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# NEW AGENDA

SOUTH AFRICAN JOURNAL OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY

## Special issue on climate change

# STORM CLOUDS GATHER OVER AFRICA

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**Youth speak out: 'Our Vote is our Voice'**
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*New Agenda* is a publication of the Institute for African Alternatives (IFAA). It is produced in partnership with the Institute for Social Development (ISD), University of the Western Cape (UWC).

**CONTACT US**
Email: **admin@ifaaza.org**
Website: **www.ifaaza.org**
Facebook: **www.facebook.com/theIFAAforum**
Twitter: **@IFAACT or @NEWAGENDAZA**
Instagram: **@ifaa_new_agenda**
Tel: **+27 21 461 2340**
Address: **Community House, 41 Salt River Road, Salt River**
**Cape Town 7925**

**IFAA STAFF**
**Acting Director**
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**Editor**
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**Special Issue Guest Editors**
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Institute for African Alternatives (IFAA)
Institute for Social Development (ISD), University of the Western Cape
**Layout**
The Media Chilli

*Cover photo: Storm clouds gather over Africa: Nsanama, Machinga District, Malawi*
*Credit: Josh Estey, Flickr*

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Issue 91

# The black sonic gestures toward just planetary futures in Africa

*Editorial essay by the Guest Editors: mpho ndaba & Rachael Nyirongo*

In a song collaboration that featured Eryn Allen, Ami Faku, Bonga Kwana, Msaki and Zolani Mahola, we are reminded that "*Ilizwe likhohlakele*" (the world is a terrible place) (Ungazilibali, 2019). How we come together, in any form of gathering is shaped by the deep-seated appreciation of the sinister nature of world. How divisiveness, violence and harm, are strategies of colonial separation; shaping our modes of seeing, being and feeling, while colonial logics remain in place. Every region of the world, regardless of where they might be located, is organised by these decisions to relegate some bodies, people, spaces and beings as unworthy of aliveness and life in general.

Africa remains caught up in this crisis, yet, the plunder of lives, ecosystems, traditions, landscapes continues. Whenever there is an opportunity to reflect on the state of the planet and the continent's place in it, we must, as a matter of radical necessity, draw from the histories of resistance politics, remembering how Africa came to occupy its current place in the modern world. As such, then, jazz music, black music composition, is a great place to start from.

What is history? In the opening parts of the song "What is History", composed and performed by a jazz collective comprising drummer Tumi Mogorosi, guitarist Reza Khota, vocalist Gabi Motuba, visual artist Zen Marie and sound artist Andrei Van Wyk, Motuba's voice can be repeatedly heard asking: "What is history?" From there, Motuba declares: "We find our humanity on the other side of death and despair." That, "[t]his settler's world is a hostile world; a world with an atmosphere of fire and shock".

Fire, hostility, shock and discomfort, in the ongoing accounts of ecological destruction in Africa, has coincided with hunger and a lack of safe and adequate housing as infrastructure fails (Forsyth & Le Maitre, 2019:8-9; Rajagopal 2022:5). These are all features of climate change on the continent, which despite being the least polluter, is most affected (Azour & Selassie, 2023)

The addressing of the climate question in Africa exists alongside the permanent imprint of racial slavery and settler colonialism: How the quest for modernity violently marked black people, while also laying claims to territories, histories, languages, cultures and the Earth (Mbembe, 2017:14-15). Therefore, it makes sense to begin this introductory ›› essay by inviting you as our reader to ponder on the truth offered by the black sonic meditations with which black artists reorient us towards liberatory practices. Here, there is deep recognition that another world is fundamentally necessary; that for us to achieve this, we must draw from the words of Aimé Césaire and call for the "end of the world as we know it" (Savransky, 2021:2). Meaning, while you will find the contributions present in this iteration of *New Agenda* useful in their own ways, the central aim of putting together these pieces of work, is in recognition of the unsustainable nature of the current planetary relations in which Africa is open to assault.

In the traditions of jazz composition, in what currently exists as South Africa, music has been pivotal to black artists' attempts to carry forward, into the future, drawing from the past, and reading the current moment, the histories of critique aimed at the state, systems of racial domination and private interests. Here, young black artists, especially after 2013, have gone on to produce piercing music, addressing the black ontological wound that sits with our being – doing so by borrowing from the organising strategies of the anticolonial struggles in South Africa and across various parts of Africa. With these, there is a refining of the lens with which we make sense of how South Africa, like many parts of the continent, exposes black people to psycho-material harm.

Groups of individual artists, working together as a collective, made up of people who bring to the collective different perspectives, have been pivotal in the analysis of South Africa as a settler colony. There is something profound about the decision to form part of a collective. Precisely because in the case of music composition, this human and artistic practice is complex in its own way.

In the South African contexts of liberation politics of the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, and right into the new dispensation in 1994, we have been reminded, time and again, that music is not meant to be an individual endeavour (Dalamba, 2006; Makhathini, 2018). More so when it comes to thinking about the abject state of blackness. Here, of course, we must equally account for how no man is an island; that even with artists who work "alone", there are collaborators who pour parts of themselves to make a particular message clear.

What is interesting about groups, however, is how they borrow from the communal practices of "*Lekgotla*": a kind of black gathering in which deliberations about conflict, disagreement, misunderstanding, welfare and being of black people is reflected on. "*Lekgotla*" is not only about people. It is instituted as the complete awareness of the world we, the people, inhabit. By reflecting on black music, emerging out of South Africa today, doing so by thinking about the state of the Earth, here, we centre the desires for radical planetary care.

In this editorial essay, on "Planetary justice and the future of Africa", various reflections, essays, and journal articles follow in the tradition(s) of "*Lekgotla*". We are asked: How else might we make sense of the world and its troubles; given the consistent shifts Capital makes as it attempts to find new frontiers for colonial extraction?

And by a way of elaborating on what ways jazz music gestures towards the end of the world, I find "What is History" – a song we were first introduced to as part of *Indaba*

*Is* (2020) album release – useful. This is a project that was spearheaded by pianist and composer Thandi Ntuli and vocalist and composter Siyabonga Mthembu of the band The Brother Moves On (TBMO).

Here, the elements that make up the song are generative in various ways. On the one hand, there is the inclusion of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela's voice and reflection in which she focuses the attention on antiblackness during the era of apartheid. Here, Madikizela-Mandela demands that whoever gets to listen to "What is History" think of how black women and children who had never undergone forms of exiling from South Africa, at the time, were faced with particular forms of the brutality of the system. The listener is also encouraged to consider the post-apartheid rehearsals of public memory as that which has excluded certain narratives of the past; overrepresenting black heterosexual male figures like Nelson Mandela in how new South Africa revisits stories of black liberation. Within the broader context of "What is History", The Wretched proposes that the violence, as a form of general antiblackness, and its brutality, never came to pass.

For people who come to what I propose we analyse as "climate *Lekgotla*", the focus I suggest we foreground, at the backdrop of how settler colonialism created out of black people the racialised Other, is that the imagination of planetary futures are impossible without our collective attendance to black unfreedom. Meaning, the repair of the Earth must coincide with the repair of black ontological nowhereness (weNkosi, 2023). One of the popular phrases we have come to know, especially for those of us who form part of the climate movement, is that "environmentalism without class struggle is just gardening". This phrase is useful in various ways, especially when we consider how in the case of Africa, people racialised black are largely on the receiving end of state neglect, unsafety and harm that is disproportionately distributed along race, class and gender lines.

The imagination of planetary justice, for black people, was contended in the wake of settler colonial imposition in which land theft, murder, disappearance were the strategies of making the modern world. For The Wretched, the analysis of the South African situation, including questions concerning the delipidated state of the planet, in the apartheid period, sees the country's polity organised around black suffering (Dladla, 2017:205; Joja, 2021:165). Most importantly, how The Wretched differs from other collectives such as The Brother Moves On and Iphupho L'ka Biko is that here the group is clear about how racial antagonism is the modality through which South Africa is constituted. As such, then, we must ask: What might it mean to think of climate crisis when taking into consideration the historical formation of South Africa and the ways in which black people occupy the category of the racialised Other? How might the black sonic shape the ways in which we feel, see and relate with the planetary crisis?

This is a methodological question; demanding that we account for how the planetary crisis is lived through the material but remains psychic, spiritual and political. The usefulness of methods as a deliberate approach towards making sense of where we are at this current juncture is that we can notice how climate crisis has been historically lived in Africa. How the material and landscape ruin is all around us; and has been known by those who have passed on; that by inviting aural, oral and visual – as it is the case with artistic practices that emerge from jazz music – we have the capacity to lead to places we never ➤➤

imagined. Doing so while ensuring that the essence of the thing which we are all concerned about remains firm, in this case, the state of the planet.

Perhaps, what is most relevant – thinking of the collection of articles and reflective pieces in this issue as a form of gathering – we are attempting to bring the attention to the mutations, shifts and the reorganisations Capital and its historical intended aims. And how climate has been a site of gathering for global multilateral interests looking to refigure capitalist development to continue business as usual.

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# Climate imperialism

## How can the rest of the world respond?

*Report on the lecture by Jayati Ghosh*

Development economist, Prof Jayati Ghosh taught economics at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi for 35 years, and has been Professor of Economics at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, USA since January 2021. She has authored and/or edited 21 books and received several national and international prizes, including the International Labour Organisation's Decent Work Research Prize for 2010 and the 2023 Galbraith Award. She has advised governments in India and other countries, consulted for international organisations and is a member of several international boards, including the UN Secretary General's High-level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism and the UN High-level Advisory Board on Economic and Social Affairs.

*The third annual Ben Turok Memorial Lecture was delivered by Professor JAYATI GHOSH at an online event held on 23 November 2023 hosted jointly by the Institute for African Alternatives (IFAA) and the Institute for Social Development at the University of the Western Cape (ISD). The event marked the anniversary of the death of IFAA's founder and former director, struggle stalwart Prof Ben Turok, who passed away on 9 December 2019. It is a tribute to an unrelenting critic of abuse of power and all forms of injustice and discrimination; it is also aimed at keeping alive Prof Turok's political legacy based on economic justice, socio-economic rights, redistribution and political transformation.* ››

Prof Ghosh acknowledged IFAA's founder as "an inspiration to many of us across the developing world. I think we all recognised his integrity, his passion, his commitment and the possibilities that he raised of different worlds being possible." Below are some of the highlights of her lecture.

The lecture began with a critique of how countries of the Global North have succeeded in framing discussions on climate change in ways that disadvantage and actively harm the rest of the world. Prof Ghosh described this as an expression of climate imperialism and warned: "The interaction of humans with the environment is now possibly one of the most crucial forms of imperialism." She went on to offer the following definition:

> The core countries and the elites within every country globally are able to produce and consume excessively. They generate hugely disproportionate and increasing global carbon emissions with rising ecological footprints. Yet the negotiations that are supposed to address climate change do so in very misinformed and unequal, deceptive and even harmful and debilitating ways. Global market-oriented finance and the fiscal strategies of the major advanced countries actually operate to increase carbon emissions at the same time as they make the required finance for effective mitigation unavailable to the rest of the world.

Ghosh made the point that richer countries actually add to the problems of climate change as they try and adapt to it. "For example, in naturally fire-adapted ecosystems they go into fire suppression! Seawalls against flooding are put up, which makes the problem worse in other parts where you're not putting up a seawall. When there are warmer climates, everybody goes in for more air conditioning, which adds to the greenhouse gas emissions." She said actions such as these that claim to be forms of 'adaptation' to climate change are in fact *maladaptation*, which is actually adding to the problem. "This is inadequately recognized by most of the people who are doing it".

Climate change has caused substantial loss and damage across all ecosystems – but Ghosh emphasised that it is the low- and middle-income countries that are the worst affected. She provided statistics reporting that the rich countries, which today comprise 14% of the global population, account for nearly 80% of carbon emissions.

She cited the latest "Climate Inequality Report" which was recently released by the World Inequality Database. It provides projected GDP impacts for the rest of this century, and shows once again that the worst affected will be most of Africa, South Asia, Latin America "and not the countries that are responsible for creating the mess, not the rich countries of the northern hemisphere.

"The most remarkable thing is that [in] the last two decades emissions have gone down for the bottom half of the population across pretty much all regions, [yet they have] ballooned in the top 10%." However, she said it is not the rich countries that have to reduce their consumption. "Actually, it's the rich people who have to reduce it, the rich everywhere ... It's really about large capital and the rich versus everybody else. And that's what imperialism is all about."

> The reason why we are in this planetary mess today is because of the build-up of emissions over the past one and a half centuries. More than half of these emissions occurred in the last 30 years. Since the 1980s the US [and] European governments certainly knew that carbon emissions are a problem, and they knew that mitigation was important, essential and probably urgent. Yet in this period when more than half of the emissions occurred they actually increased carbon emissions, despite knowing the problems associated with this.

Countries are assigned "climate responsibility" based on *current* national carbon emissions. These form the basis of climate negotiations and the national commitments to control carbon emissions that have been made by all countries at the Conference of the Parties (COP), the annual meeting of all states that are parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Drawing attentions to anomalies in the ways in which carbon emissions are measured, and therefore responsibility is meted out, she said: "The measures of the total current carbon emissions are production-based, not consumption-based. Yet we know that the North consumes much more carbon through trade because it exports a lot of the carbon emitting production to the South."

This ignores the overwhelming importance of historic responsibility for past emissions of greenhouse gases from 1850 to the present. This carbon debt comprised nearly 80% of global cumulative carbon emissions up to 2011, yet it is ignored and so understates the responsibility of richer countries. Measures of GDP, on the other hand, are distorted by purchasing power parity (PPP) adjustments which overstate incomes of poorer countries. Measures of carbon emissions are production-based rather than consumption-based. This underplays the continued significance of consumption in the North. Recent increases in carbon emissions are used to blame certain countries, especially China and India. ➤➤

> **We need to create changes in the relative power imbalances globally. These are stacked against us because we do not operate together.**

Ghosh made it clear that this way of attributing responsibility for the crisis obscures the fact that it is a global problem. "If somebody came from Mars to look at how humanity is addressing climate change, they would really be quite surprised because it's obviously a global problem – climate change doesn't respect national borders and passports and visas – yet we still deal with it nationally".

Posing the problem as development and poverty reduction vs climate mitigation is a false dilemma, she said. Poverty eradication is compatible with climate change mitigation – if inequality is reduced. Two thirds of carbon emissions are due to inequality *within* countries (and this is similar across most regions). The carbon emissions of the wealthiest 1% of the world's population are around 15% of the current annual total.

Countries can choose a development pattern that improves the level of energy efficiency of the economy. This requires access to both finance and technology. It requires changes in urbanisation patterns. And of course it involves reducing the share of the most carbon-emitting sources, from coal and petroleum-based to natural gas and to clean renewables like solar, wind and possibly hydro sources. This is better for concerned economies and societies than continuing with current patterns. The investment requirement has been estimated at 1.5% to 2.5% of GDP of large economies annually (Chomsky and Pollin 2020).

While Prof Ghosh was not hopeful that the rich countries and controllers of international finance will suddenly step up to make the world a better place, her strong argument is that it would be possible to both address climate change and reduce world poverty. "If you wanted to lift everybody who's below the current global estimate of poverty … and you provided the basic needs, goods and services accordingly, … you could actually get everybody out of income poverty with only a 5% increase in global carbon emissions" A 1.5% wealth tax on centimillionaires (individuals owning more than US$100 million is assets), would provide $290 billion per year. "The current estimate of the adaptation needs of low and middle income countries is two-thirds of that amount. You could fund adaptation needs with a wealth tax on centimillionaires as currently estimated.

"What we really have to do is control the carbon emissions of the very rich with regulation and taxation. So maybe no more moon trips, maybe massively tax private jets and so on"

All this requires first abandoning the unjust and counterproductive features of the existing framework within which climate change is negotiated and second reviving a progressive multilateralism. "We need more cooperation across different kinds of low- and middle-income countries. We need to coordinate our strategies … because combined actions are much more effective." She believes it is very hopeful that, at the urging of the African Union, the UN has voted for negotiations to start on a UN Tax Convention to change how global tax rules are set. (At present they are largely set by processes managed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], a club for rich nations).

> We definitely have to have the technology and the finance. In terms of all economic justice, the rich countries should provide it … We have to recognize that the geopolitics and the global imbalances of power are such that rich country governments are not going to suddenly become nice… We need to create changes in the relative power imbalances globally. These are stacked against us because we do not operate together.
>
> We also need coalitions with like-minded people in the global North, and a recognition among citizens of the Global North that the system is operating against them just as much as it is against most of the people in the South. It's the elites that are benefiting everywhere. Only then can we get the kind of coalitions that will put pressure on northern governments. We have to get many more people in the rich countries to be on our side."

Ghosh quoted the feminist political economist, Nancy Folbre (2020), who once said: "Necessity is the mother of coalitions!"

*Listen to Prof Ghosh's presentation to the third annual Ben Turok Memorial Lecture at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NIqHtgvCZ2M*

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# Europe's quest for energy
## fuels green colonialism in Africa

*By Roland Ngam*

Dr Roland Ngam is programme manager for climate justice and socioecological transformation at the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation Southern Africa, where he coordinates the climate blog ClimateJusticeCentral. Before that, he was a postdoctoral research fellow in the Emancipatory Futures Studies Programme at the University of the Witwatersrand.

