoiled treasure, with a shine so radiant that it lit up the entire room.

Twelve year old Rethabile Senye of White City, Kimberley, showed herself to us during our journey in Kimberley. Soft spoken and unassuming, her innocent face could easily have been overlooked in the crowd of 600 learners that filled the station platform.



*Resident poet, Mbali Vilakazi adding her signature and message to the canvas*

### Let the children speak

But her worth was far too great to be ignored. During an imagination and painting activity, it emerged that this young girl had written a poem. When Elizabeth Fletcher, COPART writer heard Rethabile's poem, she knew what to do. She took the young girl to meet the train's resident poet, Mbali Vilakazi, who had inspired the 700-strong crowd that morning.

Using a wide range of references from Mandoza, to her being a descendent of the San, Rethabile recited a lyrical poem evoking the ancient oral tradition, entitled: "Welcome to my world, South Africa." With tears streaming from her eyes, she weaved seamlessly between English, her mother tongue Setswana and Afrikaans, leaving Mbali deeply moved. [insert the poem here please]

### Nobody comes to these far-flung communities

"These are the voices that need to be heard. Instead of giving long, complex speeches about adaptation and mitigation, perhaps we need to start listening more to people like this. Yes, there is plenty of work to be done around creating awareness and talking to ministers, but this train is enabling us to meet the unheard voices and discover them."

"This is the type of people we hope to reach and converse with throughout the journey. There is so much untapped and unpolished richness waiting to be discovered. This is part of the reason why I came all this way - to help people like her. No one comes to these far-flung communities. It's been a humbling and rewarding experience thus far," Mbali said.

For Rethabile, the visitation to the Climate Train was more than just a fun field trip, it was an opportunity to be heard. "I write poems because as a young South African I feel it's important that we make our voices heard to defend and celebrate our own heritage. Climate change is threatening to change everything we know," she said after her performance.

### Premier talks climate

During the day's programme Premier of the Northern Cape, Ms Hazel Jenkins, addressed the scores of guests including MEC of Environmental and Nature Conservation Ms Sylvia Lucas, Auditor General Mr Terence Nombembe and local dignitaries who filled the rows of



*Hazel Jenkins Northern Cape Premier*

seats stacked out on the platform under the morning sun. She commended the Climate Train and the work they are doing. "Climate change is a reality and we have all experienced its threats in all different aspects of life. The Climate Train offers communities a unique opportunity to raise their concerns and questions around this issue.

Everyone has a voice and our voices should be heard, even those ones who are unable to attend COP17. Thank you for mobilising our land and doing your bit to educate and raise awareness about this important issue."

While the learners from about six different schools got their hands dirty, planting trees and painting their interpretations of Mother Earth on and off the train and participating in educational activities, school educators also stepped on-board for a workshop around climate change in the conference carriage. Stakeholders and partnerships manager for Indalo Yethu, Sinegugu Zikhulu, said the workshops are aimed at providing ways in which climate change issues could be transferred in classroom lessons.

Grade seven educator, Mrs Rowan Eleanon, was in favour of this proposal, saying that it's important to educate people at grass-roots levels.

"The children of today are the adults of tomorrow. The more learning they get around climate change, the better the chances that by the time they are older, they are able to make an impact. They are the active preventers of climate change. It's an excellent idea to bring issues around climate change into the curriculum. If we don't do anything about it now, they will experience far worse situations," she said.



*Sylvia Lucas*



*Xunkhweza Combined Primary School pupils participating in the imagination painting activity outside on the train platform*

## UKZN to accommodate alternative COP17 civil society events

The University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) has been identified as the site of this year's COP17 alternative space, known as the 'People's Space', where national and international civil society will come together around the global issue of climate change.

The contract to utilise UKZN was signed on November 3, 2011, between the C17, a body mandated by over 80 South African civil society groups to coordinate civil society activities around COP17, and UKZN management, with the assistance of the university's Centre for Society and School of Development Studies.

C17 aims to provide a space in which to strengthen the climate justice movement in South Africa, while at the same time consolidating civil society actions across the world during the two weeks of negotiations.

The establishment of a parallel space at COP negotiations each year responds to the marginalisation civil society frequently experiences at these events and the lack of progress that has been made by international governments in addressing climate change.

"The People's Space" will thus serve as the space in which the people of the world can make their voices heard and where civil society can work towards creating another vision for addressing climate change by building a strong movement of like-minded activists and ordinary people from around the world.

Situated just six kilometres from the official UNFCCC event at Durban's International Conference Centre (ICC), UKZN's Howard College will provide room for key civil society events for the duration of the two-week conference from November 28, to December 9, 2011. C17 will engage with eThekweni Municipality to provide transport between the ICC and UKZN.

The People's space is expected to attract between 5000 and 6000 people during the course of the conference. Events include the Conference of the Youth (COY7) the weekend ahead of COP17, the international labour movement's Pavilion of Work, as well as numerous panel debates, art exhibitions and film festivals.

While the People's Space was initially intended to be held at the Durban University of Technology, C17, which is coordinating the space, eventually settled on UKZN and secured a number of venues to accommodate civil society events. "C17 recognises the value of bringing as many South Africans as possible to participate in the COP and decided to use our limited funding to do so. We chose UKZN as our next-best option based on criteria of distance and cost," says C17 coordination subcommittee convenor Siziwe Khanyile.

In addition to access to The People's Space, C17 is coordinating the Global Day of Action on December 3, 2011, to relay civil society's dissatisfaction with the pace of the UNFCCC negotiations. A peaceful march through the streets of Durban attended by upwards of 20 000 people will be supported by people around the world as they take action in their home countries.

C17 will also establish a climate refugee camp at Block AK near the ICC from the December 1 to December 6, 2011, highlighting the plight of climate refugees worldwide.

To apply for use of the space go to <http://www.c17.org.za/civil-society-space/participate>.



# LUHLAZA

## Blue - Green Conversations

Drawing by Dylan McGarry



## Cultural Climates

The broad sphere of sustainability oftentimes responds almost entirely to the symptoms of climate change and environmental decline, or perhaps the structural or technical elements of our system, aiming to try 'fix' the problems, as if only a single component is 'broken'. Yet we all know the social and natural world is too complex and organic to be treated like a broken toaster.

sources, to name just a few.

In my research I often come across people using the words "raising awareness" when referring to climate change education but in Southern Africa, and I am sure in most parts of the world, merely raising awareness or behaviour-change models are just not enough. What is working in Environmental Education in Southern Africa is capability-centred, agency-based positions to learning and adaptation, and specific attention has been given to social and situated learning. That is to say educational methodologies that draw from cultural-historical approaches to learning, that are social, creative and imaginative, it is processes such as these that have proved more useful as these enable reflexive engagement with contradictions and tensions that have the potential to enhance capabilities and social change processes, especially those on the front lines of climate change.

Sometimes people think that we are just 'doing art' on this train. The COPART cultural practitioners, from the poets, to the visual artists are expanding the concept of art and developing accessible instruments, practices and new social spaces that engage these forms of learn-



ing. Learning that engages our deeply embedded values, that creates spaces for new personal or relational cultures to emerge, and, through experience, transforms historical and contemporary knowledge into knowing. This is the work that is needed to be the social and cultural foundation for any transformations in climate change science, technology, politics or economics.

*Dylan McGarry is an Environmental Scientist, artist and recently a student in Social Sculpture; he is currently completing his split site PhD in Environmental Education and Art, at the Environmental Learning Research Centre at Rhodes University's Education Department and at the Social Sculpture Research Unit, within the Art Department at Oxford Brookes University. He is also coordinating the cultural climate education programme for the Climate Train. To keep up with his writing and work visit [www.dontcopoutcopart.blogspot](http://www.dontcopoutcopart.blogspot) and also visit [www.earthfora.org](http://www.earthfora.org) which is his personal contribution to the Climate Train.*



A year ago when the Climate Train was still a dream to most, and a constant feature of our daily conversations, Elizabeth Fletcher (my co-conspirator within the COPART movement) reminded me that the word 'climate', its not just about weather, it has two interpretations, either: 'the weather conditions prevailing in an area' or 'the prevailing set of attitudes in society'. It is the latter, the prevailing set of attitudes in society, that we knew we had to our attention to. It is the realm in which all major environmental challenges were birthed, and it is within these cultural climates that most of us are working on the Climate Train. Climate change discourse can often overlook the need to work with the fabric of our cultural climates and to explore the areas where consciousness is lacking. Our disconnections, not only with the earth but also between each other, develop and materialise into problems like pollution, over-consumption, inequitable sharing of natural re-





For the past week we've been doing a lot of climate talk, tree planting and painting with the aim to raise awareness about climate change. We've travelled through four cities and worked with over 3000 children and adults, but when we arrived in Klerksdorp, we were taught a couple new moves.

Welcome to Klerksdorp, where the community don't only walk the talk, they dance along to its tune.

Known as the "city of people" the foot prints of the first gold miners still run deep in the streets of Klerksdorp. Now, years later, this very community is creating a new kind of footprint – a lower carbon footprint, that is.

#### **Beats and dance teach climate lessons**

In a predominately Afrikaans speaking area, John Sekobo from the Abogazi cultural dance group found that it became increasingly difficult to explain concepts such as "climate change, greenhouse gases and mitigation" to community members, particularly children.

With a deep love and appreciation for nature and the preservation of it, John, together with five other group members came up with a plan to teach children more about climate change. This plan involved no long power point presentations or complicated terms – just a few beats and freedom of movement.

John explains: "What child likes to sit in hour long presentations about things they have no knowledge of? Because it's such an important issue and vital that they receive as much information about it as possible, we started a dance group, teaching and educating them in a fun and relaxed way. Through dance we endeavour to teach children the effects of climate change and show them ways to contribute to making a change.

#### **Soil, plants and oxygen masks make it real**

Using plants, soil and even oxygen masks as props, children are taught about the importance of plants, weather pattern changes and health consequences by exploring new dimensions of climate change through the movement of their bodies.

Seipati Lemeku (11) from Vaal Park, who was on board the Climate Train for the afternoon's activities, said Abogazi offers her a fun way of learning new things. "My friends and I love to dance. The Abogazi cultural dance group makes learning so much fun. While we practice the dance moves, we learn about plants and nature," she said.

She added that everything she learnt on the train, was part of their dance routine.

#### **Pick it up and recycle**

"In the train we were taught about Mother Earth and how it's important to look after her, because all the

litter and pollution is making her sick. When John and his group visited our school to teach us the dance, we were taught that plastic and garbage were all bad for the earth and that we should pick it up and recycle it instead," she continued.

Diketso Molema (12) said although she learns a lot at the dance class, activities on the train also helped her to gain new knowledge.

"We watched movies about climate change and wrote messages to Mother Earth. I am happy that I came. I am excited to go home and tell my family about my experience."

#### **Relationships with earth and air**

Dressed in yellow and green, the Abogazi cultural dance group entertained the community on the stoic station, incorporating both plants and oxygen masks. Their routines consisted of three movements, using a combination of physical theatre and dance; exploring the relationship they each share with earth and air.

As they moved effortlessly across the platform, each dancer inhaled deep breaths of air as though if every breath was used to enrich their bodies – which gave the illusion of a dying and sick patient grasping for his last breath.

Later on about 40 children joined them on the platform as they expressed their love for earth through dance.



#### **Continued from page 1**

While to some extent the build-up to COP17 had been overshadowed by the Occupy Wall Street movement and its spin-offs across the globe, solidarity from other parts of the world is building, activists told the Green Times.

#### **1.5 degrees is max for Africa and small islands**

The South African civil society network centred on the negotiations, C17, says it is agitating for an "ambitious, legally binding agreement" that specifically targets a reduction of emissions that would

ensure 1,5 degrees Celsius in order to safeguard Africa and small island states.