*As Europe ends its economic ties to Putin's Russia, it has been pouring billions of dollars into Africa to urgently develop new energy infrastructure. African governments and elites have seized this opportunity, but these investments have failed to drive development aimed at the poor. ROLAND NGAM argues that "green colonialism" must give way to new democratic infrastructure projects that benefit local populations.*

The global energy market was upended when the European Union (EU) moved to wean itself off Russian gas, oil and coal in response to the invasion of its neighbour, Ukraine. In Africa, governments and businesses alike saw this as a major opportunity to generate cash for national development projects. The EU's decision to define natural gas and nuclear power as "green" or "sustainable" sources of energy in July 2022 further lifted African leaders' spirits in a post-Covid context where a variety of challenges require urgent attention.

While Europe understandably looks to distance itself from any economic association with Putin's Russia, often the alternative involves unequal relations that constitute little more than a kind of "green colonialism". As billions of dollars pour into Africa from the Global North to urgently develop new energy infrastructure, little of it makes its way into local economies or development where strong economic support measures are required. Instead, as in the days of classical colonialism, value is extracted from Africa and shipped out to northern investors, while locals are left to deal with the aftermath on their own.

*World leaders gather at the Africa Climate Summit, held in Kenya in September 2023*

## *Europe's scramble to find alternative energy sources*

According to the Centre for Strategic International Studies, Russia typically shipped between 155 billion cubic metres (BCM) and 200 BCM of gas to the EU every year until 2021 (Tsafos, 2022). Just over 15 BCM of these shipments were liquefied natural gas (LNG) according to the International Energy Agency. This relationship changed, probably forever, when Russian Leader Vladimir Putin declared a so-called "special military operation" against Ukraine.

Exports from Russia to the EU market ground to a halt almost overnight. Direct imports by pipeline slowed to a trickle. In January 2023 just 4,6% of the imported gas in Europe came by pipeline from Russia, and about the same amount of Russian gas came to Europe in form of LNG.

The United States and a partnership of countries agreed to send 15 BCM of LNG to Europe in 2022 and between January and November 2022, the EU imported more than 50 BCM of LNG from the US, i.e. more than double the volumes from the year before (Spinnler, 2023).

Important as that may sound, that still leaves a gaping hole in supply that the EU needs to fill. Droughts and floods have further constrained energy supply in Europe and all signs point to constrained energy availability in the years ahead.

In France, which until 2022 had been a major exporter of energy to other European countries, at least 50% of all nuclear reactors have been shut down due to a variety of issues, including technical problems and scorching weather conditions that reduced supplies of water required to remove and dump surplus heat from steam circuits (de Beaupuy, 2023). So Europe's energy markets are going to remain out of control for a while – an opportunity that African leaders are doing their best to leverage quickly.

## *Africa eyes the European market*

Germany, which used to import around 50 BCM of gas per annum from Russia, most of it through the Nord Stream pipeline, is scrambling to diversify its energy sources ››

> **… as in the days of classical colonialism, value is extracted from Africa and shipped out to northern investors, while locals are left to deal with the aftermath on their own.**

and storage facilities. In December 2022, the first LNG terminal in Wilhelmshafen in Niedersachsen started operating. Chancellor Olaf Scholz had previously promised that further LNG terminals in Brunsbüttel near Bremen and Lubmin and Stade near Hamburg will be finished in 2023 and private investors were about to build another terminal in Lubmin. Each of the terminals will handle at least five BCM of gas per year.

All that infrastructure needs a lot of gas contracts and it has been raining cash in Africa lately – but not necessarily for ordinary Africans. A number of African states have already received in excess of US$150 billion for gas projects, including Mozambique, Nigeria, Cameroon, Senegal, Egypt, Gabon, South Sudan, Algeria, Angola, Ghana, Tanzania, Morocco, South Africa, Libya, Tunisia, Congo-Brazzaville, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone. More countries, such as Rwanda, Uganda, Mauretania, Somalia and Malawi, are developing oil and gas projects on a smaller scale.

In July 2022, Algeria, which already supplies Italy with 20 BCM of gas per year, agreed during then-prime minister Mario Draghi's visit to the country to increase its production by up to nine BCM in 2023. However, a recent audit by Algeria's state-owned oil company, Sonatrach, shows that Algeria can only deliver an additional four BCM to Italy. However, that would require using all available resources of the Transmed gas pipeline. Capacity may not necessarily be an issue in the long term, as French president Emmanuel Macron visited Algeria in August 2022 and signed investment deals to expand gas infrastructure.

Morocco also stands to gain from the new scramble for energy sources. Chariot Limited and Predator Oil & Gas Holdings PLC have made significant finds in the country, announcing that recoverable capacity in the Anchois Gas Development Project has increased to 113.2 BCM and that it already has the necessary funds to invest in the project.

Senegal is set to extract 2.5 million tons of gas from its Sangomar-Greater Tortue Ahmeyim oil & gas field in 2023. The project's floating production, storage and offloading (FPSO) vessel is already on its way (Barradas, 2023). That number is not big enough for Germany, with Olaf Scholz offering Senegal financial support to ramp up its annual production capacity to at least 10 million tons per annum. Senegal stands to make about 1.4 billion Euro from the project between 2023 and 2025.

On 16 September 2022, Nigeria, the Economic Community of West African States (Ecowas) and Morocco launched the US$25 billion Nigeria–Morocco Gas Pipeline Project (NMGP). The 5,600km pipeline is expected to run through Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Gambia, Senegal, Mauritania and Morocco before finally landing in Europe, supplying 84.9 MCM of gas per day. Nigeria and Morocco do not have the cash to fund the project, but the Organisation of Petroleum

Exporting Countries (Opec) has stepped in to pay for the feasibility study. If results are positive, it will spearhead the search for investors.

Mozambique already has a lot of cash. After Islamic insurgents halted Total's lucrative Cabo Delgado projects for a number of years, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Rwandan soldiers drove the insurgency back and LNG ships are departing for Europe again. President Filipe Nyusi is smiling all the way to the bank. The Total Cabo Delgado project is bigger than Mozambique's entire GDP and over its lifespan the country hopes to collect at least US$100 billion from the project (de Beaupuy *et al.*, 2021).

According to Fredson Guilengue, a project manager at the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation's Johannesburg office, the Mozambican state sees the project as a quick way to earn money for urgent national development priorities, which have been made even more urgent by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Neighbouring South Africa, which consumes 5 MCM of gas per year, also wants to become a major player in oil and gas. Currently, most of the gas used in the country comes from Mozambique. Recent finds show that the country has about 60 TCF of gas offshore, much of it in Block 11B/12B in the Outeniqua Basin. The government intends to start exploiting in the that area to meet the demands of its ravenous energy market.

Both Shell and Total have made significant oil and gas finds further north in Namibia. The Shell find especially is significant, holding between 250 to 300 million barrels of oil and gas equivalent.

## *Colonialism with a green façade?*

Three things can be said about the current rush for African gas. Firstly, all the talk of keeping gas, oil and coal "in the ground" in the run-up to and after the COP26 climate negotiations has all but disappeared.

African leaders kicked up a fuss when UN Special Envoy on Climate Action and Finance Mark Carney and others led the charge to keep fossil fuels in the ground. In May 2022, former President of the African Union Macky Sall said that "Africa must be able to exploit its large gas reserves for another 20 or 30 years to further its development and provide access to electricity to the 600 million people who are still deprived. It would be unfair to stop us." He was speaking not only on Senegal's behalf, but also for all the countries that want to get in on the LNG action.

In August 2022, South African Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy Gwede Mantashe issued a series of tweets saying, "We need to explore and exploit the minerals that our country is endowed with to grow our economy … It is comforting to see that there is consensus that gas and nuclear form part of the green technologies in the Just Energy Transition. We must be systematic in our approach and appreciate that the upstream petroleum and fishing industries can coexist."

Nigeria and Egypt's energy ministers have also railed against what they see as colonialist bullying behaviour by the Global North. They are determined to "pollute now and clean up later" just like other nations have before them, the consequences be damned.

Secondly, the major projects that are being developed in Africa are specifically geared for the export market. There is very little infrastructure being developed to serve the ➤➤

needs of the local market. As a result, "green colonialism" will further exacerbate ecocide and poverty in communities where these projects are housed.

Africa has a long history of disappointment with large-scale agriculture, mining and fossil fuel projects that were sold as salvation initiatives but which really had very little impact on the socioeconomic conditions of host communities over the long term.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is perhaps the poster child for this resource curse. Despite more than a century of resource extraction (rubber, copper, cobalt, gold, platinum, etc.) by Belgium and later by Congolese companies like Gecamines, the DRC is still among the five poorest nations in the world, according to the World Bank. The pervasive presence of artisanal and small-scale mines in the country comes with major human rights challenges such as child labour, slavery, sexual exploitation and trafficking of women and children.

Corruption is rampant. Former President Joseph Kabila signed a massive $6-billion-infrastructure-for-minerals "contrat du siècle" (the deal of the century) with Chinese investors China Railway Group Ltd and Sinohydro in 2007 in the hope that it would deliver much-needed transport and energy infrastructure to the country (*Jeane Afrique*, 2022). The infrastructure had not materialised a decade later – but many politicians got very rich from it.

Investigations revealed that none of the 31 hospitals planned by Beijing had been built, nor the two universities, the roads and bridges, etc. While all this is going on, desperate men, women and children spend hours every day digging for coltan in artisanal mines controlled by syndicates in the eastern part of the country.

Kabila's successor, Felix Tshisekedi, has begun auctioning off 30 oil and gas fields in the heart of the Congo Basin rainforest, a move that represents a massive threat to global efforts around carbon capture and sequestration (Lakhani, 2022). Initiatives such as the One Forest Summit that brought together the countries of the Congo Basin (Gabon, Congo Brazzaville, the DRC and the Central African Republic) in March 2023 are key to ensuring the protection of the rainforest but they need to drive more resources to central Africa than what politicians get from logging, charcoal and fossil interests who seek to expand the frontier of accumulation.

In Nigeria's oil-rich Niger Delta, the presence of oil companies has long been considered a curse. The petroleum industry is characterised by "poor leadership, corruption and environmental degradation. Oil spills are a common occurrence due to lax security, pilfering and piracy. No water body in the Niger Delta has been spared the pollution.

Activist Nnimmo Bassey has been investigating the actions of oil companies in the Niger Delta for over 30 years. In his book, *We Thought It Was Oil, But It Was Blood (n.d.),* he writes: "Average life expectancy in Nigeria is currently 52 years. In the Niger Delta it is 41 years. Only about 30 per cent of the people in the Niger Delta have access to safe drinking water. By the time Bayelsa State was created in 1996, there were less than 20 km of all-weather roads in the area … The resulting corrupt system of patronage and wastage has significantly fuelled militarisation, repression and violence."

Ken Saro Wiwa was hanged in 1995 by the Abacha regime after he accused the Nigerian government and oil companies such as Shell and BP of waging an ecological war against the Ogoni people. When the "Ogoni Nine" were hanged,[1] the government did not require petroleum companies to give any share of their profits to local communities. It is only recently that the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) was adopted, requiring oil companies to pay a measly 3% of operating profits to host communities. This pales in comparison to the devastation that they leave in their wake.

Across the border in Cameroon it is no different. In fact, anger over who benefits from the National Refinery Company (Sonara) revenue led to the civil war that has been tearing the country apart for the past six years.

Although Sonara is located in the former Anglophone West Cameroon territory, it used to hire mostly Francophone workers from East Cameroon, and it set up French-language schools and services to cater for these workers. It was only after civil war broke out that the company scrambled to increase its quota of Anglophone workers and set up a school where people can learn in English – almost 50 years after the company was founded.

The revenues from oil and gas have not contributed to the development of the region. For many years, revenue from Sonara was never included in the national budget. Nobody knows where it went. These territories see Macron's visit as direct support for Francophones' usurpation of their resources.

Today's "green" projects adhere to a similar pattern. Transition minerals in the DRC are mined by artisanal miners with the usual accompanying armed militias, child labour and sex traffickers. A UN report recently provided solid evidence that Rwanda was sponsoring armed militias in the DRC to get its hands on some of the country's mineral wealth. In Ouarzazate, Morocco, where the government convinced local communities to hand over their land in return for jobs and development, optimism has turned to bitter disappointment. Young people have started taking to the streets having realised that the promise of jobs was all smoke and mirrors.

## *Grab the resources and run?*

Europe's thirst for gas is radically expanding "green grabbing" – i.e. the seizing of land and assets with or without compensation for so-called "green projects" – on a massive scale.

Part of Senegal's oil and gas fields are on Sangomar Island in the Saloum Delta, a Unesco World Heritage Area. According to climate expert Ibrahima Thiam, local communities whose access to these areas had already been restricted by government edicts, now stand to lose even more fishing areas to the gas projects, which will certainly fuel migration to the Spanish enclave of Ceuta and Ecowas countries. He visited the Sangomar oil project recently and found many members of the local community are angry about the restrictions to their fishing areas and the growing poverty.

RLS Southern Africa's Guilengue notes that communities in Cabo Delgado have similarly already lost land, sea and forest resources that neither the government nor Total will ever replace. This comes after Total's investment attracted Islamist insurgents to the area, forcing hundreds of thousands to flee their homes. Mozambique, the SADC and even France brought in soldiers from Rwanda and SADC to beat back the insurgents but local communities have been abandoned to their fate.

In response to turbulence on the energy markets, major European economies' investments in Africa show scant regard for environmental concerns. Progress towards switching to more sustainable ways of living and producing have been rolled back in a matter of months.

That is not to say that Africa cannot work with the Global North. Collaborations are possible. However, such collaborations must be environmentally sustainable and they must be based on democratic principles.

Speaking at the Ben Turok Memorial Lecture in December 2022, economist Yanis Varoufakis said that a democratic green transition is possible if the Global North works in a democratic way to transfer real technology and resources to the Global South for green projects. He specifically mentioned solar and wind projects, for which installation costs have fallen dramatically over the past decade.

While there is certainly a need for transition energy sources, Europe's quest for energy independence can also be achieved by supporting the rollout of energy infrastructure in Africa. This could then lead to win-win sharing of energy between both continents in the same manner that gas infrastructure has received massive cash bailouts from EU governments in the past year.

Germany is already trying to do that through its support for hydrogen projects in Namibia, South Africa and Egypt. However, more EU countries need to get involved in such projects, especially where they help African countries meet the needs of their local communities first. That is a sure path to ensuring stability on both continents.

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ENDNOTE

1 The "Ogoni Nine" were a group of activists from the Ogoni region of Nigeria, which included outspoken author and playwright Ken Saro-Wiwa, who opposed the operating practices of the Royal Dutch Shell oil corporation. They were executed on10 November 1995 by the military dictatorship of General Sani Abacha. NA

# Africa Climate Summit promised a lot

## but in the end delivered very little

<u>*By Roland Ngam*</u>

*When all was said and done, the first ever Africa Climate Summit was all about money, money and more money, asserts ROLAND NGAM, who was there and who came away with constructive ideas of what could have been done differently – and how it should be done next time around.*

### *Introduction*

Thirty-one years after the Rio summit about 12,000 people from across Africa and the rest of the world descended on Nairobi for the African Union's (AU's) maiden Africa Climate Summit. That this was the first time the African continent was organising such an event with climate emergency as its number one priority suggests that the continent that bears the biggest burden of the climate emergency is not giving the crisis the urgent attention it deserves.

Regrettably, the Africa Climate Summit was another reminder that climate negotiations are, to borrow the metonymy of Nigerian architect and prominent international environmental activist, Nnimmo Bassey, "lost and damaged".

It was COP lite. *On prend les mêmes et on recommence,* as they say in French, which can be roughly translated as "same old, same old". The same actors and vacuous talking points, only this time with more chaos; the queues in the accreditation centre (it took ten soldiers an eternity to find my pre-printed badge)! And more disregard for the 'too independent, free-thinking' of civil society. (Ugandan climate justice activist Vanessa Nakate's intervention was given the graveyard slot after the 'important guests' had exited the main conference room and were already enjoying *Nyama choma, Kachumbari* and *Ugali* somewhere in town.)

The summit was all about money. Corporate solutions, and pretty much more of the same. That was already obvious in the grandiloquent theme of the gathering, 'Green Growth and Climate Finance for Africa and the World'. The Concept Note[1] stated: "Africa needs to capitalise on this existing momentum by (a) driving a holistic Green Growth Agenda that takes advantage of its vast resources, and (b) securing Climate Finance ➤➤

tailored to Africa's needs to achieve its growth ambitions". Financial and corporate solutions dominated the discussions as well as the final declaration and the Africa Climate Summit probably did nothing to shift the goalposts in any significant way.

Colombia's Vice President, Francia Elena Márquez Mina, was the only one of all the leaders that spoke at the summit who mentioned the words "mother earth," recognising that nature exists for nature's sake, not just to be plundered and exploited by human beings; that what we are really seeking to do is replace anthropocentric ontologies with ecocentric ones; that women in particular bear a disproportionate burden due to global heating; as well as the necessity for South-South cooperation in problem solving. Not an African.

Another speaker who adopted a decidedly more ecocentric stance during his interventions was UN Secretary-General António Guterres who said, "it is time to end the injustices that are holding Africa back". Again, not an African. Also surprisingly, the only person who was very loud about reparations and no-strings attached money for loss and damage ("who put the $CO_2$ up there? I'm sorry – pay up!") was billionaire Mo Ibrahim.

Surely there is something seriously wrong with thinking that is heavily skewed towards techno fixes, corporate solutions and more pledges from the Global North, with the Global South just adopting the posture of hapless victim with begging bowl in hand and no agency at all?

The Chairperson of the African Union, Moussa Faki Mahamat, and the African Union Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, H.E. Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko, must be patting each other on the backs right now for a job well done.

We must question if the Africa Climate Summit is going to help roll back global heating in a meaningful way or just become another part of the multilateral slow grind.

The Summit was divided into three parts: the workshop for the African heads of states and governments, monarchs and foreign dignitaries; the ministerial day; and finally, the declaration and closing event on the third and final day. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's (UNFCCC's) Africa Climate Week took place concurrently and all around the main conference centre partner activities (by the AU, African Development Bank, Lake Chad Basin, etc.), bilaterals as well as an expo centre were held. Kenya's first lady also had a pavilion that was dedicated mostly to discussing the gendered impacts of climate change and there was a Kenya Tourism Board initiative plugging the country's attractions hard, as it should.

Twenty African presidents showed up for the presidential event, as did European Union Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and UN Secretary-General Guterres.

Right out of the blocks host Kenyan President William Ruto underlined the topic that would dominate the discussions: finance! In his welcome address, he said, "we must see in green growth not just a climate imperative but also a fountain of multibillion dollar opportunities that the world is poised to capitalise (sic)". The rest of his speech was littered with business-friendly language: "I invite us to adopt an opportunity lens…"; "the unparalleled opportunity that climate represents for Africa…"; "an unparalleled gold mine…"; "some of our assets are not in the balance sheet"; "we can be a region that helps others achieve their net zero objectives…"; "trillions of dollars are looking for investment

> **Surely there is something seriously wrong with thinking that is heavily skewed towards corporate solutions and more pledges from the Global North.**

opportunities as the need to decarbonise our economies heightens". President Ruto was a man on a mission to secure the bag.

He even absolved the countries responsible for the climate emergency of the primary duty to fix the mess that they created: "The conversation of North vs South must come to an end; the conversation of who did what is not a luxury we can afford." It was clear that African leaders were playing nice in order to get something in return.

It was a bit painful to watch AU Commissioner Sacko stumble through her speech, even forgetting former Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn Boshe's name at some stage. Why did she not speak in Portuguese, her first language?

One by one, African leaders rattled off a litany of grievances. Africa contributed less than 4% of global $CO_2$ emissions but was bearing the brunt of the climate crisis. They were dealing with the challenges by planting trees here and there, but more was needed for adaptation and mitigation. That is all they kept talking about – planting trees. They urged the countries of the Global North to honour their Paris pledges.

While it is true that Africa produces less than 4% of annual global emissions and that it has some of the world's most efficient carbon sinks, including the Congo Basin rainforest and the West African rainforest (in Liberia, Sierra Leone, etc.), it would have been nice to hear someone put a clear face to the climate disaster.

Instead, there was a blanket statement along the lines of "Africa has been witnessing droughts, flooding and although we cause only 4% of…". Africa's political class arrogated to themselves the role of mediator between the continent and foreign investors, although they do not face climatic shocks in any significant way.

Sacko said in her opening statement, "climate change is a pandemic in Africa". In recent times, we have seen:

- About seven coups in West Africa's 'coup belt' where decades of drought and searing heat have decimated the flora and fauna, causing some of the worst malnutrition and precarity that exists anywhere in the world;
- Multi-year droughts in the horn of Africa that has been causing displacement, crop failures and an increase in child malnutrition;
- The first famine caused by climate change in Madagascar;
- Multi-year droughts in Southern Africa that killed millions of livestock in Angola, Namibia, South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe;
- Rainfall and flooding that claimed dozens of lives and washed away thousands of homes in South Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Senegal and many other countries in 2022-23.
- Torrential rainfall and flooding that claimed 5,000 lives in Libya. ➤➤

Predictably, von der Leyen, like other major world leaders, outlined the very hard work that they had already done to tackle the climate crisis. She mentioned the one billion Euro contribution allocated to the EU Global Gateway[2] initiative to unlock investments in green initiatives in Africa, from dams in the DRC to strengthening government capacity to access green bonds elsewhere. Interestingly, that is exactly the same amount of money that the EU is giving one country, Tunisia, to stop migrants from crossing over into Europe.

Von der Leyen underscored that the EU's future climate action would be built around three pillars: 1) attracting private capital to Africa (green bonds and the like); 2) carbon pricing and markets (pricing for polluter pay policies); and 3) carbon targets for every entity. It was the same political speak with little ownership for causing the problem or ambitious declaration of funds transfer from the Global North to the Global South.

Mo Ibrahim later narrated an anecdote told to him by former EU President Jean-Claude Juncker. Juncker had told him that EU politicians knew the right thing to do, but then they did not know how to get elected if they did the right thing. Mo Ibrahim added politicians from the Global North were happy to go to summits and announce big pledges that made them look good but which they could not honour. This behaviour was behind the litany of broken promises from Paris to Sharm El-Sheik and beyond. Prescient words, but they did not dampen the ardour of the leaders and NGOs in attendance.

### *The Ministerial Day*

On day two, the big news was that access to the Tsavo Hall, where the dignitaries' workshops had been arranged, was cut off to most of the 12,000 delegates invited to the gathering. In other words, most people in attendance should not have made the trip at all. Henceforth, access would be limited to the large contingent of delegates from Europe, America, the African Union and African governments. Civil society organisations were largely limited to either watching the discussions from the safe distance of spill-over rooms or following discussions between UN agencies and civil society elsewhere.

One could have registered for the conference, downloaded the app and followed the key parts online as they were also streamed on some platforms. Of course, Kenya may have known beforehand that they needed to cut off access to some meeting rooms, but they wanted delegates to make the journey before they pulled the plug. Twenty thousand delegates, artists, vendors, etc. to accommodate, feed and entertain over five to seven days – that is a lot of revenue for the country.

During the many panels that were organised on the first two days, consultants and government officials from the Global North were eager to tell Africans that they had a great opportunity to end energy poverty through … concessional and non-concessional loans. Take the hydrogen panel for example. There were discussions about how blended finance could help Africa rapidly scale up its green hydrogen potential. South Africa's Electricity Minister Kgosientsho Ramokgopa said that work was underway to develop a South Africa-Namibia hydrogen corridor. Policies were at an advanced stage of preparation to unlock investment from … private capital.

Similarly the US Assistant Secretary for International Trade and Development underscored the need for private capital to come to the party. She also stressed the need

> **Most of the attendees agreed that African cities were largely helpless in the face of climate change.**

for concessional and non-concessional financing to flow into Africa, and that Africa needed to create the right policy frameworks and capacity for that to happen.

Colombia's former president, Iván Duque Márquez, remarked that although Africa emitted less than 4% of global greenhouse gases (GHG), negative land use on the continent was too high. He encouraged African nations to conserve more in order to get more funding. In return, the continent's conservation efforts could be rewarded in the form of investments in carbon credits as well as green and blue bonds. Such schemes were not perfect, but it was necessary to start somewhere.

Money and dollar signs aside, there were many interesting civil society events. For example, the current Secretary General of United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLG Africa), Jean Pierre Elong Mbassi, hosted an important panel on what African cities were doing to both decarbonise and prepare for the increasing impacts of climate change. Most of the attendees agreed that African cities were largely helpless in the face of climate change. They were reacting with their own funds, and little else coming from outside. Waste collection and management is often never spoken about in many African cities. Some, like the Malian activist Rokia Doumbia, who speak up to complain about piles of rubbish in the streets, end up in jail for "abusing and insulting the president".

Other discussions focused on restorative agriculture, clean cooking solutions, the modus operandi of carbon markets, reforming development finance institutions, ending energy poverty in Africa, green industrialisation, mining and metallurgy, etc. Clean cooking emerged as a very strong discussion topic. There were some solutions on show at the pavilion and delegates were convinced that the over one billion Africans who lack access to clean cooking had a key role to play in decarbonising the continent's energy sector.

### *Day three*

On 8 September, President Ruto announced that US$23 billion worth of investments and pledges had been struck during the conference. These included:

- A US$4.5 billion finance initiative to unlock Africa's clean energy potential (announced by COP28 President Sultan Al Jaber);
- A US$12 million deal between Kenya and the EU to kickstart a hydrogen value chain in Kenya;
- A US$1 billion African Development Bank & Global Centre on Adaptation initiative to finance youth-led businesses and startups across Africa;
- A US$450 million purchase of African carbon credits by United Arab Emirates investors by 2030;
- A US$30 million African Development Bank initiative for food security and climate resilience in Africa; ➤➤

- A US$30 million US government initiative for food security and climate resilience efforts in Africa; and
- £34 million from the United Kingdom for new projects across 15 African countries to help women, at-risk communities and over 400,000 farmers build resilience against the effects of climate change.

Kenya also scored major deals with Germany (debt relief), the Bezos Earth Fund (forest restoration) and specialist climate and impact fund manager Camco (debt funding).

The Summit adopted the 'African Leaders Nairobi Declaration[3] on Climate Change and Call to Action,' which is at long last a demonstration of African leaders stepping up to the challenge of climate change. That it took this long to mobilise high-level efforts to deal with the challenge in a continent that bears the biggest burden of the climate crises is baffling.

The Nairobi Declaration calls for urgent transformation of Development Finance Institutions (DFIs) so that they start treating African countries and entities fairly. Mia Mottley, the Prime Minister of Barbados, said DFIs "were not created with us in mind and that still shows today". Too often, African entities are considered risky bets and the money they get is at rates that are four or five times higher than the rates offered to nations and entities in the Global North. Too many African countries are also dealing with astronomical debt and for that reason cannot react to the most basic needs of their citizens. Much suffering comes from austerity policies pushed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank and it is good that the conference called that out.

The Nairobi Declaration calls for a global tax regime to finance climate action. A tax regime is a good idea, but it cannot be global. It must be paid by the nations and corporations that are responsible for dumping the $CO_2$ that is causing the challenges we face today. These entities are known and they are still raking in billions in profits as they ramp up pollution. Oil and gas giants earned over US$220 billion in 2022. We know that BP, Shell Global, ExxonMobil are responsible for damaging millions of hectares of prime arable land across the planet. We know that pesticides and chemicals companies like Corteva, Bayer, ChemChina and others dump large amounts of toxic chemicals into our waterways every year. We know about Coca Cola and plastic bottles, banks that funded slave ships, colonial plantations, large-scale commercial farms in Africa, and funding of polluting industries, and so on.

Meek supplication is not going to coax just and fair reparations out of these offenders. What would be revolutionary would be to demand the imposition of heavy taxes and fines specifically on these companies and the countries that have enabled their behaviour for so many years. While President Ruto may want to absolve them of any responsibility, to do that would not be climate justice. As Mo Ibrahim said at the Africa Climate Summit:

> *... we are dodging all the time talking about how to get more money, oh climate finance blab la bla. Tax carbon! Use the market! You guys in the rich countries told us that you invented capitalism. You invented the markets. Why aren't you applying market forces to carbon? Because people make promises. Oh, those poor guys in Africa, they have a problem there ... we are kind people. We gonna offer them*

*some money. How about one hundred billion dollars for climate funding? But then, actually things are tight. Sorry, we cannot make it this year. In those guys minds, it is charity! It is charity! And that is a mistake! It should not be charity. This should be an international clear agreement. You break it, you own it. Without that dynamic, nothing will change.*

The decision to establish the Africa Climate Summit as a biennial event convened by the African Union and hosted by AU member states is a good decision, although long overdue, and its format must change. Its core constituency must be the African people who must also stop acting like beggars and explicitly call out those who are responsible for global heating.

The Africa Great Green Wall Initiative, an AU project that has the potential to restore degraded forests and build resilience in the Sahel, was invisible at the Summit, and only mentioned by the Green Climate Fund and others as a footnote. That this was the case at a time when the Sahel is literally burning is confounding. One only needs to look at the parts of the Sahel where regreening[4] is happening to realise what can be achieved if local communities and clear support come together. Initiatives like the Africa Great Green Wall should be what the Africa Climate Summit is about.

Secondly, the primary audience of the African Leaders Nairobi Declaration on Climate Change and Call to Action is foreigners, specifically Global North entities, not Africans. The Africans mentioned once or twice in the document, i.e. the youth and smallholder farmers, the custodians of the environment, are mere accessories. Those who bear the brunt of climate change, i.e. women and children, are only portrayed as victims and mere props to justify the begging bowl that is being held out.

Thirdly, there is too much focus on a neoliberal trickle-down growth paradigm for development, although this time they want it to be green: “Attracting local, regional and global investment”; “Propelling Africa’s economic growth and job creation”; “Focusing our economic development plans on climate-positive growth”; “Advancing green industrialisation”. Massive inflows of foreign capital to develop industrialisation policies within current economic paradigms will yield the same results with a few beneficiaries (the connected urban elite) and a legacy of poverty and inequality elsewhere on the continent. Young people are thoroughly fed up with politics as usual. They want system change, a new way of life that is not based on constant industrialisation and plunder of the environment.

*The time has come for the African Union to appoint a Climate Commissioner.* The Declaration does not say anything about this, but it no longer makes sense to graft this major responsibility onto the Rural Economy and Agriculture portfolio as just another of its responsibilities.

## *Conclusion*

Interestingly, the ‘Synthesis report’[5] of the Technical Dialogue of the First Global Stocktake that was released by the co-facilitators on Friday September 8, i.e. two days after the end of the Africa Climate Summit, stated in key finding 4: “global emissions are not in line with modelled global mitigation pathways consistent with the temperature goal of the ➤➤

Paris Agreement, and there is a rapidly narrowing window to raise ambition and implement existing commitments in order to limit warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels".

The Synthesis Report in many ways calls out the Africa Climate Summit and its corporatised solutions as part of the problem:

- Where we needed to put a clear face to the climate crisis for all to see, the talks were dominated by politicians who live in secure leafy suburbs and never get to experience what climate catastrophe looks like.
- Where the Africa Climate Summit needed to explicitly name and shame perennial abusers for their toxic behaviour, we saw only meek supplication for peanuts.
- Where African leaders needed to demand reparations and transfers of no-strings attached technology and resources to the Global South as payment for centuries of plunder, exploitation, transfer pricing, illicit financial flows, burning through the entire planet's carbon budget, etc., we heard only talk about concessional and non-concessional loans. Loans to further enrich polluting nations, lobbyists and connected politicians!
- Where innovative ideas for a democratic, indigenous, people-led transformation of the environment were required, we only saw more neoliberal trickle-down policies that place venture capital, Global North lobbyists, banks and polluting nations at the heart of the climate solution. This is bound to fail of course. With the hard right turn that we are witnessing in the politics of too many countries, we are more likely going to see more of the same kind of tokenism instead of diversity, equity and inclusion programmes, until it's time for the next conference.
- Where Africa needed to launch a wider South-South discussion for coordinated action and fair policies, the continent's leaders locked themselves in rooms with venture capital from the Global North to beg for pledges.

It is time for African leaders to break with the typical cap-in-hand behaviour that only attracts money for themselves and their cronies in capital cities. The other Africa, i.e. the majority, those who protect the planet and look after it day after day and those who are already experiencing the destructive effects of floods, droughts and erratic weather, demand radical ideas for a just and fair transition.

*The views expressed in this article are not necessarily those of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation.*

ENDNOTES

1. The Concept Note, titled "Green Growth and Climate Finance for Africa and the World", is available at https:/africaclimatesummit.org/downloads/Africa-Climate-Summit-Concept-Note.pdf
2. See https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/stronger-europe-world/global-gateway_en
3. See the African Leaders Nairobi Declaration on Climate Change and Call to Action at chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.afdb.org/sites/default/files/2023/09/08/the_african_leaders_nairobi_declaration_on_climate_change-rev-eng.pdf
4. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cv8keCMroWU
5. See https://unfccc.int/documents/631600 NA

# Voluntary carbon markets:

## Slow violence for indigenous communities in the Global South?

*By Liz Mwangi*

Liz Mwangi is doing an MPhil in Environmental Humanities at the University of Cape Town. In that capacity she is associated with Environmental Humanities South (EHS).

*At the inaugural Africa Climate Summit, held in Nairobi in September 2023, discussions about carbon trading dominated many conversations. Kenyan President William Ruto said Africa's carbon sinks provide an "unparalleled economic goldmine" and called for "a new way of doing business." Many commentators, however, believe the real winners in the carbon trading markets are the financial brokers in the developed countries who operate these controversial global markets. LIZ MWANGI elaborates on this perspective.*

The Nairobi Declaration, signed at the Africa Climate Summit on 6 September 2023, emphasises the need to create a global carbon tax regime that would enable countries in the Global South to receive a form of compensation for the impact of climate change which is largely exacerbated by the Global North (Malesi, 2023). While the need to hold large carbon emitters accountable for their action is without doubt necessary, research conducted by various scholars (Gilbertson *et al.*, 2009; Böhm *et al.* 2012) has shown how carbon trading may not only be a new form of colonialism – "a scramble for Africa's forest carbon" (Pearce, 2023) – but a slow violence targeted at indigenous communities located in the Global South.