"Climate Justice (for Africa) is also at the top of our agenda", said Makoma Lekalakala of Earthlife Africa Jhb. Climate justice refers to processes to restore fairness and equity to developing countries. It calls for wealthy developed countries to pay their climate debt, amongst others by cutting their emissions decisively, thereby allowing poorer regions to take up more carbon space. In addition, it calls for the transfer of green technologies to enable developing nations a better chance of catching up with wealthier parts of the globe.

Another of the networks, Climate Justice Now (CJN), is less optimistic about a fair deal. Although it has taken hands with C17, its members believe that too much energy is being devoted to the Climate Fund at the expense of "real issues" affecting the poor and climate vulnerable.

#### **Elite benefit from carbon trading**

"Elite structures are using the crisis to benefit from carbon trading. Environmental organisations can't work together, as some of them are getting kick-backs from carbon trading. ... The current dynamics are benefiting only the top 1% of the world", said CJN Durban coordinator Prof. Patrick Bond.

"I have no hope, as the presidency is the same person who denied the Dalai Lama a visa to share Desmond Tutu's birthday", he said of the South African government's role as host and therefore chief negotiator.

One of the more prominent climate champions attending is Nnimmo Bassey, whose book, *To Cook a Continent*, has just been published. Bassey told Pambazuka News this week: "Civil society groups through campaigns, mobilisations and community meetings have made good efforts in communicating climate challenges.

I am aware of efforts being made with youths and children as well as with women groups. Much more needs to be done by government. People are still being taken by surprise by climate change impacts. The people are not being prepared for the huge challenges rolling down their way. Much more work remains to be done at all levels.

Those making their way to Durban include a "Trans African Climate Caravan of Hope," a bus convoy through eastern and southern Africa, assisted by the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance, as well as large NGOs such as Friends of the Earth International and Greenpeace along with networks of international labour federations and grassroots groups like Via Campesina, a Latin American small farmers network which has notched up a range of victories in defeating policies that marginalized them.

Another prominent figure at COP17 would be former Bolivian ambassador to the UN, Pablo Solon, who was a key driver of his country's ground-breaking agreement on a Universal Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth. The declaration stemmed from alternative climate negotiations following the failure of COP15 in Copenhagen in 2009. It has since given rise to the Global Alliance for the Rights of Mother Nature, which is sending a sizable group of representatives to Durban to drum up support for the principles contained in the declaration.

They will share the stage at several occasions with South African environment lawyer, Cormac Cullinan, who was instrumental in the declaration and is currently piloting a South African version inspired by the Freedom Charter. Cullinan's draft People's Climate Charter has been a cornerstone of engagements with the public on the Climate Train.



**KLERKSDORP:** "She is the frame of the unexpected. A young girl with no rank and no title, just two small hands that carry her entire community. There are no facilities here; there are no green bins that line the streets, just her understanding."

On Saturday, 5 November these profound words of poet Mbali Vilakazi came to life in the dusty community of Kanana, Klerksdorp.

With a heart bigger than her tiny hands, two year old Mamelo Machobo from Vaal Park captured the hearts and minds of the Climate Train team.

#### **Barefoot across thorny field she meets us**

Barefooted, she trotted across the thorny field to meet the Climate Train team, who were off-loading trees from the back of the bakkie at the Kanana Community Arts Centre. Amazed by the amount of plants and people around her, her curious brown eyes lit up with excitement.



Two year old Mamelo carrying a plant

Without anyone asking her to help, she picked up a plant and carried it over the gravel path. With great pride, she cautiously placed the tree alongside the others. Linzi Lewis and Wayword Sun, from AMBush Gardening Collective, were preparing the ground for planting.

At first she tried to lift the heavy water bucket, then realized it was too heavy for her frail arms. To and from she walked between the tap and the plants to fill her cooldrink bottle with water.

#### **Pouring water into a new life**

This young girl not only brought life to the poem, but to her community. Every drop of water she poured onto the plants was a deposit to a new life.

AMBush, with the help of the dedicated team of the Abogazi cultural group, quickly transformed the dry and polluted ground. Where asbestos lay across the field, there was now a beautiful garden, boasting with Imphepho, wild olive, aloe and crassula trees. "People who live in this community have very small yards. Even if we wanted to plant trees, we are not able to because of the lack of space. I am so glad that the plants are being planted here at the Community Centre, where everyone has access to it and can appreciate it," said Thandi Webb, who was also intrigued by AMBush's visit to Kanana.

#### **One of the greatest days of my life**

One person who particularly enjoyed the afternoon was environmentalist Laurence Nokonyana, member of the Abogazi Cultural Group.

"Today is one of the greatest days of my life. I feel like a child who has just received a new toy. It might not seem like a big project to many, but what happened here today was the beginning of something new. I am overjoyed by everything that we learnt over these past few days that we spent in the company of the Climate Train team."

AMBush also revived the existing vegetable garden and enhanced it with a variety of indigenous medicinal plants.

#### **Creating meaningful and functional spaces**

Linzi, who has an MSc in sustainable tropical forestry, specialising in urban agriculture and bio-diversity said the idea behind their project is to create more



dry, polluted spaces turn into lush gardens

functional and meaningful spaces for people to use.

"We usually go into uncared for and wasted spaces and beautify it to uplift both public and accessible land. We had a great time gardening in Kanana. It's important to touch base with communities, especially those that are trying to do something. The reaction we get from the people is always rewarding. It's all about contributing to a better environment for all and learning from one another," she said.

On the last day at Klerksdorp Prince Phoko bid the train goodbye, sharing his hope for this community: "If only the government can be as passionate about climate change as they are about HIV and Aids, because to me it's just as serious and scary. Prevention is better than cure. Thank you for the great work you guys are doing in educating so many people about this important cause."

### **Seeing the world through different eyes**

NASREC: Ask the Kliptown youth which million words their pictures tell about and you will see the effects of climate change in their community. The German developing agency, GIZ has committed itself to supporting Idalo Yethu and the South African Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) in preparing for the climate summit COP 17, which starts in Durban on 28 November 2011.

Part of its support for DEA is raising public awareness of the causes and consequences of climate change in South Africa. With climate change becoming an increasingly bigger threat to people living in informal settlements, GIZ and the German Embassy in Pretoria invited 15 youth members from the Kliptown Youth Programme in Soweto to participate in their 'Climate change at eye level' photo competition on climate change.

The contest comprises of educational dialogues on the impact of climate change on South Africans, and encourages participants to share their very personal stories about climate change in the form of photography and storytelling. The images taken during the tour will be exhibited on the Climate Train and displayed on [www.southafrica.diplo.de](http://www.southafrica.diplo.de).

#### **Impressions of climate change**

On Tuesday, 8 November Guy

Stubbs from African Honey Bee sat down with the group of enthusiastic youth in the conference carriage, to chat about climate change. After the discussion all 15 of the group members were handed a digital camera and tasked to go into their community to photograph their impressions of climate change.

Excited about their new toys, they went home to start their task. The next day, all of them returned to the Climate Train at Nasrec Station, eager to show off their photos.

Leader of the Kliptown Youth Programme, Siyabonga Bukhwele (24) said the project opened his eyes to the serious consequences of climate change within his community - things he has overlooked for years.

#### **When garbage becomes normal**

"When one lives in an environment where streams of dirty water run through the gravel streets, where dumps of garbage bags and dirt lie everywhere, you almost become oblivious to it and start to think that it's normal. But after the two days we spent on the train learning about climate change and actually going into our communities and taking pictures of all of these problems such as pollution and toxic water, you realise that this is not the way to live."

Holding a camera in his hands was a first time experience for Leonard Duba (20). Overwhelmed by his excitement, Leonard captured over 1000 images of his interpretations of climate change. Amongst the plenty of photos he took was waste material laying around on a near-by field and a broken sewerage pipe.

"Children play in this dirty water and that's why they are always ill. This project has taught me to reduce our waste and remove the litter and pollution around our homes. It meant so much to me for someone to trust me with their possession and take time out to teach me new skills and information."

#### **Youth spreading climate education further**

Leonard, who is also a dedicated after-school teacher at the Kliptown Youth Programme Centre in Soweto, said he was looking forward to sharing his newly gained knowledge with his grade two class.

"It's important to share one's knowledge so that we all can learn from it and move forward to a better life. The things we learnt are so interesting, I am sure that we will have lots of fun teaching it to the children."

Guy said he was very impressed with the students' work. "I was surprised by the quality of their photographs and how they managed to capture everything. They are a group of enthusiastic students, who just wants to learn as much as they can. If we can provide them with such opportunities, we can be assured of change. They have so much potential and put so much effort into their work. It was amazing to see how aware of their communities they were. They didn't only see the problems, but came up with solutions as well."

Web users are encouraged to select the 25 best pictures, which will then be exhibited at the German pavilion at the Climate Change Response Expo during COP 17. The best picture will be chosen during the climate summit and its photographer awarded a trip to Germany.

[www.southafrica.diplo.de/photocontest](http://www.southafrica.diplo.de/photocontest)



Siyabonga Bukhwele in front of his house with his camera



*Kyla Davis with some students*

PRETORIA: Whoever said that games and humour should be left for after school hours obviously hasn't been on-board the Climate Train.

At first glance it may have looked like business as usual around the buzzing grand old Pretoria Central Station, but it was more than just an ordinary day at work for the team of climate educators inside.

The Climate Train has dedicated themselves to raise awareness about the causes and underlining consequences of climate change throughout South Africa. A wide range of engagement techniques, some being piloted for the first time, are used to explore people's individual relationship with Earth.

When Kyla Davis and Craig Morris from Well Worn Theatre Company joined the team at the train's 9th stop in Pretoria, this dedication was simply enhanced.

### **Jumping to the tune of trees and bees**

Inside the bustling station children were in no short supply on the platform, as though rail transport had become the environmentally preferable mode it should. Over 100 primary school pupils from in and around Pretoria were seen jumping up and down and rapping along with Kyla and Craig.

Their project is underpinned by a strong environmental ethos and aimed at creating, amongst others, new and stimulating theatrical work around the themes of climate change, global warming and the ever-growing 'Eco-Consciousness' changing mind-sets across our planet.

In a wide circle surrounded by 200 indigenous trees, Kyla and Craig took the children on an imaginary journey exploring climate change and biodiversity through a series of games as part of their "Pollution Revolution" programme.

### **Entertain and educate at the same time**

"People think playing games is a waste of time, but we use theatre to create a sense of fun, playfulness and adventure and so to educate children about climate change. It's an incredible communicative tool, because we are able to entertain and educate at the same time," said Craig.

Centred around the tree R pillars namely reduce, reuse and recycle Kyla and Craig taught the pupils a rap song called 'greenhouse gas rap', messaged around how individuals can make small changes in the fight against climate change. The constant announcement that could be heard echoing throughout the station wasn't enough to distract the pupils from

the task at hand.

"We found that theatre is a very good way to communicate complex terms such as climate change. It's about allowing people to learn through experience, integrating actions with words so that even if they don't remember all the words to the rap, they will remember the actions that will hopefully trigger a thought," Kyla explained.

After about 15 minutes of learning the rap, the children nervously got onto the stage in the garden-room carriage to perform it in front of their fellow classmates and a group of Indalo Yethu volunteers, who were all seated in the carriage.

### **Take a walk with me**

"This is my house in 2040 - it saves energy, take a walk with me. It didn't happen overnight, not the speed of light, one step at a time so listen to this rhyme," Bonolo Mampe (11), Katlego Matseke (11) and Eddwin Simelane (11) sang with complete confidence as the carriage cheered them on.

"I wish we can come here every day," said Bonolo. "I learnt about recycling and pollution and the important of trees. I really enjoyed my day here."

Eddwin (CORR) said performing the 'Pollution Revolution' was his favorite part of the day. "It taught me to focus and concentrate. It's a cool rap and I am definitely going to teach my friends when I get home, so that they can also learn about climate change."



*Craig Morris with some students*

United Nations secretary-general Ban Ki-moon said the Green Climate Fund needs to be launched in Durban. "Durban must complete what was agreed last year in Cancún," he said, "An empty shell is not sufficient." It was agreed in Cancún, Mexico that the fund would be launched to help climate vulnerable developing countries stave off the brunt of the cost that climate change would impose on humankind. "Durban must advance a work programme on loss and damage to respond to the needs of countries like Bangladesh that are particularly afflicted by extreme climatic events," he said at the Climate Vulnerable Forum 2011 in Bangladesh this week. "We cannot ask the poorest and most vulnerable to bear the costs." (bd-news24.com/ssz/bd/1253h)

"Climate change constitutes a serious injustice and must be acknowledged by the global community," Bangladeshi Prime minister Sheikh Hasina said this week: "We are bearing the brunt of the damage though we made negligible or no contribution to the menace." (bdnews24.com/ssz/bd/1253h)

"You are right to say that we may not expect an equitable outcome from Durban. Nevertheless, Durban will be a great moment to intensify campaigns against the business-as-usual manner [in which] the negotiations have been conducted. Durban has a rich history that will inspire the climate justice movement to get stronger. Remember that Gandhi's non-violent resistance was more or less birthed in Durban. Some of the most intense organising against apartheid also occurred in Durban. Currently, Durban is the hub of the environmental justice activism in South Africa. This has not occurred accidentally. Durban has some of the most polluted neighbourhoods in the country, with highly polluting refineries and chemical factories located there. The building rage on the streets of Durban will inspire the Climate Justice movement. For me, the need to resist the planned offshore exploration for crude oil off the coast of Durban, an act that is bound to rub salt in raw injuries, holds an additional pull."

"If climate debt is accepted and paid, it will right many historical wrongs, provide funds for adaptation and for building of resilience in vulnerable territories and nations/regions. It would also help exploiters and polluters to seek just ways of doing business and of relating to others. It would require a rethinking of our global accounting books. It would show that the so-called poor countries have credited and subsidised the rich nations and that the 'rich' nations are actually the debtor nations. The question of lending money to developing countries for adaptation would not arise as the payment of the debt would suffice and probably leave a surplus. In fact the whole idea of adaptation without halting the causative factors driving the problem to which nations must adapt is unacceptable... The fundamental driver of the argument is business as usual. This has made some see climate change not as a crisis but as a business opportunity."

Nnimmo Bassey is a Nigerian environmentalist, activist and poet, elected chair of Friends of the Earth International and executive director of Environmental Rights Action. Quoted this week in Pambazuka News and African Agenda, a publication of Third World Network-Africa.





## Who were we waiting for?

KRUGERSDORP: "Many hands make light work". This idiom was particularly true for the Climate Train on Monday, 7 November, when the entire team came together for a collaborative AMBUSH (guerrilla gardening) on the corner of Market and George Street, Krugersdorp.

A once dirty and filth ridden corner is now a cleaner, unpolluted area. The Climate Train team had removed a total of 25 garbage bags filled with vile waste and dirt.

In the cool of the afternoon, in the busy streets of Krugersdorp, the Climate Train team engaged with the community. Armed with garbage bags, gloves and heaps of determination, the team got their hands dirty and quickly transformed a space adjacent to the taxi rank into a beautiful clean piece of art.

## Smells posed health risks

Johannes Nkosi, who owned a fruit stall next to the dump, said the smell which was coming from the dirt affected his sales severely and posed a health risk to everyone who walked past.

"There are always mosquitoes and flies lingering around the fruit, spreading its germs all over. No one wants to buy from us because it smells so bad. It's really unhygienic to have open bags of dirt lying around where mice and cockroaches run around. Many customers have complained, but what can we do? It's supposed to be the municipality's responsibility to clean up and collect the dirt every week, but the dirt has just been piling up." While Wayword Sun from AMBUSH was planting trees, Mbali Vilakazi was composing a poem on the pavement, creating a serene and calm atmosphere. Meanwhile the rest of the team was collecting dirt and cleaning up.

## Suit and tie picks up a broom

Even though Francie Sithole was due to clock in at work at 6 o'clock, only 45 minutes away, it didn't stop him from lending a helping hand. Dressed in his black formal suit, Francie stepped out of his comfortable car, tucked his tie into his white crisp shirt, rolled up his sleeves, picked up the broom and started sweeping.



"I was driving on my way to work and noticed what was taking place. As a resident, I felt compelled to get out of my car to come and help. Seeing the street so dirty really breaks my heart. Why are we always waiting on other people to come and help us, why can't we do it ourselves? After all, it's our dirt that lay strewn on this pavement," said the Angus Tours travel agent.

Once the dirt was removed, Dylan McGarry from COPART, picked up his paintbrushes and created a beautiful art piece on the ground, depicting a huge tree with its branches and leaves growing in every direction. Maggie Singo (9) daughter of the fruit stall owner couldn't resist and pitched in too. Dressed in her grey and blue school tunic, she ran back and forth from the stall, where she was helping at the corner where Dylan was painting.

## Painting a beautiful world

This was the first time she held a paint brush in her hands. "I have never painted before. I can't believe all the dirt is gone. It looks so clean and beautiful. I can't wait to show my friends what I've done," she said with a smile.

As the day's activities drew to a close, onlookers and passerby began to crowd around the corner. Taxi driver, Aubrey Lefashe could not believe his eyes and committed himself to taking care of the plants by watering them everyday. "I am amazed! It is really our place? It looks beautiful! The only way people could continue to dump their dirt here is if they are blind. Seeing this work motivates me to be more responsible in taking care of our environment. We were living in hell with all this disgusting dirt, but now, we have a small piece of heaven."

The collaborative Ambush and clean-up operation in Krugersdorp is indicative of the vision of the train – mobilisation, dialogue and climate justice. Even though the local municipality failed to respond to the Climate Train's invitation to visit the train and participate in the activities, the team didn't allow it to stop the momentum. Instead they gathered all their tools and took their skills to the street.





## women crochet together for coral reefs

**PRETORIA:** On its travels through South Africa the Climate Train has been creating unique spaces for community members - notables and ordinary people alike - to engage in meaningful discussions around climate change and the lively Pretoria was certainly no exception.

When one thinks of crocheting, the first thing that comes to mind might be warm jerseys and doilies. On the Climate Change Train this feminine handicraft is more than that. It's a powerful tool used for creating learning spaces to understand the complexity of climate change and the effects it poses to coral reefs.

What looks like an informal chat around a cup of tea is in fact a work in progress for the team of the Woodstock Art Reef Project (WARP), whose second team joined the train in Pretoria.

Climate's impact on corals and hundreds of species. In the cool Sunday afternoon with the smell of the unexpected Highveld thunderstorms still fresh in the air, a small group of ladies congregated on the platform, chatting and crafting away, exchanging ideas, patterns, yarns and environmental information.

Having no immediate connection to the ocean, much less coral reefs, WARP, a satellite of the worldwide Hyperbolic Crochet Coral Reef Project, engaged the Pretoria residents in conversations around the impacts of climate change on coral reefs and the hundreds of species who depend on it, through crocheting.

This initiative started when founders Margaret and Christine Wertheim of the Institute For Figuring noticing that the crocheted models resembled corals, nudibranchs and other 'frilly' marine life forms. So started the first crocheted coral reef, which has since turned into a global awareness project.

### **Fragile ecosystems bear the brunt**

Encompassing mathematics, marine biology and environmental activism, the project refers to the fragility of ecosystems, the threat that global warming and CO2 emissions pose to the ocean's living coral reefs and draws attention to the effects of global warming on ecosystems and its living practices.

Amongst the group was a musician artist from Johannesburg, Khethi Ntshangase. With environmental issues close to her heart, Khethi was curious to experience the train and be a part of the build up to COP 17.

"I was invited by a friend to visit the train and I am so glad that I came, because I would never have

known about the impact climate change poses to coral reefs and marine life. Crocheting is such an interesting way to get people involved and engaged in conversations. It was very refreshing to just get an opportunity to be able to talk to different people and expand one's knowledge. I think it is also a creative way to bring the issue around coral reefs closer to home, even though we have no direct access to the ocean. It's like we're weaving words," she said.

### **Green is a mind-set**

Tribute Mbaweni from Pretoria said the highlight of her day was the engagement. Wearing a T-shirt with the phrase 'Green is more than a colour, its mind-set' she said: "I was expecting a long talk about climate change, but instead I experienced beautiful conversations with these women. One might think that crocheting is irrelevant, but today I learnt how everything on Earth is interconnected. Coral reefs and its living eco-systems is no longer an isolated topic for me. People who live in the in-lands such as Pretoria and Johannesburg are of the opinion that it doesn't affect them, so there is still a lot of education and awareness to be done. Today's experience helped me to appreciate the things that I can't see. It was very intriguing," she added while crocheting.

With the help of Zola Ndimande, members of Warp the women worked together with ease.

"We like to look at it as a celebration of coral reefs. Millions of reefs are dying because of climate change and it's important to create this awareness and spread the message. There is often no connection with coral reefs, because we can't see them, but once people get involved and start seeing the form of the coral while crocheting, they begin to understand. The free flowing interaction and engagement is just so refreshing and really opens our project to so much more," Zola explained.

What started off as an adventure ended up as a dedicated labour of love and soon the four new corals were completed.

The crochet coral reef will be exhibited at the COP 17 in Durban.

### **Youth Caravan - Continued from page 1**

that a global youth movement is possible. If we all come together in one voice, change is possible, irrespective of language, religion or background." Alphazard said the time to act is now.

### **Dried up rivers and starving communities**

"We've seen countless dried up rivers along the way, we've seen communities starved and deprived of food because of draughts. Before the trip I witnessed the first environmental refugee camp in Dadaab, where babies and adults alike died of dehydration and starvation. Climate change is reality and no matter how much government tries to run from it, it will creep up on us and destroy us all if no action is taken," he said.

According to Clair Morris from the United Kingdom her experiences with climate change has been very different to that portrayed in the media.

"We've met some of the most affected people and witnessed their dire situations, but it's been amazing to see that despite their situations, they are still so resilient. There is so much that we as developed countries can learn from them. This trip has caused me to re-think my consumption habits and ignited a



Leah Serafini

love for the protection of our land," she said.

Leah Serafini from Canada said she hopes for a meaningful agreement to be reached at COP17.

### **Time to leave arrogance at the door**

"I wish people can leave their arrogance at the door and find effective ways to help people adapt to climate change. Communication channels need to be transparent so that even the people on the ground re-

ceive economic and social justice. We as youth want global equality! So that everyone can live a prosperous life, because climate change is threatening to affect the livelihoods of everyone."

The MEC praised the youth for their inputs and dedication, saying that it's important

MEC

to learn from one another in leading to COP17. "We know that the youth are faced with many challenges, but we appreciate your dedication and sacrifices. Although your journey has started because of COP17, it shouldn't end here. Together we need to continue to reach out to rural and affected areas," she said.



Leah Serafini and the crew





Christelle Terreblanche

**LOUIS TRICHARDT:** *Climate change is fast becoming one of the biggest threats that mankind faces, yet if you walk through the village of Vatsonhga it's hard to believe any of the scientific predictions.*

At first glance Limpopo is not an ideal contender for South Africa's greenest city. Most farming activities in the area are now taking place on the edge of survival, due to even minor changes to rainfall patterns, aggravated by drought, threatening food security.

But on the outskirts of Limpopo, tucked away like a hidden treasure, is one of the city's best kept secrets. Nestled at the top of Ribolla Mountain is the self-sufficient cultural village of Vatsonhga.