### *When did the race towards the financialisation of carbon begin?*

The 1992 Rio Summit saw the establishment of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) which introduced negotiations around the emission of greenhouse gases as a way to curb and mitigate anthropogenic climate ››


*Source: Flickr*

change effects (Rio Summit Declaration, 1992). Five years later, in 1997, the Kyoto Protocol went on to provide a working framework towards the reduction of these emissions (Kyoto Protocol, 1997), giving rise to the trading of carbon emissions and carbon offsets. In effect, through the Kyoto Protocol, the marketing and the financialisation of nature enabled the rise of what one might call green capitalism (Bracking, 2020). In simpler terms, through carbon credits, Global North/developed countries would be able to buy off their rights to pollute from Global South/least developed countries via projects or initiatives said to sequester carbon from trees and other 'biodiverse-rich' regions.

Within the financial world, the rise of carbon markets has been praised by some as an innovative economic strategy to conserve and protect the environment; more so given the belief that local communities will also be uplifted as a result (UNEP, 2015). This framing of carbon markets, however, is questionable. A closer look at the African context reveals how the hyper-financialisation of the natural world not only creates "a fictitious capital" (Thibodeau, 2010) that has large implications for the environment, but also tends to lead to more damage, benefitting those who are far away from the spaces carbon tends to be harvested from. Power Shift Africa, a think-tank that advocates for climate justice and action across the continent, released a report in 2022 stating that in the end the largest winners of the carbon trading markets are the polluters (fossil-fuel companies) and financial brokers who operate and exist within the world economic markets (Power Shift Africa, 2023).

> **… carbon trading may not only be a new form of colonialism but a slow violence targeted at indigenous communities.**

It is not surprising that Interpol, an international police information-sharing network, has warned that if not closely regulated, carbon trading might "become the next global white collar crime" (Henderson, 2011: pp. 83-9).

In August 2023, Liberia signed a carbon offset deal with an Emirati company that would see the country concede 10% of its territory (Hearst, 2023). According to Hearst, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which also happens to be one of the world's largest oil producers, would be able to "harvest" carbon credits that would have been conserved and protected through the one million hectares of forest/land it would acquire through this deal. These credits would then be sold off to other major global polluters.

There is much criticism surrounding Global North and large greenhouse gas-emitting countries seeking to engage in carbon trading with countries in the Global South. As one environmental scholar highlights, "the idea that you can simply make an equation whereby if you buy up a certain area of land … then that will ensure offsets of your carbon emissions through the natural ability of this ecosystem to sequester carbon is really dubious" (Hearst, 2023). Waring, a senior lecturer on climate change at Imperial College, London, further states that "there aren't enough trees in the world to offset society's carbon emissions – and there never will be" (2021). There is a need to conduct a more comprehensive evaluation to understand the viability and potential impact mass reforestation would have on the earth's climate and the global cycle (Buis, 2019). This would be crucial especially given the fact that in the recent past, a vast number of carbon offsets have been found to be completely worthless with others suggesting that the market could be "broken" (Greenfield, 2023).

## *Repackaged oppression: A look at carbon colonialism*

During the Africa Climate Summit, the UAE committed to purchasing $450-million worth of carbon credit from the African Carbon Markets Initiative (ACMI) (Miriri, 2023). The ACMI was launched in 2022, during COP27, with an aim of scaling voluntary carbon markets across Africa. The initiative has set out to produce 300 million annual credits on voluntary offset markets by 2030 and 1.5 billion by 2050, so as to "make carbon credits one of Africa's leading export products" (Caramel, 2023). Central to achieving these targets, amongst others, is the aim to "promote justice, equity and inclusiveness" when it comes to Africa's agency in the global carbon marketplace. At surface level, this bold and ambitious goal may appear to offer promise but on a much deeper level one begins to see how encouraging further extraction from the "goldmine," (re)creates colonial systems of oppression which have long been synonymous with Africa. It is interesting to note that the ACMI is currently steered by a committee of experts, one of whom happens to be David Antonioli who is the ex-CEO of Verra, the world's largest carbon credit certifier ››

(Africa Carbon Markets Initiative, 2022). In early 2023, Antonioli resigned as CEO of Verra following accusations levelled against the organisation for "approving millions of worthless offsets used by major companies" (Greenfield, 2023).

Carbon colonialism, then, is the process in which countries in the Global North, most of which are economically more developed, continue to pass on injustice(s) to poorer countries through carbon trading (Bachram, 2004). Schlosberg (2013) argues that carbon trading is a manifestation of new forms of colonialism: developed countries can gain an upper hand in setting the carbon standards that often lead to what some have termed "carbon dumping" in least developed countries (Parsons, 2023). Moreover this increases inequalities in bargaining power. As countries in the Global North buy off their rights to continue their industrial pursuits and practices, thus continuing to leave an even larger toxic and harmful trail in the environment, many poorer countries in the Global South are left to their mercy. The fact that this largely unregulated market has been left to the invisible hand of the economy tends to further (re)create many loopholes that encourage further oppression and exploitation of people and the planet. Researchers at the University of California Berkeley's Carbon Trading Project found that the "current system of generating rainforest protection carbon credits was not fit for purpose and was open to exploitation" (Greenfield, 2023). Other researchers have warned that credit credibility seriously threatens forests (Balmford, *et al.*, 2023).

## *A slow violence: Let them eat carbon*

We know very well that climate change does not exist in a vacuum. Although the African continent, alongside other countries located within the Global South, have experienced the harsher realities of its effects, climate change remains a global issue. To say a region or country, such as Kenya, exists in its own ecological space where carbon is grown and generated and assume that this 'grown commodity' will neutralise the effects of a Global North country is quite questionable. These ecological spaces, which are far away from the spaces where the carbon is being massively generated, in a way, give rise to what one may term sacrifice zones built upon the notion of slow violence. It's a kind of violence "that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all" (Davies, 2022:5). Often, this violence tends to maximise and exploit the vulnerability of ecosystems and marginalised communities that are poor and disempowered. Out of desperation to sustain their livelihoods given the pressures exacerbated by the introduction of such sacrifice zones, social conflicts tend to arise.

Take for example, the "Nhambita Community Carbon Project" that was set up in a rural area in Mozambique by Envirotrade, a carbon trading firm. Through the project, farmers were encouraged to "grow carbon" which would in turn enable them to receive money from the harvests and "fight off poverty". However, as Africa (2012) notes, this rising ecosystem service has not only aggravated food insecurity as farmers turn towards growing carbon and taking care of designated "carbon-zones" for the benefit of polluters, it also fails to consider the human rights of the community members who were not consulted prior to the signing of the deal. Toulmin (2009) notes that there is a great risk that carbon markets will encourage monoculture farming in place of a more diverse range of forest species (in the case of REDD+ projects[1]) if they conserve more carbon per area. Emerging research has also shown how the process of carbon sequestration within forests accounts for less than 30% of the environmental gains related to REDD+ projects (*ibid*).

In addition, under the Nhambita project, one of the stipulations of the deal extends to future generations of farmers. In another words, should a farmer die, his/her heirs would be left to carry on the "carbon burden" until the end of the contract deal (*ibid*). Power, in this sense, continues to rest in the hands of the elite groups and strips away any rights from local communities and the indigenous people living within such localities. It is no wonder then that during the Summit more than 500 civil society groups and organisations marched in Nairobi to raise their voices against basing the climate agenda on western propaganda such as carbon markets (News Wire, 2023). Indigenous peoples and local communities are often "othered" in these spaces and simply seen as cheap labour for this market. The civil society groups called instead for debt relief and reparations/compensation to be delivered, placing the more urgent needs of Global South countries and their people at the forefront.

## *Sacrifice 'ecological spaces' and zones*

Sacrifice zones have tended to be located in less developed countries that either serve as wastelands or dumping sites for the Global North (Voyles, 2015). Agbogbloshie, a former wetland in Accra, Ghana, which is home to the world's largest e-waste dumping site, is an example of an environmental sacrifice zone on the African continent. Harsher environmental realities are exacerbated as pollution becomes a traded commodity in the global markets. According to Lerner (2012), an environmental justice activist, sacrifice zones continue to "… dramatize the fact that low-income and minority populations … are required to make disproportionate health and economic sacrifices that more affluent people can avoid." This recreates the already mentioned systems of oppression that are closely interlinked with race, class, gender and economic disparities (Juskus, 2023). As more powerful groups seek to reap the rewards and financial gains from these markets, access to land, land grabbing and land rights also continue to be contested issues (Cotula *et al.*, 2009).

Within the environmental sector, a new term has emerged. "Green grabbing," first coined by Vidal (2008), refers to the way in which land is appropriated to meet an environmental end. Through this appropriation the rights to the land and to access it moves from those who occupy it (who are often weaker both politically and economically) and into the hands of more elite and powerful individuals. Cases of green grabbing related to carbon markets have been reported in countries such as Uganda where more than 20,000 people were forcefully removed from their village to make room for a carbon trading project carried out by a British forestry company (Kron, 2011). In a ruthless act that involved the burning down of the villages, the locals were forcefully driven off their land to make room for planting pine and eucalyptus trees that would supposedly generate carbon credits. Interestingly, the eucalyptus tree is closely associated

> **… the hyper-financialisation of the natural world not only creates "a fictitious capital", but also tends to lead to more damage.**

with high levels of land degradation as it easily and heavily erodes soil nutrients (Boss, 2022). Cutere has argued that in this particular case, the pine trees further aggravated the situation by hindering and reducing water sources (Böhm & Dabhi, 2009). Here we have a two-fold violation of human rights and livelihoods, as well as the land itself. A report carried out by the Oakland Institute (Mousseau, 2019) revealed how, for the carbon trading firms, such areas are often seen as "unused bushland" simply available for their exploitation.

The case in Uganda is just one example. Energy Monitor (Gordon, 2022) reports that Kenya had one of the most notorious forced evictions of indigenous people from their ancestral homeland and forest for carbon-related initiatives. In 2014, more than 1,000 Sengwer people (an indigenous community in Kenya) were removed from Embobut Forest in Cherangani Hills (Vidal, 2014; Sena, 2015) to make way for a carbon offset project. Their villages were torched and they have become squatters. In many ways, one can see how the atrocities that were a feature of Kenya's ruthless colonial government when indigenous communities were forcefully evicted from their lands, continue to echo in today's post-colonial, 'democratic' government. Quite paradoxically, scholars such as Lohmann (2000) have pointed to the fact that by removing people from their lands and forcefully causing migration, this displacement may actually lead to more carbon emissions than those allegedly captured by those projects:

> *[A]ny communities displaced from carbon plantations … would have to have their activities monitored closely for (say) a century, no matter where they had migrated to, to determine precisely to what extent they were encroaching on forests or grasslands elsewhere, and thus releasing the carbon stored in those ecosystems to the atmosphere (Lohmann, 2000:8).*

Dalby (2013: pp. 38-47) has also heavily criticised this practice, stating that "to turn forests into carbon sinks [also] creates complicated links between metropolitan and peripheral areas." When communities are evicted from their lands, not only does this have an impact on societies, but also on the larger ecological systems and human relationships. The loss of practices and knowledge around soil care by communities, as well as the changing fertility and chemical composition of the soil (Fairhead and Scoones, 2012) are but a few of these indirect shifting dynamics that tend to occur.

## *Is there an alternative?*

How can we redesign carbon markets to serve the people and the natural world. Given that most of these offset markets tend to be located in indigenous lands and communities, placing the people at the heart of these projects is not only necessary, but should be mandatory for all future projects. A community-based model of carbon markets that is built with and for the people should be applied for all carbon-offset projects. Taking into consideration the living dynamics and histories of the people occupying the land would be more beneficial in the long run. If done successfully, these markets may increase the much-needed financial flows to communities for forest protection and conservation.

Globally, only a quarter of countries recognise or explicitly recognise the rights to govern carbon. In Africa, Ethiopia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) are the only countries that explicitly recognise community rights to carbon. Vietnam is the only country in the world that has a benefit-sharing scheme when it comes to carbon credits (Gordon, 2022). It is commendable that in terms of Kenya's Carbon Trading and Carbon Benefit Sharing Bill of 2023, local communities are set to receive and be allocated at least 40% of the benefits reaped from such projects (Wambua & Otieno, 2022). The Bill was signed into law on 1 September, only days before the Africa Climate Summit. At present, it exists only in the law and a close following of its implementation is needed to ensure that the 40% reaches the local communities.

## *Thinking beyond carbon markets …*

Soovacool (2010) proposes a new method that involves phasing out carbon credits entirely and creating a carbon development fund instead. In this case, carbon emitters would be taxed on their emissions, rather than buying off the rights to continue to pollute. Power Shift Africa, as cited above, has proposed other methods of financing climate action. These include the call for the cancellation of schemes such as "debt-for-nature," doing so in the service of the wellbeing of African people. Further, there is a need to ensure that climate finance allocated for mitigation and adaptation purposes is not simply pledged but is delivered through systems that reach grassroot communities. What is needed is support for new financial flows that enhance and place both the planet and the people at the centre, without causing further damage or harm.

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ENDNOTE

1. For more on REDD+ see https://unfccc.int/topics/land-use/workstreams/redd/what-is-redd NA

# Eskom and energy:
## Large-scale renewables programme the only way to keep the lights on

*By Mark Swilling*

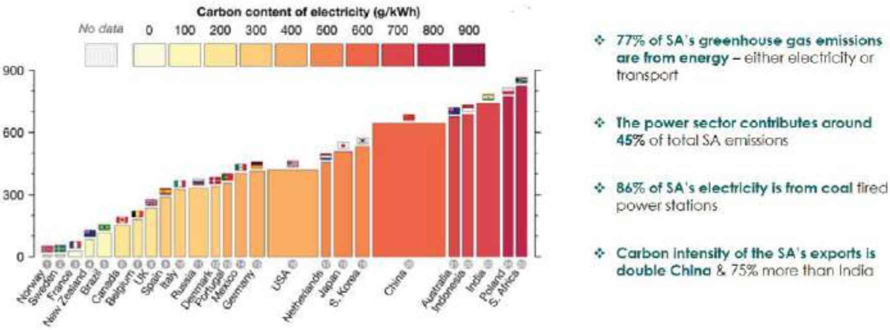
Professor Mark Swilling is Distinguished Professor of Sustainable Development and Co-Director of the Centre for Sustainability Transitions (CST). He is a member of the International Resource Panel, fellow of the World Academy of Art and Science, a member of the Board of the Development Bank of Southern Africa since 2014 and Chairperson of the Board from January 2019–September 2019 and from November 2021 to the present. He was appointed by President Ramaphosa as a Commissioner on the National Planning Commission.

*Taking account of current actual empirical conditions and the balance of power in South Africa, MARK SWILLING traces the prolonged discursive process through which South Africa arrived at its – precarious and contested – decision in favour of a large-scale renewables build programme. This article is based on a paper presented in July at a panel discussion on 'What constitutes a progressive perspective on our energy crisis?" organised by the Progressive Citizenship Initiative.*

South Africa's energy system is the most coal-intensive in the world. As a result, compared to other countries, it is the most carbon intensive economy in the world.

Eskom, the vertically integrated state-owned power utility, owns 15 of the 16 coal-fired power stations that together comprise just over 40 GW of installed capacity.[1] At the same time the coal fleet is old (on average 41 years old by 2022) and therefore most of the power stations need to be decommissioned by 2050.

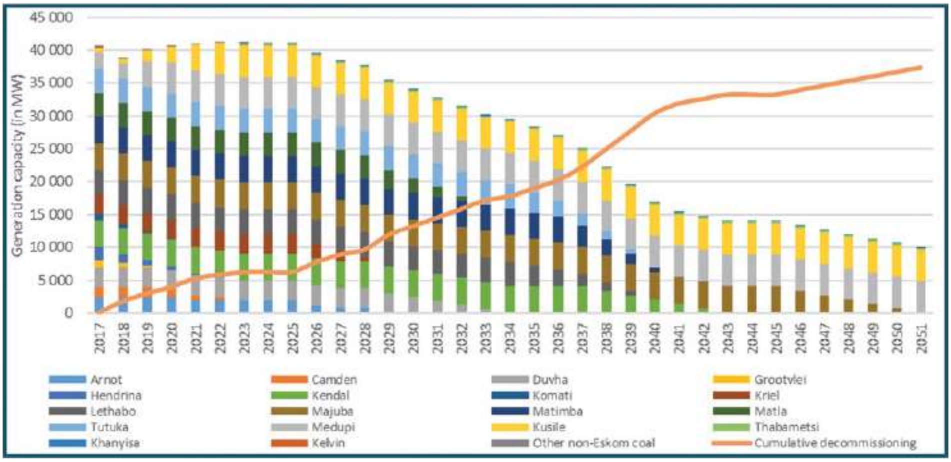
**Figure 1: Carbon content of electricity**




*Source: Carbon Brief, 2018*

Figure 2 reflects the official decommissioning strategy through to 2051 based on figures from the Department of Energy and Eskom. These figures assume that two new privately owned power stations that are being planned, Khanyisa and Thabametsi, will get built, which is now highly unlikely. Just as unlikely is that South Africa will be able to raise funding to build another coal-fired power station, especially since China announced it will no longer fund coal-fired power stations outside China (Carbon Brief, 2022).

**Figure 2 South Africa's coal-based generation capacity and scheduled decommissioning**

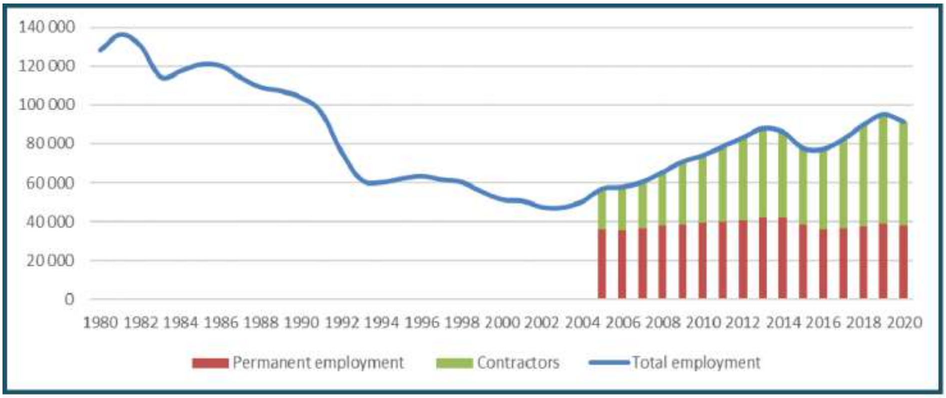



*Source: Hermanus & Montmasson-Clair, 2021*

In a country with one of the highest unemployment rates in the world, the socio-economic impact of decommissioning is a highly charged political issue. A total of ››

150,000 workers are employed in the coal-related value chain. By 2020 there were 91,459 workers employed in coal mines that service both Eskom (around half the mined coal) and the coal export market. This figure included 7,433 mineworkers employed by Sasol, South Africa's fuel-from-coal company. There were around 15,000 transport-related jobs: Transnet Freight Rail (about 12,000 people directly depending on the domestic and export coal lines), the Richards Bay Coal Terminal (532 people in 2014) and coal trucking (about 200 trucking small businesses employing 2,000 to 4,000 people in 2018). Eskom's coal-fired power plants employed about 10,000 people, Sasol employed 17,814 people, steelmaking 6,622 and cement production the rest (about 7,000 people in 2016) (Hermanus & Montmasson-Clair, 2021). Of the 85,000 people directly employed in coal mining, about half were permanently employed while the rest were contract workers. The rise in contract workers who have less secure employment with fewer benefits is a key feature of the restructuring of the coal sector in response to the profit squeeze and leveraged buyouts by black empowerment companies.

**Figure 3: Direct employment in coal mining in South Africa**



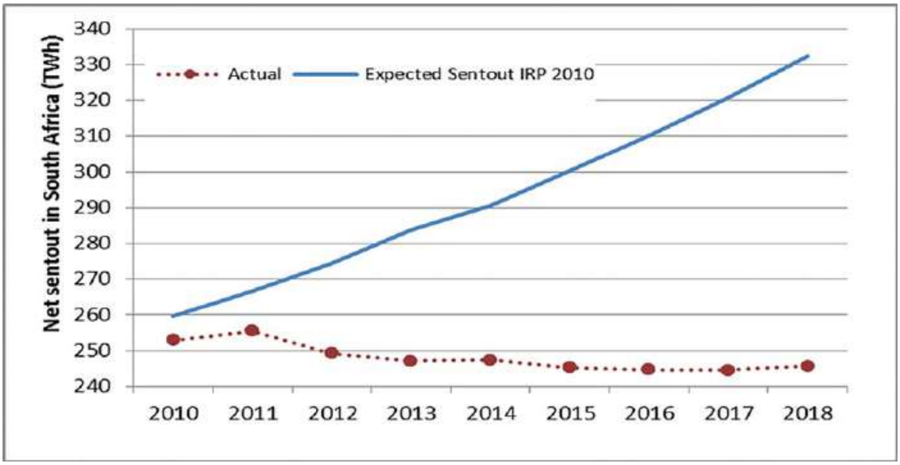

*Source: Hermanus & Montmasson-Clair, 2021*

South African energy planning has been notoriously poor. During the late apartheid years over-investment in generation capacity resulted in steep drops in prices that suited the post-1994 democratic government. However, instead of building additional capacity after 1994 in anticipation of future demand as recommended by Eskom, this was delayed until 2008 by which time it was too late – loadshedding had begun, and has not stopped since, with seriously negative economic impacts.

In 2010, the government published the Integrated Resource Plan, its official energy policy (Department of Mineral Resources and Energy, 2011). As reflected in Figure 4, predictions of demand were proven totally wrong. This had much to do with the restructuring of the economy as the secondary sector went into decline and the services sector grew, thus reducing the energy intensity of the economy. This, plus relatively low growth rates after the global financial crisis, partly explains declining demand.

But the other driver was the rising costs of coal supplies and therefore electricity production. South Africa's coal fleet was designed to burn cheap low-quality ($CO_2$ intensive) coal, and the high-quality coal was exported mainly to developed economies. Profits from the latter effectively cross-subsidised the former which, in turn, contributed to the fact that South Africa had the cheapest (and most $CO_2$-intensive) energy in the world in the early 1990s. After South Africa was re-absorbed into the global economy after 1994, new markets opened up in the Global South (especially Asia and Latin America). But the demand was for cheaper low-quality coal, thus creating competitive pressures that pushed up the price of cheap coal at a time when higher quality coal was becoming less abundant. This, coupled with pressures to increase coal prices to enable black economic empowerment in the mining sector, contributed to rising prices (Burton, Marquard & McCall, 2019).

**Figure 4: Expected Electricity Sent-out from IRP 2010–2030 vs Actual Sources: Statistics SA & Promulgated IRP 2010–2030**




*Source: Department of Mineral Resources and Energy, 2019*

Finally, Eskom became the prime target of state capture forces during the presidency of Jacob Zuma, 2009 to 2018 (Bhorat *et al.*, 2017; Eberhard *et al.*, 2014; Godinho, Hermanus & Eberhard, 2018). Eskom was effectively looted during this period, its labour force massively expanded, maintenance of power stations neglected and expenditure controls effectively abandoned. Table 1 presents a summary of the state of play in 2019 compared to 2007. Employee costs increased three-fold, coal costs six-fold and the selling price nearly five-fold. The total amount of coal bought remained the same, electricity sales declined and debt ballooned from R40 bn to R440 bn between 2007 and 2019.

**Table 1:**

| | 2007 | 2019 |
|---|---|---|
| Employee costs (billion rand) | 9.5 | 33.3 |
| Employees | 32 674 | 46 665 |
| Coal costs (billion rand) | 10 | 58.5 |
| Coal purchases (Mt) | 117.4 | 118.3 |
| Electricity sales (GWh) | 218 120 | 208 319 |
| Total installed capacity (MW) | 42 618 | 44 127 |
| Revenue (billion rand) | 39.4 | 179.9 |
| Ave selling price (c/kWh) | 18 | 90.01 |
| Debt (billion rand) | 40.5 | 440.6 |

*Source: Bloomberg*

Advised by Bain Consulting Group, Jacob Zuma's solution to the energy crisis was a fleet of Russian-built nuclear power plants which would have cost South Africa $76 billion. The secret so-called 'nuclear deal' that he and Vladimir Putin signed in 2014 was declared illegal by a High Court ruling in 2017 that was initiated by two major environmental groups.

Without a coal or nuclear solution to the energy crisis, the only option available was renewables. After Cyril Ramaphosa became President in 2018, he poured cold water on the nuclear deal and promoted coal-fired power and renewables. But by 2020 his Presidential Economic Advisory Council declared that renewables with gas backup are the only option (South African Presidential Economic Advisory Council, 2020). By mid-2021, Eskom, the President and the entire cabinet minus the Minister for Mineral Resources and Energy were agreed that a rapid large-scale renewables build programme was the only option available if South Africa was going to keep the lights on. How did this partial consensus on a renewables-based transition pathway emerge?

### *The first discursive period*

The first discursive period started with the White Paper on Energy Policy in 1998 and the White Paper on Renewable Energy in 2003. This marked the start of a fundamental contradiction between a bid to re-imagine the future of the energy sector in crude neo-liberal terms, and the real-world dynamics of low electricity prices that was enabling an export-oriented growth model. Both White Papers emphasised the importance of unbundling the vertically integrated nature of the electricity sector and the related entry by the private sector (with a preference for black empowerment companies) in both coal-fired power generation and renewables.

This was part of a wider neo-liberal policy turn that occurred in 1996 when the Minister of Finance announced the introduction of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy to replace the more social-democratic Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) that was adopted by the new democratic government after 1994 (Visser, 2004; Gelb, 2006; Swilling, 2020). Unbundling and privatisation of energy generation was the imaginary at the heart of both White Papers. Following the neo-liberal 'regulationist' script developed elsewhere in the world, this was coupled to the proposal to establish an independent regulator (Eberhard, 2006). As a result, the National Energy Regulator of South Africa (NERSA) was established on 1 October 2005 in terms of the National Energy Regulator Act, 2004 (replacing the National Electricity Regulator that existed between 1995-2006).

However, for private investors to enter the generation market, electricity prices needed to be substantially higher. But riding off the back of over-investment in sunk costs during the apartheid era, Eskom's prices were far too low to make private investment profitable. Ministries responsible for the export-oriented economic growth strategy resisted raising electricity prices (reinforced by NERSA's interpretation of their role as acting in the 'public interest'), while endorsing the neo-liberal imaginary that imbued economic policy in general. The end result was the absence of public investment in new generation capacity because of the assumption that this would be forthcoming from the private sector; while at the same time private sector investment did not happen because electricity prices were too low.

In 2008 President Mbeki apologised to the nation for this imbroglio, and the rush commenced to build two new coal-fired power stations (Medupi and Kusile) using Eskom's internal capabilities (which were being hollowed out by state capture) with disastrous consequences. The cost of Medupi and Kusile ballooned from a project cost of R163.2 bn in 2007 (for completion in 2015) to R450 bn by 2021 (without being fully completed) (*BizNews*, 2021).

In the meantime, NERSA decided in 2007 to initiate investigations into a Feed-in-Tariff (FiT) to promote renewable energy. After going far down the road, including publishing a set of FiTs (later arbitrarily revised downwards) and raising expectations of renewable energy developers who even incurred expenditures securing land and expertise, the National Treasury (NT) concluded in 2010 that FiTs contradicted government financial regulations. The Public Private Partnership (PPP) Unit within NT worked with the Department of Energy (DoE) to design an alternative approach, which drew heavily on ➤➤

the templates that had been developed globally by then (with involvement of South African experts from Cape Town University) for procurement via the auction mechanism (Eberhard, Kolker & Leigland, 2014; Swilling *et al.*, 2022). A team of local and international experts were appointed[2] who re-coded a detailed set of rules and procedures that became the Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement Programme (REIPPPP) and led to the first Request for Proposals (RFP) on 3 August 2011.

## *The second discursive period*

The establishment of the Independent Power Producers Office (IPPO) to manage the RFP in August 2011 marks the start of the second discursive period, which ends with the fourth bid window in 2015. Institutionally, the REIPPPP was made possible by a partnership between the DoE, NT and the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), which mandated the IPPO, as a semi-autonomous institutional entity within the DoE, to oversee ministerial determinations for the procurement of utility-scale RE.

Participation by the NT, and specifically its Public-Private Partnership Unit, was instrumental in configuring the programme. The NT's provision of state guarantees for 20-year Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) is widely recognised as a feature that increased the REIPPPP's investment attractiveness and sustained its viability (Montmasson-Clair & Ryan, 2014; Eberhard & Naude, 2016). Much of the success of the procurement framework has been attributed to its stringent and comprehensive design, together with ongoing adjustments and improvements, the particularities of which have been detailed in various recent studies (Montmasson-Clair & Ryan, 2014; Kruger & Eberhard, 2016; Bayer, Schäuble & Ferrari, 2018; Kruger, Nygaard & Kitzing, 2021).

Re-imagining a South African energy future that was not exclusively about coal was a tricky story to sell. It was the IPPO that built and disseminated the narrative, emphasising that the REIPPPP was necessary to demonstrate South Africa's progress on climate change commitments as per the Paris Agreement, as well as to respond to the need for adequate, reliable, flexible and affordable electricity generation capacity (Department of Mineral Resources and Energy, 2023). Montmasson-Clair and Ryan (2014) argue that another motivation was a recognition, by the South African government, that Eskom was ill-equipped to meet the country's electricity demand and thus not capable of ensuring energy security to underpin broad-based socio-economic development.

For Karén Breytenbach, the head of the IPPO (Breytenbach, 2018: 1), an energy transition pathway that merges decarbonisation and 'safe and just operating spaces' (SJOs) was a strategic priority for South Africa:

> *Through the REIPPPP we have proved that we can quickly help reduce the country's reliance on fossil fuels, that we can stimulate an indigenous renewable energy industry and that we can contribute to socio-economic development and environmentally sustainable growth. Today, our REIPPPP approach has become an export product in itself, with an increasing number of countries in Africa and elsewhere in the world, adopting and adapting the South African model to suit their particular conditions.*

> **South African energy planning has been notoriously poor.**

The re-coding of the procurement rules was done in a way that departed from South Africa's statutory procurement standards in order to give more weight to SJOs. Qualifying bids were assessed according to a 70:30 split between price (70) and economic development (ED) criteria (30). The ED criteria included job creation, local content, ownership, management control, preferential procurement, enterprise development (EnD) and socio-economic development (SED). The REIPPPP is internationally recognised for this unique re-coded fusion between price-competitiveness and a fulfilment of ED requirements (Eberhard & Naude, 2016; Schmidt *et al.*, 2017). And it has yielded results: across the SED, EnD and community ownership categories, investments by IPPs in local communities are reported at around R50 billion over the duration of the 20-year PPAs (Department of Mineral Resources and Energy, 2023).

In accordance with the Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) 2011, four ministerial determinations were announced by the DoE and overseen by the IPPO between 2011 and 2015 (Department of Mineral Resources and Energy, 2023). Over the course of these four 'bid windows', the programme procured 6,323 MW of RE from 92 utility-scale, grid-connected projects of various technologies, but predominantly wind and solar photovoltaic (PV) (GreenCape, 2020). Despite the complexity of the bidding process and the stringent ED component, the REIPPPP positioned South Africa as an attractive destination for private-sector investment in utility-scale RE (Baker, 2015; Eberhard & Naude, 2016). During this time, the REIPPPP demonstrated promising growth, attracting R209.7 billion by 2019 of private investment (mostly from internal sources) through 92 approved projects (Department of Mineral Resources and Energy, 2023). On the whole, the first three rounds were largely over-subscribed and the programme demonstrated continual learning and iteration (Montmasson-Clair & Ryan, 2014). A significant reduction in costs was also evident, with major declines across all technologies: from R3.65/kWh in Round 1 for solar PV to R0.95c/kWh in Round 4, and from R1.51/kWh in Round 1 for onshore wind to R0.75c/kWh in Round 4. Eskom's electricity price rose to R0.91c/kWh by the time the Round 4 projects came online. By 2021, wind had dropped to R0.66c/kWh, solar PV to R0.60, and coal-fired power rose to R1.31/kWh.

## *The third discursive period*

The third discursive period is the hiatus between the fourth bid window in 2015 and the demise of the nuclear option in 2017, but with effects that lasted into 2021. Instead of building on the remarkable momentum achieved during the four bid windows, policy uncertainty brought the entire nascent renewable energy industry to a shuddering halt. This despite the fact that the massive flow of mainly South African capital into 92 utility-scale renewable energy projects had rapidly catalysed the build-up of South African project implementation capacities, upstream manufacturing capabilities (due to local content requirements) and significant downstream servicing businesses in the transport and operations and maintenance sectors (Swilling *et al.*, 2022). ››

Eskom was positioned by the Zuma-centred power elite as a bulwark against renewables, including a CEO who used Twitter to run a social media campaign against renewables. Instead of a transition to renewables, Eskom and the Zuma-centred power elite re-imagined South Africa's energy transition pathway around nuclear energy as the cornerstone of a new black-owned mineral-energy-industrial complex, complete with uranium mines part-owned by the President's son (Bhorat *et al.*, 2017). Even though the High Court brought down the nuclear strategy in 2017, Zuma remained defiant until his exit from power in 2018.

From the start, President Ramaphosa's administration has suffered a policy split between pro- and anti-renewables forces. Soon after he was elected in 2018, his then Minister of Energy, Jeff Radebe, immediately executed the outstanding agreements with 27 preferred renewable energy bidders that had been put on hold since 2015 by Eskom's succession of CEOs, with the then President's full support. However, the coal- and nuclear-centred imaginary was kept alive by the new Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy (and Chairperson of the governing party), Gwede Mantashe, appointed by President Ramaphosa to replace Radebe in December 2018. As a result of his antipathy towards renewables, the fifth bid window was only opened in early 2021. This means that the procurement hiatus effectively lasted for six years in a country beset by continuous loadshedding, with 2020 the worst year for loadshedding despite recessionary conditions.

## *The fourth discursive period*

The fourth discursive period commenced towards the end of 2019 with the publication of two key documents – the 2019 IRP by the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE} and the Eskom Roadmap by the Department of Public Enterprises. The 2019 IRP laid out for the first time a comprehensive framework for decommissioning of coal-fired power stations and the large-scale construction of utility-scale renewables (see Table 2). Controversially, the 2019 IRP provided for 1.5 GW of new coal power. The Eskom Roadmap, released by the Ministry responsible for Eskom, provides the framework for unbundling Eskom into separate publicly owned generation, transmission and distribution entities. Needless to say, neither the decommissioning targets nor the renewables ramp-up targets had been met by 2023 because the DMRE was in charge of regulatory codes that govern the highly complex procedures for procuring renewable energy. The DMRE's preference for 'clean coal' and nuclear has resulted in these delays.