#### **Enter a time warp**

With yards of green grass that seem to go on for eternity, roof tops of traditional huts peeking out of the hills - a picturesque view overlooking 25 surrounding villages in the Elim area - you'd be forgiven for thinking that you had entered a time warp.

The Vatsonhga Cultural Village Projects consists of 56 women and men from around Elim. They meet from Monday to Friday at this peaceful location, using various skills such as crafting, sculpturing, pottery, painting and dancing. On a blistering Saturday afternoon they had travelled about 70km to visit the Climate Train at our 11th station stop, Louis Trichardt. We were now on our way to drop them off at home to plant some trees.

"It was a fantastic day! I have personally learnt a lot about climate change, recycling and saving electricity and water. We knew about climate change, but took it so lightly. We didn't realise that it had already caused so much damage. We are so fortunate to live on such beautiful land, yet we brush off causes and consequences to climate change. But now that we've been empowered by all this knowledge, our duty is to spread this new gospel and educate more people so they can be aware," said project assistant manager Hlenkani Maluleke.

#### **With care, Earth will take care of us**

With a rich and wide variety of vegetation ranging from banana, guava, nuts, mangos, avocado and marula trees, we wondered whether the seemingly insignificant trees we brought along to plant will make any difference to this lush village. But Harry Nulovhedu from the project assured us otherwise.

"Today I learnt that deforestation is one of the main causes of climate change, therefore one can never have too many trees. This is the way people used to live centuries ago. They lived off the ground and re-

lied on it for everything. If you take care and appreciate Earth, she will take care of us. Every time we water these plants we will remember what we were taught on the train," he said while assisting WayWord Sun from AMbush Gardening Collective as he was preparing the ground.

#### **Somehow we will overcome**

Asked to share some of her challenges faced due to climate change, Irene Mukongonui said: "Normally we don't experience such heat and the rain patterns have also been quite irregular. Yet when I stand on this land and breathe in its fresh air, I feel its beauty and believe that somehow we will be able to overcome this problem we are facing now."

With 60% of the community members depending on farming and agriculture and no rain, they are growing increasingly weary. Food security is becoming a worrying concern, says Hlenkani Maluleke. "Most of these women come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Some are school drop outs and others come from really dire situations. Most of the farmers plough with corn, but the irregular weather patterns are affecting their crops, making it very difficult to farm."

## **Common need for change joins communities**

**POLOKWANE:** *Drought, lack of funds and land ownership problems. This is but a few of the challenges the Blood River shack dweller community's youth are facing.*

With unemployment, lack of resources, disease

and gangsterism the odds seem stacked against them, however the A Re Direng Mmogo Community Project still chooses to believe that there is hope. Despite these poverty traps holding them back, they refuse to lay down their weapons just yet.



Danielle Ehrlich from AMbush hands over the trees to Dineo Monam and Sandra Ramphela from A Re Direng Mmogo Agriculture Group.

Troubled by the high level of unemployment and substance abuse in their area, this group of 22 youngsters decided to diverge from the destructive way of life epitomised by the hundreds of the local youth and formed an agricultural group.

#### **Together we can make a difference**

"The name of the project means 'together we can make a difference'. The people in our area, particularly the youth, are not interested in agriculture, because most of them are involved in wrong things. It's our vision to do something out of the ordinary so that the community can learn new habits and reconnect themselves with nature and the environment. We believe that once people get connected with nature again, poverty will be alleviated and the youth will make better decisions," said Dineo Monam during her visit to the Climate Train in Polokwane.

On my journey through South Africa so far, I have had the opportunity to meet and encounter so many interesting people a hope and a desire for a better life. I remember the little girl I met in Krugersdorp, who at the age of two had the inclination that newly planted trees must be watered. She walked to and from the tap with her tiny cool-drink bottle until she was satisfied with the moist soil. I remember the man from Krugersdorp who stepped out of his cosy car, rolled up the sleeves of his business suit and helped us clear a week's long accumulated rubbish dump.

When you speak to communities, it is clear that climate change is a reality and they are bearing the consequences of it everyday. They want change. All they are waiting for is support and for someone to take them by the hand and show some interest in what they have to say. Just like the A Re Direng Mmogo Community Project.

#### **Sometimes there's no water in taps**

Even though they are still struggling to obtain land, they are refusing to step down; instead they passionately continue to press toward their goal.

"There is currently a scarcity of water in Limpopo. When you turn on some of the taps no water comes out. We haven't had rain for al-

most a month now, so getting good fertile land is difficult. We have however identified a favourable piece of land that belongs to the local traditional tribe. We met with them a few times to discuss our plans, but they haven't agreed to give it to us yet. But

*Continued on page 8*



## Toxic ripple effects of mining in Mokopane

*Sheltered from the fierce heat of the Naboomspruit sun, 16 Mokopane community members gathered for an Earth Forum in the cool shadows of an oasis of tall palm trees. These participants formed part of a community action group called Jubilee, which aims to address critical incidences of environmental injustice, particularly around the effect of mining on human and environmental well-being.*

The group was seated in a perfect circle, each holding a cupped hand of ochre tinted soil from the area. They were surrounding the Earth Forum's primary instrument: an oiled cloth placed on a round wooden table. This was where handfuls of soil had been placed from each town where Dylan McGarry conducted connective practices to encourage ecological citizenship. McGarry is a doctoral researcher at the Environmental Learning Research Centre at Rhodes University, and a COPART cultural practitioner on the Climate Train.



Photographer: Rafs Mayet

*The community members*

The group started a calm contemplation by exploring their imaginations and memories and actively listening to each other's reflections and hopes for the earth. Testimonials arose seamlessly from the gathering.

### **Benefit for one should benefit all**

"I don't want a luxurious life. I just want to be able to play with my children without worrying about toxic water and noisy operations in the background," said Joseph Matlangwe, a resident at Mokopane. When asked to reflect on what it takes to live well as opposed to living rich, he responded: "A benefit for one should be a benefit for all. I hope for a safe environment where people are not exploiting our land with quick get rich schemes." Audrey Molokomme confessed that living well for her is a life without restrictions and fresh food to eat from the ground.

The group listened carefully to the substance gathering in the forum, as each handful of earth was placed on the round table. It became increasingly clear that the effects of platinum mining in their neighbourhoods was inhibiting the simple expression of each

person's idea of living well, and was fundamentally jeopardising their health and ability to live safely.

Another group member said: "Mining companies should go mine where they come from and stop destroying our land with all sorts of pollution. We want a healthy environment again. Because of industrialisation in our land we are being deprived of our right to a healthier and better life."

### **Land for ploughing was taken away**

According to Phillipos Dolo, co-ordinator of Jubilee, the mining has deprived these people of access to land. "In rural areas we depend on the land for ploughing. The mining companies took all the land we worked on without any compensation." He added that due to the lack of employment in the area sex work and HIV/AIDS has become increasingly prevalent in the community. The companies have been mining for 16 years, yet it is only now that the people in the area are awakening to the aftermath of unsustainable mining enterprises. Mr Dolo highlighted the consequences of toxic sulphur nitrates, which carry severe health risks to the people living near the mines. "While companies' pockets become heavier, their vulnerable neighbours carry the physical costs."

As the forum drew to a close Lesiba Lamola shared. "There is no real platform for us to share and engage. We are always in the dark, and the government makes plans before they even consult us. The government should take us more seriously so that a better life can start because right now, there is nothing happening. We are not being properly consulted. Everything is done above our heads as though we don't exist. We hear things on TV, but yet we are the ones who are directly affected. They are making money at our expense."

### **Transformation starts with a dream**

In response to these emergent tensions McGarry concluded: "Creating a new space for something to emerge and expanding our capacities to listen is a valuable start, not only for your community, but also for how you engage government or the mining industry. I hope that this process has seeded something small in each of us. Any great movement or transformation starts with a dream. As citizens we need to fight together and create these spaces to share and have real conversations with politicians and decision makers on our own terms. There needs to be an attitude of active citizenship, as these are fundamental violations of human rights."

After the forum, McGarry established a working plan with the group to carefully work with the People's Charter for Africa, which is a draft, complementary charter to the Universal Declaration of Rights for Mother Earth. What happens next is dependent on how the people of Mokopane are able to negotiate meaningful change within the mining industry and how government deals with human rights violations caused by unsustainable mineral economies.

### **Common need for change joins communities** *Continued from page 1*

perseverance is the mother of success, so no matter how many challenges we are going to face, we are not going to give up. We have been struggling for five months now, but there is a need in our community and people need to be educated about climate change. Since we were born, the Earth has been caring for us, so now it is our turn to take care of her and give back," said another group member Sandra Ramphete.

As a way to generate money and move back to their traditional roots the A Re Direng Mmogo Community Project seeks to plant fresh produce such as spinach, cabbage, tomatoes, onions and carrots.

### **We can still rely on earth**

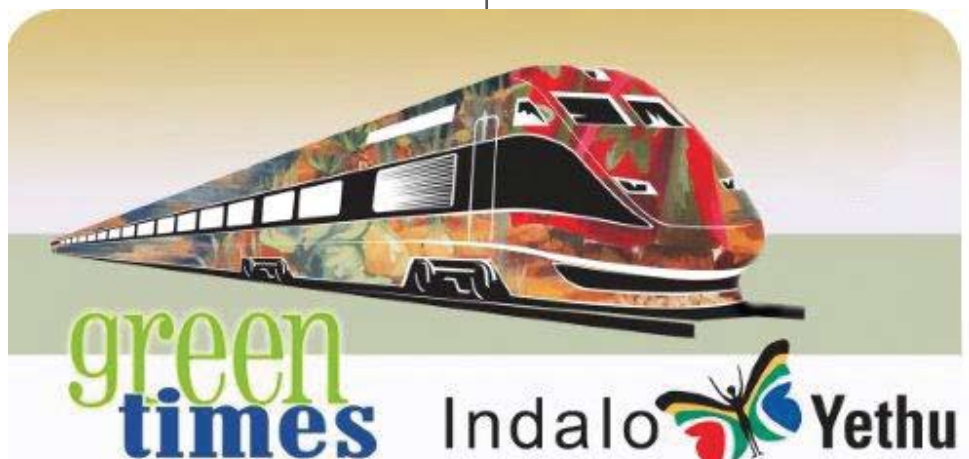
The Climate Train together with AMBUSH Gardening Collective donated 15 trees to the A Re Direng Mmogo Community Project, which they plan to plant in a nearby school.



"We want to be able to render a service to the community and show them that we are still able to rely on the Earth for our sustenance. Why must we buy fruit and veg from shops when we can grow it ourselves? We want to re-instil the love and appreciation for Mother Earth in our community."

This kind of passion and self-determination is what's needed in order to move forward to a better and healthier Earth. People recognize that climate change is affecting their livelihoods and have already taken the first step. But the road to a healthier Earth is not a journey that can be walked alone. If we want change to take place, we need to step out of our comfortable shoes, roll up our sleeves and join hands.

In all their diversity, I found one thing that is common in all the places that we've visited and that is peoples' deep longing for change. Nowhere in the six provinces that we've been to did we find communities waiting for government to educate and bring about change. Whether it was through dance, poetry or youth awareness groups, communities are choosing to empower themselves when it comes to climate change. Question is: are you willing to walk beside them and contribute to a healthier, greener life?





### *Civil society is the king pin to COP 17 success* *Continued from page 1*

from the developed countries... If the reductions are strong we will see a stabilisation of climate without a catastrophe. If the Durban (reduction) figure is low, the whole plan will (slide)."

#### **Last 24 hours is crucial**

Even though negotiators may make progress, the last 24 hours before the conclusion is crucial as heads of state tend to intervene to push national interests and this is where civil society should be prepared to amplify their voices to counteract the trend.