**Table 2: IRP 2019**

| | Coal | Coal (Decommissioning) | Nuclear | Hydro | Storage | PV | Wind | CSP | Gas & Diesel | Other (Distribured Generation, CoGen, Biomass, Landfill) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Current Base | 37 149 | | 1 860 | 2 100 | 2 912 | 1 474 | 1 980 | 300 | 3 830 | 499 |
| 2019 | 2 155 | -2 373 | | | | | 244 | 300 | | Allocation to the extent of the short term capacity and energy gap. |
| 2020 | 1 433 | -557 | | | | 114 | 300 | | | |
| 2021 | 1 433 | -1 403 | | | | 300 | 818 | | | |
| 2022 | 711 | -844 | | | 513 | 400 1 000 | 1 600 | | | |
| 2023 | 750 | -555 | | | | 1 000 | 1 600 | | | 500 |
| 2024 | | | 1 860 | | | | 1 600 | | 1 000 | 500 |
| 2025 | | | | | | 1 000 | 1 600 | | | 500 |
| 2026 | | -1 219 | | | | | 1 600 | | | 500 |
| 2027 | 750 | -847 | | | | | 1 600 | | 2 000 | 500 |
| 2028 | | -475 | | | | 1 000 | 1 600 | | | 500 |
| 2029 | | -1 694 | | | 1 575 | 1 000 | 1 600 | | | 500 |
| 2030 | | -1 050 | | 2 500 | | 1 000 | 1 600 | | | 500 |
| TOTAL INSTALLED CAPACITY by (% of MW) | 33364 | | 1 860 | 4 600 | 5 000 | 8 288 | 17742 | 600 | 6 380 | |
| % Total Installed Capacity (% of MW) | 43 | | 2.36 | 5.84 | 6.35 | 10.52 | 22.53 | 0.76 | 8.1 | |
| % Annual Energy Contribution (% of MWh) | 58.8 | | 4.5 | 8.4 | 1.2* | 6.3 | 17.8 | 0.6 | 1.3 | |

Installed Capacity
Committed/Already Contracted Capacity
Capacity Decommissioned
New Additional Capacity
Extension of Koeberg Pant Design Life
Includes Distributed Generation Capacity for own use

- 2030 Coal Installed Capacity is less capacity decommissioned between 2020 and 2030
- Koeberg power station rated/installed capacity will revert to 1926 MW (original design capacity) following design life extention work.
- Other/Distributed generation includes all generation facilities in circumstances in which the facility is operated solely to supply electricity to an end-use customer within the same property with the facility
- Short term capacity gap is estimated at 2000 MW

*Source: Department of Mineral Resources and Energy, 2019*

Andre de Ruyter was appointed as Group Chief Executive (GCE) of Eskom in early 2020 and tendered his resignation in late 2022 after the Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy accused him of treason for not ending loadshedding. He had two goals: (a) clean up Eskom by getting rid of state capture forces that were embedded across the entire Eskom value chain and (b) re-establish energy security for South Africa. By August 2020 he realised three things about his second goal: (a) that the 15 Eskom power stations were in worse shape than anyone had previously assumed and could not be salvaged; (b) no-one was going to lend money to Eskom to build new coal-fired power stations and even if they did, it would take a decade before they came on line; and (c) renewables ›› were the only way to bring new power onto the grid quickly and most affordably. He established within Eskom a Just Energy Transition Office to coordinate the planning and implementation of the strategy. The President, in turn, established the Presidential Climate Commission (PCC) in December 2020 to prepare a South African position for the COP26 meeting in late 2021 and to oversee policy-making to achieve the Net Zero by 2050 target. The PCC published the cabinet-approved Just Energy Transition Framework (Presidential Climate Commission, 2022).

An influential scientific report published by the CSIR in 2020 confirmed that the renewables-based energy transition pathway would be the cheapest and most viable option (Roff *et al*., 2020). According to the 2019 IRP, renewables would ramp up into the 2030s followed thereafter by additional coal-fired power (Figure 5). This was contrasted with a decarbonisation scenario (accelerated decommissioning and accelerated implementation of renewables) that saved 1.5 Gt of carbon (Figure 6). The surprise finding was that the system costs for both were similar, but with major SJO advantages for the second decarbonisation scenario. Based on historic data from the implementation of the REIPPPP, 10,000 jobs were created per GW. The decarbonisation scenario assumes that 5 GW of renewables will be built per annum through to 2050, which equals 50,000 construction jobs per annum. About 200 operational jobs per TWh would be created during ongoing operations over 20 years. Given that total output by 2050 would rise to 400 TWh per annum, this equals 80,000 jobs, compared to 56,000 coal workers who work for coal mines that supply Eskom.

**Figure 5: Current Policy Trajectory (with RE build limits retained): Annual Electricity Production**

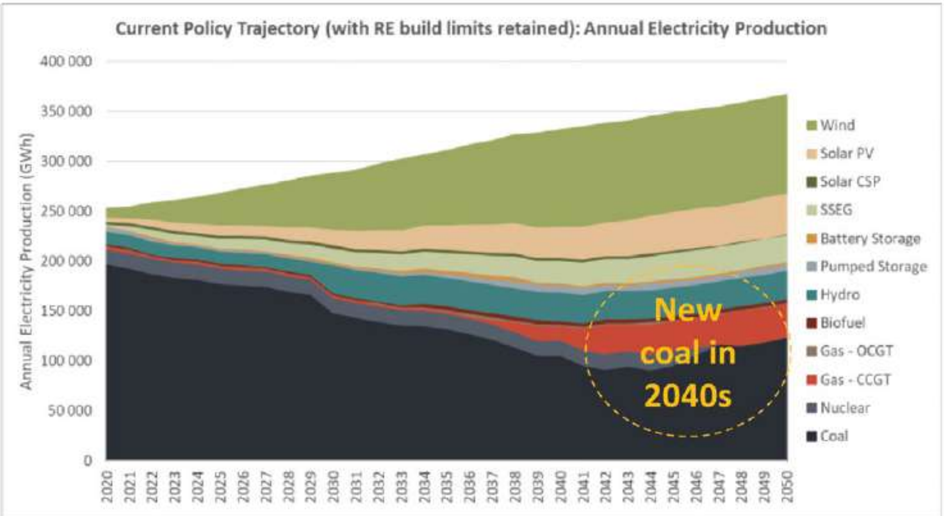
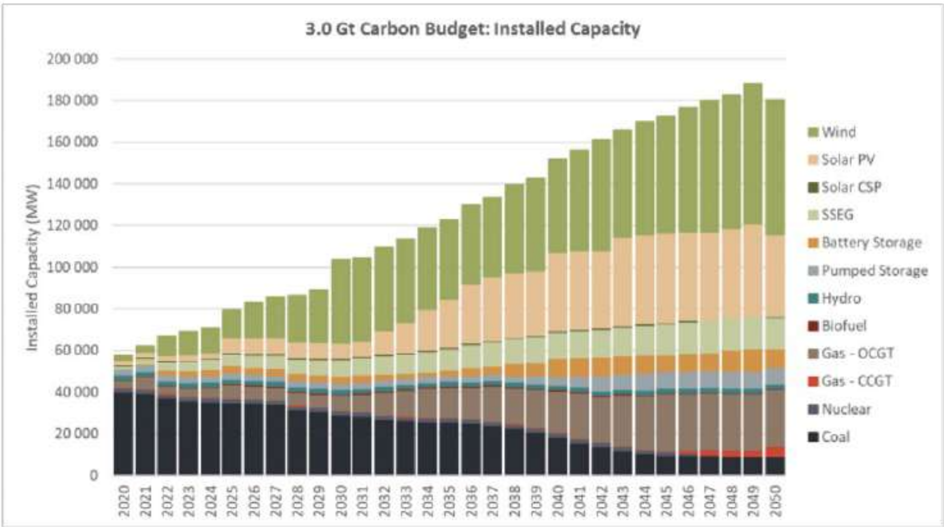


**Figure 6: 3.0 Carbon Budget: Installed Capacity**




*Source: Roff et al., 2020*

Influenced by the CSIR/Meridian report and the results of Eskom's own modelling, De Ruyter presented Eskom's Just Energy Transition strategy to the PCC in August 2021 where he called for accelerated decommissioning of the coal-fired power plants and the accelerated ramp up of renewables. He made it clear that renewables plus gas back-up was the only realistic option. This proposal included an emphasis on SJOs with respect to interventions to benefit workers and communities affected by the closure of coal mines and coal-fired power stations.

## *The fifth discursive period*

The fifth discursive period started in late 2021 when South Africa's Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP) was announced at COP26 in Glasgow. This marked a key turning point not because this imaginary achieved policy consensus within the South African polity, but because the discursive dynamic that followed shifted in favour of the transition pathway promoted by de Ruyter. The difference, however, is that Eskom was no longer alone in promoting a renewables-based energy transition pathway, nor did it retain control of the narrative. The JETP provides a good example of the benefits of an integrated JET pathway. First announced at COP26 in 2021, the South African government presented the JETP investment strategy at COP27 in Egypt in 2022. This was approved by cabinet in the lead-up to COP27.

Up until that point energy policy (as expressed in the IRP) was driven by the DMRE and South Africa's updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) was driven by the ➤➤

> **“Re-imagining a South African energy future that was not exclusively about coal was a tricky story to sell.**

Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFFE). The latter was in line with the National Development Plan approved in 2012 which called for a “transition to a low-carbon, resilient economy and just society” (National Planning Commission, 2012:212). These two separate policy processes – the coal-oriented IRP and the Net Zero-oriented NDC – were not aligned with each other as envisaged in the National Development Plan (NDP) and the PCC’s Just Transition Framework. In an attempt to overcome these divergent policy trajectories, the President followed a recommendation by the National Planning Commission to establish the PCC in 2020. Since then, the PCC has facilitated the integration of energy and climate policy, resulting in the cabinet-approved Just Transition Framework (JTF) (Presidential Climate Commission, 2022). This included a process that led to an updating of the NDC to include a more ambitious set of decarbonisation targets. Approved by cabinet, the JTF became the basis of the JETP.

The JETP was formulated by the Presidential Task Team on Climate Finance (PTTCF) that was appointed in early 2021 and charged with the responsibility of drafting the JETP in time for presentation at COP27. Although the mainstream narrative in South Africa had hitherto been about ‘decarbonisation plus social mitigation’ (i.e. ameliorating the impact of coal-closure on miners), the JETP has shifted the emphasis decisively into a wider narrative (which is also consistent with the NDP), i.e. ‘decarbonisation plus mitigation plus green industrialisation’. This is because the decarbonisation of the power sector was only one of three focus areas of the JETP, the others being green hydrogen and electric vehicles (EVs). Furthermore, provision was even made in the JETP for social ownership of renewables via cooperatives. Most significantly of all, it is not just a policy framework – it is also an investment plan that estimates the total costs of the energy transition over the next five years (R1.5 trillion) and then situates the donor contribution announced at COP26 of R130 billion in that context.

This brings into relief the fundamental reality that the bulk of the funding will therefore need to be internally generated by South African financial institutions. The combination of the cabinet-approved JTF formulated by the PCC, the cabinet-approved JETP presented at COP27, the updated NDC with more ambitious targets and the soon to be approved Climate Bill means that South Africa has succeeded in merging its decarbonisation commitment with its developmental agenda at the level of policy intention and commitment. The upshot is an ambitious energy transition pathway that has yet to achieve policy consensus within the policy elite that will be needed to ensure rapid and effective implementation. Alternative coal- and nuclear-centred transition pathways continue to be promoted by influential political players aligned with the coal-based vested interests, but they are now subordinate to the mainstream renewables-based narrative.

As the South African loadshedding crisis worsened considerably into 2022 (with, on occasions, nearly half the coal-generation fleet out of commission), the President seized the initiative in July 2022, reinforced by his State of the Nation Address in February 2023. In essence, the transition pathway envisaged by the President (but not underpinned by a robust internal political settlement), comprised three basic strategies: fix the broken and ageing coal-fired power stations (without a commitment to decommission old power stations in line with the JETP), maximise de-regulation to allow for market-driven delivery of utility-scale and rooftop renewables, and reinforce delivery of utility-scale renewables (with socio-economic development impacts) via the REIPPPP. Given that the latter increases costs to fund socio-economic development, it is effectively no longer a competitive option for developers and is, therefore, to all intents and purposes dead.

To drive this reform programme, he established a new Ministry for Energy in the Presidency and announced that the Electricity Regulation Amendment Bill would be tabled soon that will introduce major reforms aligned with international trends towards greater market competition in the energy sector. The focus of this reform initiative is energy security to support economic recovery, not specifically decarbonisation nor even social justice. Decarbonisation and social justice are effectively by-products of this new drive for energy security: decarbonisation because renewables are the cheapest way to increase generation capacity quickly, and social justice because jobs and services will result from accelerated economic growth.

In February 2023 the Minister of Finance announced that the state would help Eskom pay down its debt, but on condition its business model shifts decisively from being primarily a generation business to being primarily a transmission and distribution business. He also announced a major tax incentive for renewables. By early 2023 the Energy Action Plan was in place which essentially focused on (a) fixing the coal-fired power stations that can be fixed within budget constraints; (b) procurement of massive quantities of renewable energy; (c) upgrading and extending the transmission grid; (d) promoting energy efficiency; and (e) rooting out corruption. By mid-2023, 4.4 GW of rooftop solar had been installed, equal to a total investment of R65 billion. Furthermore, 9 GW of embedded solar generation was in the pipeline, and Bid Windows 7 and 8 were announced calling for a total of 10 GW of renewables. This is equal to 25 GW of new generation capacity, in a country that only has 48 GW of installed coal-fired power generation.

## *Strategic conclusion*

In light of the actual empirical conditions and the balance of power, the progressive strategic position going forward would be as follows:

- Support the break-up of Eskom (partly to break the grip of state capture forces on Eskom) into three *publicly-owned* utilities, namely generation, transmission and distribution.
- Based on hard empirical financial evidence, accept that no future coal-fired power or nuclear-powered generation capacity will be built in South Africa because both are unfundable from public and private sources – at best, some power stations might be fixed to last their life cycle. ➤➤

- Accept that 5 GW of renewables must be built every year from now, and forever – once you start building renewables, they must be replaced after 20 years, this creating a permanent set of construction jobs equal to 10,000 jobs per GW.
- The National Transmission Company of South Africa must be constituted, with a progressive technically competent board. Accept that in order to fund the extension of the grid it will be necessary to enable Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) agreements for sections of the grid (e.g. Northern Cape) – this will be similar to the major toll road agreements, resulting in the transfer of the assets back to the state at the end of the concession.
- Enable the renewables build programme, and the grid extension programme, drive the largest industrialisation programme since 1994 that will result in the drastic reduction in imports of components required for this energy transition.
- Actively support the commitment in the JETP to socially owned renewables, including via cooperatives, partnerships between communities and local governments, and social enterprises.
- Mobilise communities, social movement and trade unions around a practical set of just transition demands and implementable programmes, in particular in Mpumalanga.

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ENDNOTES

1. Kelvin power station is privately owned.
2. Legal: Linklaters (UK); Technical: Tony Wheeler Consulting (UK); Governance: Ernst & Young; Project management: SPP Projects; SA legal firms: Bowman Gilfillan, ENSAfrica, Ledwaba Mawai, Webber Wentzel; Technical: Mott McDonald (SA); Finance design: Ernst & Young, and PWC. NA

# The rise, fall and rise of Eskom

*By Roland Ngam*

*There are a number of important debates going on right now about energy production in South Africa. The biggest one of course concerns load shedding and the debilitating power outages that have increased over the past years. Then of course there is the just energy transition debate to end South Africa's reliance on dirty fossil fuels, notably coal. ROLAND NGAM ask why are these debates important and which pathways should South Africa follow?*

## Introduction

South Africa's power utility Eskom is the biggest producer of electrical energy on the African continent. Eskom alone generates 53% of all electricity produced in Africa. Its total installed capacity is about 52,000 megawatts (MW), which is about twice Morocco's nameplate generator capacity, four times Nigeria's total installed capacity, 18 times the Democratic Republic of Congo's installed capacity and about 30 times Zimbabwe's total installed capacity. South Africa has more than the 52,000MW nameplate generation capacity of course, but some of this is owned by private businesses and households.

The major issue with Eskom's energy fleet is that the biggest share of South Africa's energy comes from burning coal, which is dirty and also toxic. Eskom's 81 coal units, which generate 85% of South Africa's electricity, are responsible for up to 20% of all carbon dioxide ($CO_2$) emissions on the African continent. To put this in perspective, Eskom alone pollutes more than all Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries put together. South Africa emitted 435 million metric tons of $CO_2$ from fossil fuel combustion and industrial activities in 2021, with most of this coming from Eskom's coal fleet. Mpumalanga – the home of many Eskom generation units – is a global pollution hotspot with extraordinarily high levels of methane emissions.

Why is there such a heavy reliance on coal? South Africa is the eighth biggest producer of coal in the world. Its coal reserves are estimated at 53 billion tonnes and at the present consumption rate there are at least 200 years of coal supply left in the country. The thinking has always been that if we have this massive asset, why not use it to power our economy?

## *From Escom to Eskom: a brief history*

South Africa's first large-scale power station, the Kimberley Diamond Mine power station, was built in 1883 and generated electricity using steam turbines. The first major power station, the Victoria Falls Power Station, began operating in 1905.