"The situation is very dangerous here in South Africa. We can have a worse result than Cancun and even Copenhagen (COP15), which could leave us with more non-sustainable market mechanism agreements", he stressed. "In Cancun many developing countries fell for the promises of carbon market money, when a proper climate deal started eluding the conference."

Only a systemic change in how the world functions and a new respect for "Mother Earth" could really stave off cataclysm.

"The issue not being discussed (but should be) in the negotiations is the real cause of climate change and growth in greenhouse gasses", said the man who had spearheaded numerous UN campaigns on amongst other the rights of indigenous people and human rights of access to clean water.

"What drives climate change ... is a system of profit and harm ... in which only humans have rights and the rest is treated as objects, that can be exploited and polluted. This has to change if we want to save the earth..."

#### **Nature needs rights and laws**

We should talk in the UN about structural causes of climate change and about giving nature rights and laws. We should change the way we relate to nature now, to respect Mother Earth.

*"Change the system, not the climate!"*

Solon also said that part of the problem was that 1% of the world controls 50% of its resources, something he believes has to change so that "all shall live well" on the planet, including other living beings, thus protecting ecosystems.

"We should be discussing mechanisms to distribute resources in a fairer way (to counteract for instance unemployment and poverty)", he said. "We need a balance between the needs of humans and Mother Earth... This system of competition and efficiency does not work. We need another system based on solidarity, sharing and respect. It is a pity we don't discuss this in the UN... The only solution is to have a strong civil society following what is happening to resources belonging to all of us."

#### **Massive difference in expectations**

He said currently there is a wide gap between the expectations of a 40 to 50% reduction from the developing countries' G77 group and the Cancun promises of a 13 to 17% reduction from the wealthy countries. "Some are only willing to reduce with 3% from 1990 levels in the next decade, such as the US and Canada, some say 30%", Solon pointed out with dismay.

This core agreement was rejected by Solon and his country at Cancun, to the chagrin of many. He still defends his stance – often alone in the negating chamber – that it would be tantamount to "suicide". On suggestions that the Cancun draft agreements could be "saved" in Durban, he is somewhat sceptical, saying that the average reduction promises have actually declined in the last year and is now closer to 13% by 2020, which is not enough to avoid catastrophe.

#### **Emissions exceed GDP**

Citing a recent Price Waterhouse Coopers report, Solon said emissions grew in the last year at a higher rate (5,2%) than the world average GDP (5%).

He reminded the audience that the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has committed all 192 members to "differentiated responsibility," which means that developing coun-

tries should be allowed more carbon space to meet their citizens' basic needs.

Up to 82% of current harmful gasses in the atmosphere are historically accumulated from rich developing countries' emissions, while the vast majority of the world's population contributed minimally. Currently the developed world still pumps out 20 tons of carbon emissions per person per day, while the average in poor countries is two tons per person. This meant that the developed world should take the lead in climate reduction pledges, but this is not happening. "There should be just access to the atmosphere!"

#### **Clean slate would wipe out historical responsibility**

He said currently the vast majority of people use about 20 to 25% of the carbon space. He also warned that there are moves by the rich countries to "wipe out their historical responsibility" in emissions at COP17 by suggesting all start from a clean slate, something that should be resisted as it would substantially weaken existing protocols.

Also on civil society's agenda for agitation in the recent proposals by some rich nations that their reductions should be "voluntary" rather than binding, he said this would render the Kyoto protocol "an empty shell" and "a weaker, more flexible maybe regime". The extension of the 1997 Kyoto deal, which lapses next year, is one of the top items on negotiators' priority lists. But Solon said despite the existing agreements, the market approach has not delivered anything resembling promises to transfer technology and funds to vulnerable countries. Many of the big powers are now reneging, suggesting that poor countries should themselves "mobilise" funds for adaptation and mitigation.

"All we ask is that they sign and comply", he said of the need to keep temperature rises below 1,5% for Africa and small island states' sake. "But many don't want to do that! ...The only thing left is to mobilise in Durban, but also in Japan, Russia, all over the world, to pressurise governments. Otherwise we will see a suicide pact here."

*By Christelle Terreblanche*



## Water is sacrificed for gold

**NASREC:** When the Climate Train arrived in Johannesburg, Nasrec station on Tuesday, 8 November we all knew we were in for an eventful three days. However, unless you're a football fan, you probably have very little reason to visit Nasrec Station. Since the Soccer World Cup was hosted in South Africa last year, this pristine station has for the most part been quiet. But when the train pulled up, voices could be heard in every corner of the remote station – whether it was shrieks of excitement from the children or simply opinions and views which were being raised by community members in the conference carriage.

An estimated 350 visitors flocked to the station over the three days, enabling the Climate Train team to engage in meaningful conversations with the Johannesburg communities.

### Captivating presence in bottle green dress

One discussion which struck home for a lot of the visitors was that of Ms Mariette Lieferrink, one of the country's foremost environmental activists.

On Wednesday the train was fortunate enough to host this dynamic woman.

Close to 25 women and men from Soweto gathered in the conference carriage and awaited the arrival of the Federation for a Sustainable Environment CEO.

Dressed in her signature traditional bottle green Chinese dress and matching earrings, Mariette walked through the door and her captivating presence was immediately felt throughout the 15m long carriage.

Addressing a very serious yet suppressed issue, acid mine drainage, Mariette shared her insight and knowledge about the world's second most dangerous environmental threat (next to climate change) with the crowd.



## 360 thousand litres of acid mine waste in our rivers

"We have sadly sacrificed water for gold. A magnitude of 360 thousand litres of acid mine waste, containing toxic and radioactive waste run through our rivers and streams every day, wiping out all fish, frogs and living species along the way and causing irreversible damage."

Mariette went on to explain that the mining industry has a history extending over more than a hundred years of breaking up, excavating and leaching some of the most poisonous substances known to man, and then abandoning such operations. As she continued to talk and share some of the most vivid pictures on the projector, the group which comprised mostly of Women in Environment members, listened intently.

She said the poor will bear the brunt, as more informal settlements are being built in close proximity to these toxic rivers, and some even being built on radioactive ground.

### Toxic water looks clean and fresh

"The problem with radioactive water is that it looks clean and fresh until lime is added to it. That is why it's so hazardous. This water is filled with heavy metals such as uranium, which can cause chronic kidney disease and cancer. There are serious health consequences associated with acid mine drainage, still you find children play in this water and animals drinking from it. This toxic orange coloured water is unfit for consumption and the dangers of the polluted water are unknown to the public. It seeps into the soil, affecting the crops and animals that eat off the ground."

During the discussion, Ms Msetesana Modise from People Life Environment Agency posed a question: "How will we know whether the land which houses are built on is safe and healthy ground? Are there people in our communities to advise us on these matters? As a young person I am worried about the access of information."

Mariette replied aptly by saying: "Next to the richest of mines live the poorest of people. This land is

toxic and unnatural. After many years of environmental advocacy and lobbying the government has looked into the dangers of radioactive mine dumps. South Africa has one of the best legislations and constitutions in the world, but unfortunately it is not enforced. Families living in these areas must be relocated. Communities need to make their voices heard and start speaking out. You have been given this information now, so go out and share it."

### Environmentalists are seen as threats

Gugu Mbatha from Vosloorus said that before Mariette's discussion, she had no idea about the dangers caused by acid mine waste. "I was blown away! The orange coloured rivers and ground she spoke about we see every day, yet we are so uninformed about the danger it poses. It stretched my knowledge and made me realise how desperately we need people like Mariette to inform and educate us. I wish more people were able to attend today's discussion."

Msetesana said the type of transparency portrayed by Mariette is what the community needs. "It was such an informative discussion. Government officials should be coming into our areas and educating us about it, instead they hide such information from us, knowing the dangers that we live under. I could relate to everything she is saying because I live right next to a mine dump. As an environmental activist in my community I try to spread the word, but now you end up becoming a threat, because uninformed people think you are trying to stop development."

Mariette's passionate and unselfish service to communities was clear throughout her hour long discussion. She has played a major part in bringing an environmental crisis, such as exists in the western parts of the Gauteng region through which the Wonderfontein Spruit flows, to the attention of the broader South African civilian population. Her work is of particular value to large urban settlements in industrial areas.



Write to Elma Pollard from the Green Times at [elma@thegreentimes.co.za](mailto:elma@thegreentimes.co.za) or Christelle Terreblanche from Indalo Yethu at [christelle@indaluyethu.org](mailto:christelle@indaluyethu.org)

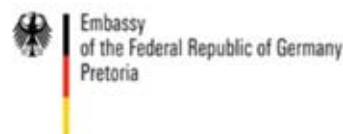
[www.thegreentimes.co.za](http://www.thegreentimes.co.za)  
<http://www.indaloyethu.com>  
<http://www.climatetrain.org.za>  
[www.facebook.com/indaloyethu](http://www.facebook.com/indaloyethu)  
<https://www.facebook.com/ClimateTrainCOP17>

With appreciation for our sponsor Indalo Yethu, supported by the DEA and the German Embassy, and other partners displayed here –

All stories and photographs by Sonia Koopman from the Green Times, unless otherwise indicated.



environmental affairs  
Department of Environmental Affairs  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA





COPART BLOG LINKS FOR CLIMATE TRAIN POSTS:

OCTOBER (8 posts):

[http://www.dontcopoutcopart.blogspot.com/2011\\_10\\_01\\_archive.html](http://www.dontcopoutcopart.blogspot.com/2011_10_01_archive.html)

NOVEMBER (32 posts):

[http://www.dontcopoutcopart.blogspot.com/2011\\_11\\_01\\_archive.html](http://www.dontcopoutcopart.blogspot.com/2011_11_01_archive.html)

DECEMBER (9 posts):

[http://www.dontcopoutcopart.blogspot.com/2011\\_12\\_01\\_archive.html](http://www.dontcopoutcopart.blogspot.com/2011_12_01_archive.html)

# Climate Express

Indalo  Yethu  THE WITNESS  
green times



**SAVING TOMORROW, TODAY**

## Ordinary folk must act now

*The public must be informed that there is a need for reform*

**CHRISTELLE TERREBLANCHE**

IT is up to civil society to prevent a potential genocide or ecocide being agreed to at the Conference of the Parties (COP17) in Durban, says a top climate change negotiator.

Pablo Solon stood his ground firmly against the world at last year's COP16 in Cancun, Mexico, believing that the deal on the table would do more harm than good to the developing world.

Delivering the Harold Wolpe Memorial Lecture in Cape Town ahead of the COP17 talks in Durban, he urged all South Africans to become involved in bolstering the hand of negotiators of vulnerable countries, and especially South Africa's.

Solon is pushing for a deal that will would set a path for climate justice and restore the dignity of Africa and others whom development had so far eluded. He also proposed a novel solution to tax-rich countries 0,75% of their GDP. This could render \$600 billion next year to help developing countries leapfrog to greener development paths — a suggestion that is bound to raise controversy.

Solon suggested that the formal negotiations could fail the developing world, given his experience inside.

"The key thing is not the talks inside, but those outside — it is to inform the public that there is a need for reform. We must do everything to stop an agreement that would burn the world and especially cook Africa."

He emphasised that the current deals on the table would not prevent a world average rise of 4°C in temperature this century, which could mean that Africa heats up by a staggering eight degrees, according to the UN Environment Programme's latest predictions. This would be



PHOTO: RAFS MAYET

genocide, as it would wipe out living conditions on the continent.

Solon, who was Bolivia's ambassador to the UN for three years, is in Durban in his personal capacity

and not as a formal negotiator. His task is to lead a civil society bid to pressurise negotiators to come to a fair, legally binding and ambitious agreement, and agitate for a new ap-

THE KEY THING IS NOT THE TALKS INSIDE, BUT THOSE OUTSIDE. WE MUST DO EVERYTHING TO STOP AN AGREEMENT THAT WOULD BURN THE WORLD AND ESPECIALLY COOK AFRICA.

proach to the talks — one in which the rights of Mother Earth take precedence.