In 1923, the South African government established the Electricity Supply Commission (Escom), known in Afrikaans as the Elektrisiteitsvoorsieningskorporasie (Evkom) with a view to ramping up South Africa's power generation capacity. Escom generated the power, and the Victoria Falls Power Company distributed it. This relationship continued until 1948 when the Victoria Falls Power Company was absorbed by Escom. The power utility went on to buy other small utilities around the country in order to create a centralised network and in 1987 the acronyms Escom and Evkom were fused to generate the name Eskom.

Prior to 1994, Eskom had a very narrow mandate. Its mission was to provide electricity to large-scale commercial farms, mines, steel plants, the manufacturing sector and white households. Electricity was offered to the manufacturing sector at rock bottom prices in order to make South Africa a global mining and industrial powerhouse. At this stage, less than 40% of the country had access to power.

After winning the first democratic elections in 1994, the ANC identified access to electrical power as a right to be enjoyed by all citizens. Eskom was mandated to make the dream of quality affordable electricity for all a reality.

The number of black South Africans who had access to electricity increased from around five million in 1994 to over 16 million in 2019 and the electricity penetration rate went up from around 36% in 1994 to more than 85% in 2019. That is a major leap forward; the average white family has had electricity in their homes for over 100 years whereas the average black family has had electricity in their homes for less than 30 years.

But adding that many houses to the grid came at a price. According to Eskom's 1994 Annual Report, the utility had 37,840MW of generation capacity in 1994 with 23,845km of power lines. That year, Eskom committed to reducing the price of electricity by ➤

> **… at the present consumption rate there are at least 200 years of coal supply left in the country.**

15% and connecting 1.5 million black households to the grid. Eskom later told the government that with so many new households getting on to the grid, Eskom needed new generation capacity.

The World Bank advised the South African government to leave new build projects to the private sector. In accordance with this recommendation, President Thabo Mbeki commissioned a report and tried to privatise Eskom before eventually reversing course, but he did not act quickly to build more generation capacity. Between 2005 and 2011, Eskom reopened three coal units that had previously been mothballed to generate 3,600MW of electricity. It also commissioned 1,000MW of new own capacity and awarded 1,000MW of generation to Independent Power Producers (IPPs).

The rest is history. There was too much pressure on the grid and load shedding began in 2007. President Thabo Mbeki apologised to South Africa for not accepting Eskom's timeous recommendation to build more generation capacity to match the country's demographic growth.

Mbeki commissioned two new coal power stations, Medupi in Lephalele in Limpopo province and Kusile near Witbank in Mpumalanga, to generate 9,500MW of electricity. However, many coal generation units were approaching the end of their lifespan and Mbeki's successor, President Jacob Zuma, should have commissioned a significant new build project of his own. Instead he opted for nuclear capacity of about 9,600MW, but whistle-blowers outed the deal that he was negotiating with Russia and he abandoned the project. Eskom then focused on running its coal fleet but it had neglected to address the need for sustainability over time, providing little down time for maintenance, and that has led us to where we are now.

Load shedding has worsened as the coal fleet got older and more unreliable. Due to design flaws at Medupi and Kusile the country is yet to get a combined 9,000MW from them at any given moment. There were 36 days of load shedding in 2019, 52 days in 2020, 48 days in 2021, 200 days in 2022 and in 2023 there has been load shedding almost every day. This is having a devastating impact on the South African economy. Business output has dropped and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) forecasts are being repeatedly revised downwards.

Black South Africans still bear a disproportionate burden of load shedding. In today's digital age, access to information is essential for participation in society and the global economy. Without electricity, many low-income households are cut off from important sources of information, limiting their ability to participate in the global community.

Children in townships and rural areas are unable to study after dark or access computers or other electronic resources, limiting their ability to learn and develop the skills they need to succeed in the modern world.

Those who rely on traditional sources of lighting and cooking, such as kerosene lamps and wood stoves, breathe in toxic fumes every day, which causes respiratory illnesses and other health issues such as asthma. Basic activities such as cooking, cleaning and maintaining personal hygiene become more difficult and time-consuming, reducing the overall quality of life for individuals and families. Small businesses cannot operate effectively, limiting economic opportunities and hindering development.

## *So, how do we fix Eskom?*

President Cyril Ramaphosa has adopted a number of unprecedented decisions to end load shedding in South Africa. In 2021, he amended schedule two of the *Electricity Regulation Act*, raising the threshold for embedded generation from 1MW to 100 MW without the need for a licence.[1] In 2022, he lifted the 100MW threshold completely and indefinitely. The Department of Mineral Resources and Energy has approved more than 100 IPP contracts with generation capacity of more than 10,000MW.

The provinces are also stepping up to the plate. Construction work has commenced on the Gauteng government's 800MW solar farm in Merafong on land donated by the Sibanye mining company. The Western Cape has announced plans to build as much as 750MW of clean generation capacity by 2025 under the Western Cape Energy Resilience Programme and to increase this to over 6,000MW by 2035. Obviously, such ambitious plans must be coordinated properly with Eskom because the flurry of new build projects has created some capacity problems with electricity that cannot be fed into the grid due to insufficient specifications or a lack of power lines.

In Kwazulu-Natal, the city of Durban has announced a R324 billion plan to build solar and natural gas power stations. The Northern Cape has announced plans to train skilled workers and negotiate new partnerships with renewable energy companies.

In March 2023, President Ramaphosa appointed an electricity "czar" to coordinate all the efforts to end load shedding. Electricity minister Kgosientsho Ramokgopa has announced that his immediate priority is improving the energy availability factor (EAF) of Eskom's 81 coal units. Eskom is purchasing replacement parts for some coal units and has called on the government to waive the requirement for flue gas desulfurisation[2] systems in some units to bring them back online quickly. This is a controversial move. Although many desperate South Africans just want a reliable, uninterrupted electricity supply, removing flue gas desulfurisation systems means dumping more $CO_2$ and methane into the atmosphere. It goes without saying that people are going to die from this, especially those who live in close proximity to some power plants.

Koeberg, Africa's lone nuclear power plant that supplies 5% of South Africa's power, has always had a reputation for reliability. It has a total nameplate capacity of 1,940MW and is vital to keeping the lights on. However, on 15 April 2023, Koeberg Unit 2 tripped, sending South Africa into Stage 6 load shedding. Koeberg will certainly add to Minister Ramokgopa's sleepless nights.

### *The international Just Energy Transition Partnership*

The world is warming rapidly and to avoid the adverse effects of climate change spiralling out of control, we need to significantly scale down our emissions. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, limiting global heating to 1.5° or ➤➤

2° relative to preindustrial levels involves rapid, deep and in some cases, immediate greenhouse gas emission reductions.

At COP26 South Africa signed a Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP) with Germany, France, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union to support South Africa's phase-out of coal. This was one of the most notable outcomes of COP26. Through the JETP, South Africa will be able to access US$8.5 billion to accelerate its just energy transition plans.

South Africa has revised its 2030 mitigation target range downwards from 398-614 Mt $CO_2$-eq to a range of 350-420 Mt $CO_2$-eq. This ambitious target cannot be achieved without decarbonising Eskom. South Africa has earmarked Komati's old coal station as the key locus of this project.

In addition to 200MW of solar power, the JETP funds are to be used to set up a reskilling centre for energy sector workers as well as to boost small business initiatives that have emerged around coalmines.

Electricity minister Ramokgopa caused an uproar when he announced his decision to refurbish old coal power plants, import 15-year-old second-hand generators from the Netherlands and apply for a waiver on flue gas desulfurisation systems as a way to end the energy crisis immediately. This will cause and lock in massive $CO_2$ dumps in the atmosphere. Nevertheless, at the same time the following factors must also be considered:

- Some trade unions are fully behind Energy Minister Gwede Mantashe's push to hold on to the core of South Africa's coal fleet for the next three decades and possibly longer given the possible threat of significant job losses in the sector;
- Businesses in towns where there are coal-fired power plants are not keen on the JETP either as they may lose their sources of income;
- Both the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa) spokesperson Phakamile Hlubi-Majola and the president of the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) Joseph Mathunjwa, the main trade union in the platinum belt, have pushed conspiracy theories suggesting that the JETP partners, which are also some of the highly industrialised countries that are responsible for most of the $CO_2$ emissions in the atmosphere today, are bullying South Africa into shifting to unreliable green energy sources. They say that South Africa must listen only to Mantashe who wants to lock South Africa into using more coal, gas and diesel for the foreseeable future.

The coal and allied sectors employ up to 120,000 people. The energy, auto and metals sector employs a further one million people. That is a formidable political bloc. Pushing them too hard and too quickly into adopting green energy could backfire and alienate many working families. Remember that the "*just*" in *just transition* requires the decarbonisation process to be fair, just and patient. The just transition really has to be *just*! We need to speak our truth loudly and clearly but also, and this is very important, *patiently*.

Green energy sources are getting cheaper every day and South Africa's international partners are adopting tough measures to switch their economies to low-carbon or carbon-neutral paradigms in the medium term. Others, such as China, continue to install a record number of coal-fired generation plants (China has installed over 200GW of new coal capacity since 2019), which is why people like Mantashe are right to call out those who are fixated on South Africa while massive polluters are left to do their thing they way they like.

Perhaps it is also important to say that the load shedding crisis has inadvertently accelerated the adoption of solar- and wind-generated power in South Africa. Prior to 2021, many people were not interested in discussing solar and wind as serious alternatives to coal but that has all changed with uninterrupted load shedding. Now thousands of South Africans who can afford it have installed rooftop solar energy-based photovoltaic (PV) systems at unprecedented rates.

South African households have installed at least 1,000MW of rooftop PV and wind capacity since 2020. From less than 3,000MW of renewable energy generation capacity five years ago, South Africa more than doubled that to 6,200MW by 2023. When the construction of the more than 100 IPP projects in the risk mitigation and renewable energy independent power producer procurement programmes are completed over the next years, South Africa will have at least 16,000MW of renewable energy capacity. That is a remarkable transformation. Inch by inch, South Africa is getting closer to where it needs to be, regardless of what the fossil fuel lobby is doing or saying.

## *Conclusion*

Electricity has a developmental purpose. Regardless of how dirty they are, Eskom's 81 coal units play a critical role in South Africa's development. Workers rely on them for jobs as well as to take care of their families. Load shedding has had a devastating impact on the South African economy with the poor bearing the brunt of the power outages and disruptions. However, the power challenges have also helped to accelerate South Africa's renewable energy push. It is all hands on deck as many different stakeholders rush to build new green power generation capacity and that is something we must recognise and quietly celebrate.

On a broader, multilateral level, the countries that are genuinely concerned about South Africa's $CO_2$ emissions and would like to help decarbonise the economy should help transfer the skills, technology and money that South Africa needs right now to keep the lights on. During a recent visit to South Africa US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen called on philanthropists to help the country get a cleaner power fleet. But asking philanthropists is taking the easy way out. What the Global South needs is for the countries that have played the biggest role in creating the dangerous levels of CO2 that are trapped in the atmosphere right now to invest in adaptation and mitigation projects.

ENDNOTES

1. Embedded generation (also known as distributed generation) refers to smaller scale electricity generation or storage plants connected to a local distribution network rather than the overall transmission network.
2. Gas desulfurisation is a process to reduce the sulphur dioxide from exhaust gases from fossil fuel power plants. NA

# African women bear the brunt of climate change

## Tracking the impact of the crisis in Nigeria and Mozambique

*By Rachael Nyirongo*

Rachael Nyirongo is Research Services Manager at the Institute for African Alternatives, and is currently leading the Young Climate Voices Project. She has a background in law with a Masters of Laws in International Law and Human Rights Law. She has a keen interest in climate justice and environmental law.

*Eco-feminists believe that the exploitation of nature and the oppression of women by patriarchal power structures 'must be examined together or neither can be confronted fully' (Hobgood-Oster, 2002: 1). RACHAEL NYIRONGO analyses how gender inequalities in Africa impact climate change and exacerbate oppression of women on the continent.*

### *The evolution of gender roles in African societies*

In precolonial Africa women were not strictly confined to the homestead. They acquired skills that were essential for the community's survival. For instance, women participated actively in the labour market in pottery-making, farming and other means of trade. Moreover, women usually played a crucial role in managing the finances of the household (Agbaje, 2019:1275-94). Unlike women in the Global North at that time, the role of African women was more adaptable and they could take part in male-dominated areas such as politics (*ibid.*). As a result, women would participate in the wider community as educators, farmers, wives, regents, priestesses, chiefs, elders and mothers (*ibid.*).


Colonisation adversely shifted the foundational ideologies that many African communities were built on. It established a more "Westernised Africa" impacting every aspect of life including language, national ideology and the gender paradigm (*ibid.*). Colonisation changed gender socialisation in Africa by introducing patriarchal systems that limited women's social, political and economic activities within the communities (Montle, 2021:17771). These limitations placed rigid binaries around gender roles and established systems that dictated women remain in the private domain, making it no longer possible for women to carry out duties alongside men (Agbaje, 2019:1275-94). For instance, in Uganda, it was women who had led cotton cultivation until the British administration declared in 1923 that this could not be left to women (*ibid.*). The narrative that women could only be homemakers and bear children became predominant.

Patriarchy has since become ingrained in every aspect of the African way of life and the gender gap in Africa has continued to grow since colonisation. In some cases, it is enforced by the law – for example in the Congo Family Code of the Democratic Republic of Congo, which states, "the husband is the head of the household. He owes protection to his wife; his wife owes obedience to her husband."[1] Practices such as early marriages exacerbate gender inequalities.

## *The impact of climate change on African women*

Since women evolved into second-class citizens they have had to bear the brunt of the world's crises. Unsurprisingly, climate change has disproportionately impacted women on the African continent. Climate change exacerbates vulnerabilities, and studies ➤➤

> **Colonisation changed gender socialisation in Africa by introducing patriarchal systems that limited women's social, political and economic activities.**

suggest that the complexity of social factors put women and other marginalised groups at greater risk of climate change impact over time (UNFCCC, 2022, para. 8). In developing countries, women are 14 times more likely than men to die during a climate catastrophe (UNDP, 2022). The livelihood of women farmers is more adversely impacted; research has indicated that women are more susceptible to the impacts of droughts and if they lose their source of income it is more difficult for women to secure work outside the farm. Women are also expected to continue doing unpaid family work (Erman *et al*, 2021:26).

Households in crisis have adopted coping mechanisms that worsen gender equality. Research shows that the girl child is usually one of the first members of a household to be affected by the impacts of climate change (UNFCCC, 2022, para. 8). It has become common practice to use child marriages as a means to raise capital in difficult times or to remove girl children from school to help with work around the home or farm (*ibid.*). Girls and women have the main responsibility for daily tasks such as fetching firewood or water for household activities. Climate change usually means they need to travel further to collect these and as a result, they are unable to continue with other activities critical for their development and livelihoods, such as attending school or going to work. Longer journeys expose them to greater risks of gender-based violence (GBV) outside the home (UNFCCC, 2022:para 27). These factors exacerbate gender inequality (UNFCCC, 2022:para 26).

Survival measures taken by the men in the household also have a domino effect on the lives of women and girls. Men are usually the ones to migrate from rural areas to urban areas in search of work, which leaves the women with responsibilities they would not normally have had, such as taking care of the land. Despite this, sometimes men who migrate do not send money back to their families in rural areas as promised (UNFCCC, 2022:para 28). This places an even heavier burden on the women who remain behind; not only do they have an increased workload but also a decreased income. In many communities women are not able to own or inherit land that they are left to take care of, which leaves them even more vulnerable (UNEP, 2020:19).

### *Women and the plunder of the environment*

The plunder of Africa's resources and consequently its environment has evolved over the years. What used to be carried out by colonisers is done by transnational companies today (Hormeku-Ajei and C. Goetz, 2021). The economic dynamics have been completely restructured as a result of colonisation. Pre-colonial African trade was mostly undertaken between Africans, with less need to export goods. After colonisation, Africa's global economic position became the provider of raw materials for the Global North. This has created African economies that are largely dependent on exports to survive (*ibid.*).

The increasing exportation of raw materials from the continent and the constant insatiable consumption by humanity have led to the continent's accelerating biodiversity loss. Over the past few decades, the extractives industry has developed enormously across the continent with oil, gas and minerals being directed to countries that have little to no extraction industry. Despite low-income communities predominantly working in these industries, they rarely benefit from them. The resources are used unsustainably and in some cases are lost to illegal activities, resulting in the flow of benefits from these activities declining over time (*ibid.*). Organised trans-national and trans-regional environmental crimes are rapidly increasing in Africa causing substantial harm to the environment, revenues, state security and sustainable development (Thiaw, nd).

The damage caused by these organisations largely goes unaccounted for due to lack of access to fair judicial proceedings, corrupt practices by government officials and lack of knowledge of the communities (*ibid.*). As a result of these practices, low-income and rural communities suffer, and the women are most affected.

### *Niger Delta*

As Africa's largest delta, the Niger Delta is home to over 6.5 million people who depend on its resources (Chijioke, 2022). The Delta holds much of Nigeria's oil and gas reserves, the extraction of which has negatively impacted the biodiversity of the area and consequently the lives and livelihoods of communities who live in the area (Gabriel, 2004:1). The ecology of the Delta — coastal ridge barriers, mangroves and freshwater swamp forests, and lowland rainforests — determines the economic activities of the communities, especially of the women (*ibid*:2). Women who live in the Delta's mangrove ecological system are largely involved in fishing and gathering seafood (*ibid.*). The mangroves are also a good source of firewood for domestic use and small-scale food processing. Within the freshwater swamps, women also rely on fishing to make a living, but also participate in gin distillation from raffia palm trees, the collection of African mango seeds, *Ogbono (Irvingia gabonensis)* and snails, and in weaving mats and other objects using screw pine, rattan palms and bulrushes (Gabriel, 2004). However, the economic activities in the mangroves and freshwater swamps are dependent on the women having access to these natural resources.