### PEOPLE'S CLIMATE CHARTER PILOTED ON THE TRAIN

Solon helped spearhead the consultations that led to the adoption of the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth in Bolivia and in Ecuador last year. This has since sprouted a global alliance for the Rights of Mother Earth. The Climate Train engagements across South Africa have participated in piloting a local declaration in the form of a People's Climate Charter draft document. This is intended to result in a solidarity declaration from an African perspective.

Solon said that since Cancun, most developed countries have softened their earlier promises. Neither has much come of commitments for funding to vulnerable and poor countries to help them reduce emissions and adapt to severe weather events. He said many of the pledges, vaguer promises and carbon market mechanisms made recently actually shift carbon-reduction burdens to developing countries. Thereby, he said, they were cheating.

"I have been inside COP15 and [COP]16. What is the discussion about really, the most key issue? [It is] what is going to be the emission reductions from the developed countries. If the reductions are strong we

will see a stabilisation of climate without a catastrophe. If the Durban [reduction] figure is low, the whole plan will [slide]."

### LAST 24 HOURS IS CRUCIAL

Even though negotiators may make progress, the last 24 hours before the conclusion are crucial as heads of state tend to intervene to push national interests and this is where civil society should be prepared to amplify their voices to counteract the trend.

"The situation is very dangerous here in South Africa. We can have a worse result than Cancun and even Copenhagen (COP15), which could leave us with more non-sustainable market mechanism agreements," he said. "In Cancun many developing countries fell for the promises of carbon market money, when a proper climate deal started eluding the conference."

Only a systemic change in how the world functions and a new respect for "Mother Earth" could really stave off cataclysm.

"The issue not being discussed [but should be] in the negotiations is the real cause of climate change and growth in greenhouse gases," said the man who has spearheaded numerous UN campaigns on, among others, the rights of indigenous people and human rights of access to clean water.

**Continued on page 2.**



# Climate change affects all of us

... but it's the vulnerable who suffer the most

JUNE JOSEPHS-LANGA

THE world has descended on Durban. South Africa has had many noble titles bestowed on it. The world's miracle. The miracle nation. The nation of hope. And perhaps deservedly so because South Africa's struggle for the equal rights of all against institutionalised racism was a noble struggle. That SA's transition to a one-person-one-vote democracy was relatively peaceful, despite the many who had lost their lives in that battle, confirms that we have earned the title. The 17th Conference of the Parties to negotiate a global deal for addressing the climate crisis is the struggle that will be fought peacefully through negotiations taking place in Durban. The climate change frontier of struggle is one where the battle lines are sometimes clearly drawn, and at other times not so obvious. There is a clear understanding that developed countries have, through rapid industrialisation, contributed to the unacceptably high levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere which have resulted in the measured increases in the average global temperature. But there is also a question in our minds about how to consider other countries who do not fall into the category of developed countries, but who have significant carbon footprints. The footprint can be attributed either to high population size or being on a trajectory of rapid industrialisation. Without these countries taking significant steps to move to a more sustainable energy path and greening their economic growth, they also significantly contribute to the problem. While the negotiations will grapple with these issues, what is clear is that climate change and its resulting adverse weather impacts have devastating consequences for Africa and developing countries, including small island states whose very existence is under threat by the visible encroachment of sea on land. Increases in flooding, drought which threatens our ability to produce food, and new disease strains bring additional burdens to countries whose citizens are already just managing to survive. This struggle is about those who are least responsible not being made to carry the burden for a crisis they have least contributed to. This struggle is for the poor and vulnerable communities who have little carbon footprint to mitigate, but who will have little means to adapt to the changes they need to make in order to survive.

The climate change phenomenon

## NATURE REFLECTED IN CHILDREN'S ART



Children painting at De Aar station.

PHOTO: RAFS MAYET

is a scientific one, but the struggle is for justice and development. It is therefore not the scientists who should be marshalled as the forces for battle. They have done their work. The UN International Panel for Climate Change has presented the best science to show that climate change is real, and the natural ability of the Earth to cope is unbalanced due to excesses in human consumption. What is required is the political will to ensure all live well. Climate change and its adverse weather impacts and rises in sea levels have the ability to reverse our development gains since SA became a free country. And through extreme weather events, and flooding or drought in various parts of the country, we have seen that the poor in SA are most affected as they do not have the resources to recover from these setbacks. Freedom then means very little when your house has been flooded, and you sit huddled in a community centre you've been evacuated to knowing that everything has been washed away or destroyed. This struggle is for those people.

The Climate Train has crisscrossed the country in its ambitious pre-COP outreach to engage the nation in conversation about climate change and the impacts that people are experiencing. In the villages and towns in the seven provinces of SA, we have seen and heard the people's



PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Indalo Yethu CEO June Josephs-Langa speaks at Nasrec launch.

struggles. There are still traditional divides between middle class and poor people. There is also empathy and concern from middle-class citizens who want to do something, but just don't know what. Climate change does not discriminate and destroys everything in its wake.

Addressing climate change calls for a fair, equitable, inclusive and just global framework, a properly resourced Green Climate Fund; and a second commitment to the Kyoto Protocol is the battle prize. All citizens have to play a part in this struggle. South Africans know peaceful struggle, and must let their voices be heard. The COP president herself,

the head of the SA delegation and their ministerial colleagues come from a vibrant activist background and must lead the way in the UN process. The call to action is for each of us to tap into the vibrancy of our activist memory, and practise and deploy this peacefully in the various roles we play in the battle that unfolds in Durban. We must take the baton passed on to us as the people of Kwame Nkrumah — Wangari Maathai, and our own living global icon of hope, Nelson Mandela, in their struggle for the people of Africa to live dignified lives, free from poverty. Those countries who assisted SA to become the nation of hope through the many anti-apartheid movements must realise these negotiations call for their continued solidarity. We have taken our journey on the Climate Train to empower people with information to act. We have also begun a consultation on an African People's Climate Charter to ensure their climate rights and hopes are reflected in a common language that is written in their own words which include them in the climate discourse. Having heard their struggles, hopes and aspirations to be assisted to adapt in a changing climate environment, we hope all in Durban act with urgency for ALL to live well.

— June Josephs-Langa is CEO of Indalo Yethu, South Africa's environmental agency.

## Ordinary folk must act now

Continued from page 1.

"What drives climate change ... is a system of profit and harm ... in which only humans have rights and the rest are treated as objects, that can be exploited and polluted. This has to change if we want to save the Earth."

### NATURE NEEDS RIGHTS AND LAWS

We should talk in the UN about the structural causes of climate change and about giving nature rights and laws. We should change the way we relate to nature now, to respect Mother Earth.

### CHANGE THE SYSTEM, NOT THE CLIMATE

Solon also said that part of the problem is that one percent of the world controls 50% of its resources, something he believes has to change so that "all shall live well" on the planet, including other living beings, thus protecting ecosystems.

"We should be discussing mechanisms to distribute resources in a fairer way [to counteract, for instance, unemployment and poverty]," he said.

"We need a balance between the needs of humans and Mother Earth. This system of competition and efficiency does not work. We need another system based on solidarity, sharing and respect. It is a pity we don't discuss this in the UN.

"The only solution is to have a strong civil society following what is happening to resources belonging to all of us."

### MASSIVE DIFFERENCE IN EXPECTATIONS

He said that there is a wide gap between the expectations of a 40% to 50% reduction from the developing countries' G77 group, and the Cancun promises of a 13% to 17% reduction from the wealthy countries.

"Some are only willing to reduce by three percent from the 1990 levels in the next decade, such as the U.S. and Canada. Some say 30%," Solon said.

This core agreement was rejected by Solon and his country at Cancun, to the chagrin of many. He still defends his stance — often alone in the negating chamber — that it would be tantamount to suicide.

On suggestions that the Cancun draft agreements can be saved in Durban, he is sceptical, saying that the average reduction promises have declined in the past year and is now closer to 13% by 2020, which is not enough to avoid catastrophe.





Climate train arrival at Durban station.  
PHOTO: RAFS MAYET

# Reaching out to far-flung places

## *Climate Train proves to be a winner*

**CHRISTELLE TERREBLANCHE**

A WARM and jubilant crowd welcomed the Climate Train at Durban Station after its month-long journey through South Africa.

A palpable sense of expectation permeated through the crowd as the train took the last corner, after having visited seven provinces to engage with communities on their experiences of climate change and their needs in order to meet its challenges through mitigation, adaptation and protection.

It was the end of a journey taken under the banner Mobilisation, Dialogue and Climate Justice, with the train stopping at 17 towns and cities to spread awareness to far-flung communities who are often left out of the loop when important decisions have to be taken that impact on their livelihoods.

A range of dignitaries, including the UN's Climate Chief Christiana Figueres and EThekweni Executive Mayor James Nxumalo, accompanied by the council speaker Logie Naidoo, delivered official welcome messages to a crowd of well-wishers, pupils, diplomats, activists, artists and journalists.

Adding to the festivities were the South African Police Services' brass

band and traditional Zulu dancers and music, while cameras from international media houses flashed. Those who spent four weeks on the train to mobilise, educate and engage communities, civil society, officials and particularly vulnerable youth and women's groups, were clearly relieved to be able to take a breather.

The keynote speaker was Figueres, who urged other countries to emulate the unique Climate Train civil society outreach concept, which was unprecedented in scale and depth in the history of the UN's Conference of the Parties (COP).

Figueres, the executive secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) called the train a "fabulously brilliant idea".

She urged civil society in other countries to emulate the train outreach method in order to push for a solution to climate change.

"We cannot stand still on the platform," she said about the public. "Without pushing with the other wheel of the train (for the outcome wanted, little can be accomplished).

"We all need to say what must be done for the future of the children. It is not only the responsibility of the negotiations."

Indalo Yethu, the South African Environment Agency, was the lead partner in the train project, in collaboration with the British Council and Copart, the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (Prasa) and the Embassy of the Republic of Germany, with the support of the Department of Environmental Affairs, loveLife, Sanbi (The SA National Biodiversity Institute) and German Development Agenda GIZ.

The Climate Train represents a successful outreach programme which enabled participants to learn about people's climate hopes, aspirations, experiences and solutions en route to COP17 in Durban.

Figueres was moved to tears by the train's poet-in-residence Mbali Vilakazi's appeal for a new, inclusive language to conquer the climate-change challenge.

Indalo Yethu chief executive June Josephs-Langa said that the train showed up the harsh realities that some South Africans are coping with, which are exacerbated by climate change. "There are still traditional divides between the middle class and poor people.

"Climate change and its impacts do not discriminate. It is therefore an issue that we can be united in the struggle for."



PHOTO: RAFS MAYET

Mayor James Nxumalo (left) welcomes Climate Train activists.



PHOTO: RAFS MAYET

UN Climate Chief Christina Figueres and Indalo Yethu chief June Josephs-Langa.



# How can the leaves

## Coal-mining plans jeopardise the cul

DYLAN MCGARRY  
and CHRISTELLE TERREBLANCHE

*"HOW can the leaves on the tree say 'we do not care for the roots? How can they claim to be evergreen? Our elders are our roots, and we are the leaves. This is what we are seeing, the seeds are dying. Why?—because we do not care for the roots. The younger generations they are the seeds, they have lost their connection to the elders, saying 'we can live our own life' I learned this from my father, he was an elder."*

These are the words of Makaulule Mpatheleni, spokesperson for Dzomo la Mupo (The Mupo Foundation: [www.mupofoundation.org](http://www.mupofoundation.org)), who on November 15 handed over a letter to the Deputy Minister of Water Affairs, Rejoice Mabudafhasi, on behalf of a coalition of nine NGOs to call for a ban on a water licence application by Coal of Africa, an Australian mining company. The company is prospecting at the Vele mining site at the edge of the Mapungubwe World Heritage Site. This would also necessitate the extraction of underground water from an area in Venda to feed the new Medupi Power Station in the area.

The coal also happens to lie below sites deemed sacred by the Venda. A day after publication of the official appeal, Mupo's Moses Mudau received word that the company threatened legal action against them given the appeal. While the company dismissed as "spurious" the allegations when contacted for comment, it admitted it would revert to legal avenues if attempts to bring the company into disrepute continue.

On November 19 in Louis Trichardt, Makhado, a round-table exchange guided by the Climate Train team, was conducted with the women of Dzomo la Mupo, who guard the ancient water springs. They brought along their elders from far-flung communities such as Tshidzivhe, Vhutanda and Tshivhula. Sharing their heartfelt concerns and pain — ranging from the proposed mining in the area to the growing disconnection occurring between generations in their communities — they spelt out their demands to COP17 negotiators. New global reports suggest the Limpopo Valley is among the most climate-vulnerable sites globally, and the group is facing diminishing water supplies at a time when the coal mines are expected to use vast quantities of water.

The vision of Dzomo la Mupo (vhaVenda for Voice of Nature or Universe) is to revive the indigenous values of Mother Earth and to protect their sacred sites, traditions and way of life from unsustainable industrial development. One focus is to heal the ailing trans-generational knowledge pathways that are rapidly being eroded from the effects of rapid modernisation.

Mpatheleni says: "At Mupo we are working with elders. For us the elders are fountains of knowledge and without elders, we cannot say we will have a future ... For us, as we say we learnt from the elders, sacred sites are not just a forest or a cave, as the elders say, sacred sites



Dzomo la Mupo group, in the Climate Train exhibition carriage.

start very deep under the ground, beyond where we can reach up to, where we can't reach above the stars."

She stressed that sacred sites "connect us on Earth, and the ancestors in the ground and the one we don't know, meaning the creator.

"If you disturb the sacred sites, you interfere with the connection of spirituality, of where we are and where our water comes from. We have disturbed this cycle of seasons, that is why we have climate change. We go to sacred sites to pray for the health of whole communities. This is not a story, it is a reality. We want to raise this in a loud voice at COP17. Look at the disturbed indigenous forests, sacred sites and ecosystems. This is what causes climate change.

"Our children today are growing knowing another way of life. The children, they know that the food comes from the packets and from the shops, there is no relation to the soil ... How can our children believe in the knowledge coming

from the elders and from nature?"

### FORGETTING TO RESPECT SACRED NATURE

Mpatheleni highlighted concerns from elders that even the government doesn't respect their sacred sites, traditionally the dwellings of "protective water spirits", the early warning systems of calamity: "Today the Department of Tourism has turned our sacred sites into an entertainment place. You will now find condoms scattered at our sacred site."

The indigenous people of Venda are sensitive to the delicate balance between culture, spirituality, livelihoods and nature. During the exchange, the elders passionately explained that when sacred sites are disturbed, they not only interfere and jeopardise Venda spirituality, but jeopardise natural ecological patterns that sustain Mother Earth.

An elderly woman from Dzomo la Mupo testified: "The rivers are empty. They should not be empty during this time. We have a [traditional]

month which is a restricted sacred month, where we should not do anything ... it is taboo... During this month people are mining minerals from the earth and burning the forest ... that's why there is climate change. How can there be balance, how can we be stable?"

A woman from the group affectionately called Makazi, carefully deciphered the large ecological calendar that the elders had previously created to inform younger members of the community. She highlighted the paramount importance of protecting traditional cultural cycles, based on understanding the interconnectivity and balance found in nature, and between people, in order to solve the complex problems of climate change:

"If you look at this calendar, this is the cycle, the movement of the ecosystem which is found in the sacred sites, in the indigenous forest. ... Our elders, the ecosystem, is our solution to bring order to this disordered world."



# Do we forget the roots?

## Cultural and ecological future of Venda



PHOTO: RAFS MAYET

**THE VISION OF DZOMO LA MUPO [VHAVENDA FOR VOICE OF NATURE OR UNIVERSE] IS TO REVIVE THE INDIGENOUS VALUES OF MOTHER EARTH AND TO PROTECT THEIR SACRED SITES, TRADITIONS AND WAY OF LIFE FROM UNSUSTAINABLE INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT. ONE FOCUS IS TO HEAL THE AILING TRANS-GENERATIONAL KNOWLEDGE PATHWAYS THAT ARE RAPIDLY BEING ERODED FROM THE EFFECTS OF RAPID MODERNISATION.**



PHOTO: RAFS MAYET

The Dzomo la Mupo group, at a round-table discussion.



PHOTO: RAFS MAYET

Venda woman at a round-table discussion.

Another concern for Moses Mudau and Mupo is Coal of Africa's statutory community consultation process. In order for an environmental impact assessment (EIA) to be approved by the government, the developer has to conduct rigorous engagements.

According to Moses this process has been seriously flawed: "They say they are busy consulting communities ... but when we speak to them as community spokespeople they threaten us ... now we wonder what is really happening. What Coal of Africa is doing is not enough. There are many people out there who don't really know what they are planning."

In response, Coal of Africa's investor relations manager Sakhile Ndlovu, said: "We most certainly have complied fully with what the law requires in terms of community consultation and continue to do so," she said. She said "genuine concerns, articulated to us in the appropriate forums in good faith, are taken seriously and

acted upon", while they are "committed to the responsible development of its mineral assets" and "acting in compliance with legislation and regulation".

"We are committed to more than just compliance though and believe that the company should do all it can to mitigate any negative environmental impacts and support the preservation of the natural environment, while creating direct and indirect jobs ..."

Dismissing threats of legal action, Ndlovu nevertheless stressed: "We have said that we will certainly consider using avenues available to us in the law to stop parties that maliciously seek to bring us into public disrepute."

A male elder insisted the consultations benefited individuals at the expense of the community: "... you find now that the community is in darkness ... very few people will benefit ... We are not against the mine per se. We know that our people lack jobs. The issue is the repercus-

sions of the mine [and that] they may bring disaster to human life. We are saying as Mupo, please do not damage our ecosystem, as no one can restore the ecosystem which is damaged ..."

According to Mpatheleni, who attended the initial public consultation process hosted by Coal of Africa, she learnt from its engineers that if the mining is to go ahead it is estimated that by 2015 it would have used all the underground water reserves in the area.

On the depletion of groundwater by 2015, Coal of Africa rejected the "alarmist predictions" which it said are not based on empirical facts and said it had commissioned "detailed analysis of water usage and sourcing and these are at an advanced stage".

Mupo's concerns, however, mirror those of countless communities across South Africa, particularly those in Limpopo and the North West provinces, where extraction is displacing whole communities. At COP17, civil society

groups from Africa and South America are scheduled to hold several consultations on this apparently worldwide trend of putting minerals and energy for short-term gain before people and ecosystems.

### DZOMO LA MUPO'S RESPONSE TO THE AFRICAN CHARTER FOR RIGHTS FOR MOTHER EARTH

The Climate Train has been creating open spaces for exchange and discussion around a country-wide process to draft a People's Climate Charter, which aims to be the African contribution to the Universal Declaration on Rights of Mother Earth, adopted by South American countries in the past two years after extensive consultation. This was piloted through the Earth Forum ([www.earthfora.org](http://www.earthfora.org)) process and other round-table discussions on the train route — engagement around a draft charter crafted by eminent environmental lawyer Cormac Cullinan.

In summary, the draft document proposes agreement on universal and Africa particular values about human relationships with nature, including;

- the Earth is sacred;
- all shall live well;
- each (member of natural communities, which includes plants, animals, rivers, mountains) has the right to its place in the community;
- healing shall replace exploitation;
- communities shall decide for themselves; and
- those who harm the Earth shall be held accountable.

Dzomo la Mupo asked to add two core principles to the draft charter — that all indigenous forests be protected as a priority to bolster ecosystems and on a cultural level, that the ancient wisdom of the elders be respected and harnessed before it is lost forever. They insisted we should "... live to leave a space for future generations to continue ... where we are trying to fulfil the present life ... everything we must do, it [must be] for the future generation. And for me the future generation doesn't only mean human beings, it is the future of all Earth's communities, future of the trees ... the children are future, but the great-grandchild of those children will see that big tree."

### A REQUEST TO COP17

The exchange on the Climate Train ended with a formal request from Dzomo la Mupo articulated by Mpatheleni: "We are humbly requesting ... can we save the last remaining indigenous forests rather than continuing to destroy them ... Every indigenous tree, every indigenous forest that we see, can we use all our power and all the means to save it, instead of destroying it, or interfering with it?"

"We hope that through this way we can really deal with the climate change ... Another request, can we use the knowledgeable elders before they die, because to Mupo, elders are our library, a living library, which if an elder dies it's like going to Oxford and burning the library?"

"Can COP17 and all the institutions regard the elders as a knowledge library ... I don't see in 100 years to come we will be having knowledgeable elders with this knowledge. There is a huge gap between the young and the elders. There is no connection, no connection to everything."







## MADE FROM WASTE

Melanie Wepener (left) shows a mat made from waste — Cape Town Station. PHOTO: RAFS MAYET



## TROUPE AT STATION

A traditional troupe at Mokhado station. PHOTO: RAFS MAYET

# More to climate change than we realise

*Climate change isn't only about weather, it's about people as well*

**MBALI VILAKAZI**

IT began with a question.

*"Is there a Xhosa word for climate change?"*

My frustration with how conversations around climate change are being held within the public space was what first set me on course towards getting involved. In creating my response, mine was a search for a new language.

We should not be settling for imposing our ideas — often based on well-meaning, but misguided information — on communities, the result of which ultimately ends up limiting approaches and excluding certain groups of people. There is the matter of context.

The question I had to ask myself is why is it that so many of my peers — many of whom are brilliant, conscientious and responsible when it comes to other matters — have such cursory understanding and interest in climate change. What is it about this issue that is causing the people I know to adopt such a casual attitude towards it?

I thought about the predominant climate change discourse as balanced against my own realities — realities I didn't always find reflected in newspaper reports, interviews and discussions. Something was missing.

*"The aunt who has just got electricity for the first time in her life. For whom it is everything... it is her first time. She wants everything on — all the time. She wants to see it, hear it and feel it. All the time. What will we say to her?"*

Realising the importance of my own participation, it would be the invitation to join the climate train that would most afford me the opportunity to explore where my own responsibility as an artist and a human being lies. And to shape it.



PHOTO: RAFS MAYET

Poet Mbali Vilakazi at the BFWest Climate Summit.

This train has enabled me to live the poem. Not just ask the question, but make my contribution and be a part of the solution. It now ceases to be just a poem, in my view it extends itself and becomes the very expression of the vision and purpose of this train. It remains a source of wonder for me how it carries the story of this experience. There are so many moments when I have stood in situations that had me referring back.

*"Discussions always held elsewhere. In some other way. Closed doors, signatures, cameras and uneasy settlements. While the impact lies in the direction of not what we think, but what is actually required."*

In Beaufort West, attending the Climate Change Mini Summit, convened by the Department of Environmental Affairs for the Western Cape and hosted by the Disaster Management Centre, a rare opportunity to have a conversation with the people who effect policy and make the deci-

sions came about. It was something special and the beginning of what would become the norm — artists sharing space with the government, talking strategy.

*"Some are creating distant campaigns and others are calling on the governments to action-change. In lands where concepts are being explained to people in languages they do not understand."*

The informative climate-change newsletters placed on the platform at the Pretoria Central Station were written in complicated language, dense and riddled with scientific terms at a taxi rank, where myriad South Africans are constantly making their way, all of whom are not necessarily English speakers.

*"The many people who do not know what COP stands for. Or when the last meeting was held. Or why."*

In Standerton, hosting workshops with high school pupils who had no

idea of COP's existence, but who spoke of being afraid to discuss climate change with their families, feeling it wasn't their place to address adults. Young people who felt that recycling was no new idea to them.

*"We are poor, we have always had to reuse and we are not high consumers."*

The environmental issue is a social issue. This is what we need to understand — it is a social issue. The discussions around climate change do not belong exclusively to the realm of science and politics, although we can willingly acknowledge the reality of the politics of climate change.

This is an issue that is the great equaliser and this is where all our combined struggles meet. Everyone will be affected. And everyone is required.

The residents of Mokopane Village and their unwavering determination and patience. The children of Mongu in Zambia, the Ugandan mother, Yusuf, from Ethiopia and the people of Somalia all reflected in the faces of the youth activists who joined us at Nasrec Station in Johannesburg. Undertaking a journey of their own — travelling on the Caravan of Hope through the continent on their way to COP17 — their passion, dedication and commitment stays with me.

The story of this train is the story of the people we have met.

*"People like 18-year-old Noloyiso Mthana, from Luyoloville, eGugulethu. She is the frame of the unexpected. A young girl with no title and no rank. Just two small arms that carry her entire community — once a week. She is there, but we are not."*

They have honoured us not only with their presence, but in trusting us with their interpretations, chal-

lenges and suggestions. They have taught us a great deal. This has been an exchange. We have had to consider their lives, their perspectives and at times, we have had to learn how to step out of the way in order to listen. And learn. We have met the statistics and they have names. And dreams. And opinions. It has been a great privilege to meet South Africa in this way.

In this changing world, the urgency dictates that we can no longer expect to approach our work without our own processes being challenged. It is not about us and how important we think we are — the call is different.

*"Out of our fitting and worn shoes. To build the bridge of the divides. Over hesitance and across the plains of fear. Back down the long and desolate road of the less travelled. To look out once more beyond respected procedures of hesitancy and numbers in boxes of predetermined thought."*

We are being asked to reconsider our systems of living in their entirety. To have the humility to let the message be bigger than us. The work is shifting paradigms and it asks us to shift our own. What is important to note is that when we speak of climate change, we speak not just of weather patterns — we speak of people too. The social climate.

*"Ask the difficult questions, ask them again and again until we too are made vulnerable with our own longing to change. To become something of the same — a collective dream of better in everyone's name."*

In our conversations and in our attempts to respond to this new challenge of our times, it is important to remember that this work is about people.

*"Listen. See. Think. Speak. Do. Be. Differently."*



# Climate change at eye level

**giz** Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

**SONIA KOOPMAN**

LERATO Semosa is 21 years old and one of about 70 youth who joined a photo competition on climate change. Her picture shows hands carefully collecting water dripping from a tap. Asked why she chose this motif she explains: “It takes a village to build a nation. It is in our hands, as people, to save our Earth.”

Using a camera lens, five groups of 15 young South Africans at a time are sharing their impressions of climate change. They have roamed their communities to capture the causes and its impact on their nation with amazing results.

Faith Brown’s (22) picture shows a man on his bicycle. Brown comments: “If we work together to prevent things that destroy our climate, we can make a difference and create a better tomorrow for the upcoming generation.”

Simon Chauke (24) has captured a boy who switches off electricity in his kitchen: “I wanted to show that every little thing counts to reduce energy consumption, even if it is just switching off a plug.”

The photo competition is part of the Climate Train’s programme and has been designed as an outreach initiative to raise environmental awareness ahead of Cop17. The activities are part of German support to the Department of Environmental Affairs’ public awareness campaign on climate giz and the German Embassy in Pretoria have invited youth along the train’s route to participate in a photo competition on climate change.

The contest comprises educational dialogues on the impact of climate change on the people of South Africa, and encourages participants to share their personal stories about climate change in the form of photographs and storytelling.

The images taken during the tour have been exhibited on the Climate Train and displayed on the embassy’s website.

Users were encouraged to select the 25 pictures they liked most. These pictures will be exhibited at the German stand during Cop17. Visitors are encouraged to choose the best picture.

The winner will win a trip to Germany and attend the Radius of Art conference on Art for Social Transformation, a joint event between giz and the Heinrich Böll Foundation to be held in Berlin in February.

You are invited to look at the pictures and the messages which the youth have provided for the climate summit.

Cast your vote and help select the winner on [www.southafrica.diplo.de](http://www.southafrica.diplo.de)

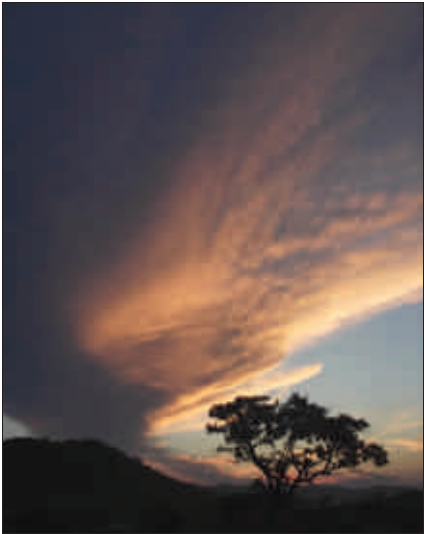


PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Photographers on the Climate Train.



A man on a carbon emission-free bicycle. PHOTO: FAITH BROWN



‘The weather is changing, and it is going to rain. It is a beautiful sight. By just looking at the clouds, you could see that it is going to rain today. But, although it looked like it was going to rain, it did not’ – Ngimsele Masakona (21). PHOTO: NGIMSELO MASAKONA

## South Africa and Germany enjoy strong bilateral ties

THE German Missions in South Africa represent the German government in the country. The embassy is in Pretoria, with a consulate general in Cape Town and honorary consuls in Durban and Port Elizabeth. The many sections of the embassy sustain the strong bilateral ties between Germany and South Africa.

Both nations are committed to climate protection and will be key players during the upcoming UN Climate Change Conference in Durban. The German embassy is pleased to support the Climate Train, considering it an important instrument for raising public awareness and engaging the people of South Africa on envi-

ronmental issues. The train’s goals are significant to the embassy — providing information about climate change and its environmental impact, while at the same time mobilising communities and gathering their contributions for a Climate Charter and Pledge to be delivered to Cop17. The embassy co-operates closely

with the South African government in making a concerted effort to ensure that Cop17 will bring about “the next big step forward” and the joint support of the Climate Train is a decisive step in this direction. To learn more about the projects and involvement please visit [www.southafrica.diplo.de](http://www.southafrica.diplo.de) — Supplied.



# A train journey of change

AN amazing journey? Yes. In four weeks I've been privileged to see 17 cities and had the opportunity to witness some of the most interesting people and places and tell stories of their struggles with climate change. I've visited some really remote villages, gasped at some of the most beautiful sunsets and engaged with the country's most daring and beautiful citizens.

Yet, as a journalist you are taught and trained to always remain objective. Never let your emotions get involved, they tell you. But how does one not get involved when tasked to write about human beings most inner fears and challenges due to climate change? Every night after coming back from the day's activities — which involved either insightful round-table discussions with passionate and deeply affected youth and community members who are faced with the challenges of climate change, or road trips into communities where we planted trees and witnessed dry polluted areas transform into beautiful and useful places — I would sit down in my cabin and stare blankly at my laptop and notes and asked myself: "How are you going to write this article while remaining objective?"

I struggled with this uneasy feeling of not getting involved for an entire week. Then it dawned on me. There's no way that I will be able to share the true essence of this train and all its stories without getting involved. There's no way I am able to bring about change if I step back from the fighting line.

People are suffering and some are even dying because of climate change. Livelihoods are being threatened and people are left in confusion and dismay because of the selfishness of other human beings.

In Klerksdorp I met a man while walking through the town. It was one of the hottest day's we encountered on our journey. He was sitting on the pavement in his grey-and-blue work uniform, with sweat dripping off his forehead. He asked me where I'm from.

After sharing our message on climate change awareness with him, he thoughtfully replied: "I wish the government could be as passionate about climate change as they are about HIV and Aids, because to me, it's just as serious and scary. It has never been this hot this time of the year and I believe it's because of climate change that we are experiencing such fierce heat." I wish every business owner and government official could share Prince Pheko from Klerksdorp's sentiments.

At our first stop in Worcester, now almost a month ago, we met a group of women farmers from Mawabuye Land Rights Forum. Despite the wealth of the fertile property around them, climate change is threatening to exacerbate further their food security, water supply and employment challenges. Yet facing all

*A journey through South Africa through the eyes of official Train correspondent and Green Times journalist SONIA KOOPMAN*



PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Sonia Koopman.

these challenges, these women's resilience struck a chord. In order to survive and provide shelter, the group, together with the help of NGOs, have started their own organic vegetable gardens in their back yard.

"Our forefathers warned us about this, but if we want to see change, we need to be the change. It's unfortunate that we find ourselves in this situation, but life goes on and we are not going to give up," said one of the forum members, Shirley Davids.

The next day we had the passionate Zwelithemba Youth Forum join us on the train. The group, together with Dylan McGarry, doctoral student in Environmental Education and Social Sculpture and contributor of Copart movement of climate artists, sat down for an

exchange about the true values of the country's indigenous cultures, the most ancient of earth.

Collectively, they explored their inner concerns and values around the current state of life in the impoverished community of Zwelithemba, a rural community in Worcester. Engaging with practical responses, they contemplated their own fundamental values needed for meaningful change while exploring the Universal Declaration of Rights for Mother Earth which was adopted last year in South American countries following the failure of COP15 in Copenhagen in 2009.

"The Earth Forum and the exploration of the Charter enabled me to gain a deeper appreciation of nature, making me realise the desperate need for environmental education in vul-

nerable and poor communities," said youth forum leader, Sofuthi Balungile (22).

"After today I understood the link between social and environmental issues. I now have a clearer vision of my purpose and responsibility as an individual towards Earth. I realised that no matter how rich or poor one is, we are all equal in fighting the battle against climate change. We need to work side by side if we want to see a change," Alex Ndzima (23) said.

Metaphors of elders being the roots and the younger generation being seen as the leaves seemed to reoccur in many communities who felt that children have lost respect for elders and therefore have lost respect for Mother Earth. In Standerton executive mayor Caroline Matshidiso mentioned that mothers (roots) have neglected their role to educate their children (leaves) to appreciate and respect nature and that's why the area is left polluted and dried up.

"People have too many excuses when it comes to climate change. Mothers come home from work tired and expect teachers or other people to teach their children. Education should start at home and mothers should start taking up their roles in society again," she said.

In Beaufort West we were met by hundreds of youth and pupils on our arrival. Mbali Vilakazi was busy with one of her poetry workshops and to engage them into dialogue, asked the group of youths to close their eyes and imagine waking up and having no water to drink.

To her surprise they didn't have to imagine, because just a couple of months ago that was their exact situation. "At first no one knew the drought was due to climate change, but now that we are receiving more information about it, we can see the link. As a teenager it's shocking to me. A drought in the Karoo is so unusual. If we carry on like this, what condition will the Earth be in when my children and grandchildren are born," 16-year-old Russel Ehrenreich shared.

Choosing to sit back because you are of the opinion that it's not your job to do certain things and pass the buck on to some one else, hoping that they will pick up the litter or curb their carbon emissions is not the way forward. Climate change is a battle for all humankind hoping against hope for change.

En route to COP17, we hoped that these personal and touching stories people have shared would help spur changes to save the Earth.