In the forests, the main economic activity for women is farming and fishing, typically on a small scale. Other economic activities include the collection of snails and other non-timber products, weaving, fuel wood gathering and tapping rubber trees. Pottery making is common across all areas of the Delta (*ibid.*). Women dominate in the trade of goods, local and long-distance. Thus, women are the group most impacted when the environment in the Delta is damaged by the oil industry (*ibid.*)

### *Pollution of the Delta*

Although the region is one of the most resource-rich in the country, it is also one of the most underprivileged and undeveloped in the area (SERAP, 2022:14). In 1956, Shell was the first company to start pumping oil out of the region, soon followed by other companies. Since then, an estimated 40 million litres of oil is spilt annually (Ratcliffe, ➤➤

2019), with an estimated 9,828 spills occurring within the last 10 years (Chijioke, 2022). The oil spills have been catastrophic for the region, causing damage to unique ecosystems. They have caused the contamination of the water the communities drink, the land they farm and the air they breathe. This has had tremendous impacts on the health of the population, with an estimated 16,000 infant deaths annually as a result of the pollution (Bayelsa State Oil and Environmental Commission, 2019:4).

Those in the community who rely on farming, fishing and the other forms of economic activities mentioned above to make a living have been stripped of their livelihoods. Farmlands are now covered in oil, which prevents successful harvests, contaminates the crops and in turn exposes people to high levels of chromium, lead and mercury (Ratcliffe, 2019).

Women account for 60-80% of the farming labour force and they are the main caregivers for children and the elderly (Babatunde, 2022) Despite this, it is the men in the communities who benefit from a patronage system with the oil companies and the government. As a result, women are often not involved in the decision-making structures and lack access to socioeconomic and political resources that are enjoyed by men (*ibid.*). In a study carried out in 120 communities, it was revealed that only 8% of women own land.

A 51-year-old mother of five reported harvesting smaller yam and cassava tubers and no harvest at all in some parts of her field. She explained that as the market has changed, she as a farmer is no longer able to set prices for her produce but rather has to accept the prices offered. Just 20 years ago, the produce was much bigger and she could afford to buy all her necessities with the profits but the situation is very different now and has affected many areas of her life (Ratcliffe, 2019). She said it is now difficult to feed her family and send her children to school (*ibid.*).

For decades, women have organised themselves and protested against various injustices within the region, shutting down 40% of crude oil production in the early 2000s (*ibid.*). One of their grievances was that they received little compensation from the companies or government, despite being the most impacted group (Acey, 2022), as they did not own the land. Compensation was paid to the men who owned the land instead of the women who worked and lived off it (Gabriel, 2004). Women within the region have claimed that the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and National Gender Policy (NGP) have done little to change the status quo of women (Nwaoku,2021). In a 2021 protest against the NDDC one of the women claimed:

> *Our men have failed us, we want to do what they have not been able to do. They have asked some of us to come for discussion; we are not ready to compromise. We are here for the right thing to be done. (ibid)*

### *Victims of conflict in Mozambique*

The province of Cabo Delgado in northern Mozambique has for a long time been dealing with high poverty levels and lack of access to services. In 2010, huge natural gas reserves were discovered in Cabo Delgado, which attracted international investors (Mukpo, 2021). The communities that lived along the shorelines, among the poorest in

**“In developing countries, women are 14 times more likely than men to die during a climate catastrophe.**

the country, had relied on the sea to secure their livelihoods. However, once the gas was discovered they were relocated, which led to them losing their source of income (*ibid.*). Negotiations over compensation for the relocated communities were conducted by various stakeholders from Maputo’s civil society who lacked the necessary linguistic and socio-cultural sensitivity and the compensation the communities received in the end was not fair, which fuelled the people’s anger (Matsinhe, 2021).

The discovery of these lucrative natural resources also attracted the attention of Islamic State-supported militants and in 2017 the province was thrust into an armed insurgency, which escalated in 2020 and has resulted in a humanitarian crisis and mass displacement (Pinto, 2022:6). As of June 2022, there were over 940,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs), most of them women and children (Unicef, 2022).

Experts have stated that the root cause of the conflict is the exclusion, marginalisation and poverty of the local communities resulting from the mega-gas projects in the area (Matsinhe, 2021).

A series of natural disasters have compounded the crisis caused by the insurgency. Mozambique is prone to cyclones, floods and droughts. It has been ranked as the third country most prone to natural disasters in Africa and fifth in the world (Longle, 2022). In the last 42 years, 15 droughts, 20 floods and 26 tropical cyclones have been registered (*ibid*). The frequency of these events has been increasing at an alarming rate in the past few years; from 2013 to 2019 there have been 23 natural disasters (Kamer, 2022). The country has suffered almost back-to-back cyclones since 2019. In March and April 2019 Cyclone Idai and Cyclone Kenneth occurred consecutively, impacting 1.7 million people (REAP, 2022). Cyclone Chalane hit in late 2020, causing the second displacement of 270 families living in settlements and affecting over 314,000 people (*ibid*:2.). In January 2021, Eloise hit and brought Tropical Storm Ana, which affected an estimated 125,000 people. The increase in frequency of these cyclones is a direct consequence of climate change (Kabukuru, 2022). One businesswoman said:

> *Before we used to hear of cyclones hitting every 10 years, but now how many do we expect in a year? We are tired of starting over. We need some peace of mind, we want to continue with our lives.*(Longle, 2022)

***Impact on women***

As a vulnerable group, both conflict and climate change-induced disasters disadvantage women. During times of conflict or natural disasters, women are the first to lose their assets and jobs, and girls are at higher risk of dropping out of school (*ibid.*). However, women are still expected to carry out their household responsibilities ›› despite the extraneous circumstances. The conflict and disasters cause thousands to be displaced, which results in changes within the household structures.

The displaced men in Mozambique lost their jobs which meant many were more present in the home, impacting the women's decision-making powers within the household (Pinto, 2022:8.). When men can no longer provide for their families their perceptions of masculinity may be challenged, creating hostile environments within households and resulting in an increase in gender-based violence against women. Although some men will take on some of the household responsibilities normally carried out by women, such as collecting firewood, most of the household responsibilities continue to fall to women and girls (*ibid*:9).

Around 70% of the displaced populations relied on agriculture to make a living. However, in 2022, 53% of the population living in settlements reported being unable to make any income, and were heavily dependent on humanitarian aid (*ibid.*). Only 40% reported that they can generate some form of income from agricultural activities, but not enough to be independent of humanitarian assistance (*ibid*:9). Some people, mostly women, have started small businesses selling alcoholic beverages which are in high demand by the men in the communities (*ibid.*). Others, particularly women in female-headed households, offered transactional sex to men to receive some of their humanitarian aid. As a result, some men take some of the aid from their families to use as payment in exchange for sex (*ibid*:10).

Women are normally expected to stay home to tend to their responsibilities in the household and on the farms. However, their movement has been even more restricted as IDPs, not only because they are still the main caregivers within the household, but also due to concern for their safety in volatile circumstances and by officials preventing them from leaving the settlements. This has meant they are limited in what they can do to make a living. Land distribution within the settlements is uneven – 44% of men have access to land compared to 15% of women (*ibid.*). This means the men have a greater say on what happens with the land, which is problematic for women, especially those in abusive relationships. Moreover, female-headed homes have a lower chance of getting access to land (*ibid*:9).

Access to water is also limited and in some of the settlements, the accessible water is untreated or contaminated. Women have reported that they dedicate several hours a day to accessing clean water. As they still need to carry out household duties during the day, many walk long distances at night to collect water. Medical facilities are also far from the settlements requiring many to walk long distances to access medical care. At night this can be unsafe for women who often choose to walk in groups for safety (*ibid*:11).

Many women caught up in conflict-affected areas have been taken captive. Some are used as sex slaves, forcibly married to insurgents or trafficked across borders (Wadekar and Ram, 2022). For those who do manage to escape, the threat of violence within the settlements is still very real; whether it be in their homes or when they venture out.

## *Conclusion*

The situation of women in Nigeria and Mozambique is not unique; across the globe women are at risk as a result of patriarchal systems and inequalities. Although African women traditionally had more authority within their communities, the benefits they used to enjoy cannot be seen in any of the communities anymore.

Corruption and the ambitions of those in power have led to land grabbing that has left communities destitute. Although the problems start at home and within the family unit, there are systemic challenges that prevent women from being able to address these issues. Whilst solutions are delayed, women and children are unfairly impacted by pollution, displacement and natural disasters whilst still needing to carry out various responsibilities.

Although eco-feminists continue to fight patriarchal systems, it is clear that the exploitation of nature exacerbates the oppression of women that is already prevalent. Women need to be given more access to resources such as land to address the imbalance of power and allowed to gain independence and a means of livelihood. For this to happen, customs and laws that prevent women from having land rights need to change.

Finally, women need access to judicial remedies, which will allow them to protect their rights. Women cannot continue to seek justice through the same structures that are oppressing them; they need effective alternatives.

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ENDNOTE

1 See Article 444 of the Family Code of 1987 (Democratic Republic of Congo). NA

# Madagascar:
## where inflation, climate change and cyclones collide

*By Ny Hasina Andriantsehenomamonjy*

Ny Hasina Andriantsehenomamonjy is a journalist, researcher and human rights and climate activist based in Madagascar. She is also the coordinator of Dis Moi Madagascar, which stands for Droits Humain Océan Indien (Human Rights Indian Ocean).

*In this study of the impact of climate change on the people of Madagascar NY HASINA ANDRIANTSEHENOMAMONJY explains how the climatic conditions that have severely affected countries in the region have dramatically impoverished the rice farming Malagasy, driving them into debt traps which unscrupulous money lenders and avaricious property developers have taken full advantage of. Below, she proposes possible solutions to the country's key economic and climate challenges.*

### Introduction

Madagascar is an island country in the Indian Ocean, approximately 400km off the coast of East Africa across the Mozambique Channel. At 592,000 square kilometers, it is the world's largest island after Indonesia.

Although it is one of the five poorest countries in the world, Madagascar is ranked among the world's top tourist destinations due to its unique indigenous fauna and lush flora. With its cosmopolitan growing population that has its origins in Africa, Asia and Europe, the island's cultural richness often surprises visitors. Recently, the "Madagascar" movie franchise introduced the island to millions of new "fans" around the world.

Unfortunately, Madagascar and Lemur Island off its coast have been facing a multitude of challenges in recent years (inflation, stagnation, climate change effects, etc.) leading to social, economic and cultural upheavals such as famine and forced migration. Madagascar is reportedly among the countries most affected by climate change and rising ocean levels. ➤➤

This calls for urgent adaptation, mitigation and socioecological transformation.

Madagascar has been the scene of countless natural disasters, especially cyclones and tropical storms, due to its geographic location. In fact, the island is hit by hundreds of cyclones and tropical storms every year, although most are harmless.

Recently, however, the cyclones have been getting bigger, faster and more dangerous. Cyclone Freddy hit Madagascar in February 2023, killing seven people. It left a trail of destruction as it travelled along a very unusual curved path across Asia, Oceania and finally landing in Africa in a record 36 days. The Malagasy National Office for Risk and Disaster Management reported that more than 100,000 people were affected by Cyclone Freddy. School infrastructure was the worst affected and thousands of students are still without schools.

Several settlements are still under water in the Atsimo Andrefana (south-west) and Menabe (west coast) regions: in those areas, the Risk and Disaster Management Office reported 414 flooded properties and 2,863 people affected from 689 households. A total of 1,939 people were displaced in Manja district (in the south) and 362 in the sites of Toliara and Morombe (in the south-west of the island).

Cyclone Freddy came on the back of the violent and destructive Tropical Storm Ana and Cyclone Batsirai and Cyclone Kenneth in 2022. According to the United Nations, in early 2022 Tropical Storm Ana killed 55 people and affected 132,000. Shortly after that, Cyclone Batsirai claimed 120 lives, displaced 120,000 people and affected another 500,000 people and properties. During 2019, Madagascar was hit hard by Cyclone Idai and Cyclone Kenneth.

Already, 2023 seems to be going the same way as 2022. This year alone, over 150,000

> **This year alone, over 150,000 people have already been affected by violent winds and heavy rainfall and nearly 11,000 more have been displaced.**

people have already been affected by violent winds and heavy rainfall and nearly 11,000 more have been displaced.

In the southern semi-arid and arid parts of Madagascar, otherwise known as the "Deep South," communities have been experiencing recurrent catastrophic starvation or "*Kere*" (as it is called in the local dialect) for decades. Demographic pressures and worsening drought due to climate change are the main causes of this ongoing crisis which traps the subregion in a cycle of poverty: 57% of the population are classified very poor (INSTAT, 2014) while 67,5% experience continuous undernourishment (Razanakoto, 2017).

To escape the food shortage and economic distress, Malagasy from *Kere*-affected communities are migrating northwards. This mass migration means that more food and other resources are needed: land, houses, hospitals, schools, etc.

Conflict is almost inevitable as migrants are not readily welcomed by local populations who are also struggling. Although northern Madagascar looks quite different from the south, climate challenges also exist, in the form of flooding in some parts and drought in others, with devastating consequences for humans and the wildlife in general.

Inflation and the cost of living has worsened in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and since the outbreak of the Covid 19 pandemic Madagascar, already weakened by many factors, has experienced unprecedented inflation, especially in the prices of basic necessities.

Our research among suburban small-scale rice and vegetable producers in the context of the Covid pandemic, the war in Ukraine and climate change clearly showed that like many other African countries, the Malagasy people of Madagascar are also going through a tough time.

The cost of most food items has gone up. Like everywhere else on the African continent, the purchase price of cooking oil, wheat flour, rice and other basic, everyday staples that people need to survive have skyrocketed. The cost of building materials and pharmaceuticals has also doubled or tripled in some cases.

Small-scale farmers are taking longer to sell their fresh produce. Some have resorted to strategies like selling reduced portions at the price their customers paid several years ago.

Inflation is increasing the number of new poor, both in urban and rural areas, and further widening the gap between the haves and have-nots. Families are cutting back on the number of meals they eat to get by. Some people are even selling their property to buy food. Employment opportunities are few and far between because the Malagasy economy is not growing fast enough to create new opportunities for the majority of citizens. Fewer than 10% of the 29 million Malagasy report that they are doing well.

Most Malagasy earn their living off the land through agriculture and artisanal mining. ➤➤

The biggest group affected are those working in agriculture, especially small-scale farmers and vegetable producers since the agricultural calendar and crops seasons have become so unpredictable.

"In all our lives, we never had difficulties like today with changes we have not been prepared for that make the land more arid and temperamental, resulting in huge loss of income," said a woman who declined to give her name. "Our yields are getting smaller and smaller and we cannot afford modern tools because they are too expensive. We also cannot find adaptive and resilient seeds. In addition, we are struggling with access to water and inputs."

The price of rice has recently soared to nearly five times its previous price, making this basic foodstuff almost a luxury. This is untenable in a country where rice is the primary food crop.

Climate change and the growing demand for dwindling rice harvests has become a major issue for the thousands of rice farmers across the island, from north to south, east to west as well as in the central highlands. People have witnessed a constant decline in yields from year to year, resulting in shortages within their own households.

"Times have been getting tougher over the last 10 years. Our work does not even allow us to feed ourselves properly throughout the year. How do you expect us to live on an empty stomach? We could do better if the state helped us a little because we lack everything here: more land to cultivate, water, seeds and especially money!"

### *The Vary Maitso borrowing system*

Poorer Malagasy families face an even bigger battle to find food during the lean period from October to December, when rice farmers are busy in the rice fields planting, transplanting, weeding and so on before the harvest. This requires intensive labour and a lot of cash. Because they do not have the financial means to feed themselves and buy inputs at the same time, many small-scale producers are forced to borrow cash or food from private individuals in usurious informal credit systems that have existed in the country for decades. Sometimes, farmers become heavily indebted (due to their loans, interest repayments, etc.) and become trapped in the debt system.

To escape this, they may have to pawn or sell their crop while it is still green rice plants growing in the paddies — at ridiculously low prices imposed by their creditors. This is known as the "*Vary Maitso*" system.

*Vary Maitso* literally means *"green rice,"* i.e. rice plants that are still growing. For the thousands of small-scale producers across Madagascar their most valuable possession is their land and the rice that they produce on their land.

Due to climate change, economic hardship and other factors, rice harvests have been declining. The rice acreage is also shrinking, so that many families cannot harvest enough to feed themselves until the next harvest.

What can a cash-strapped farmer who cannot borrow money from a regular financial institution do to get out of this situation? They usually go to their neighbours, moneylenders (loan sharks actually) and offer them part of their rice crop that is still growing, the green rice – *Vary Maitso* – in exchange for rice they can eat right away. Alternatively they say, "give me some money to buy rice from the market and I will pay you back later. When my rice is ready, I will harvest it and give you the portion that I took from you, in rice or in money – as you prefer."

This system used to serve as a solidarity mechanism for neighbours to help each other and bind the community. However, it has now been corrupted by predators who want to make profits or get their hands on prime land on which they can build high-end apartment buildings in cities like the capital Antananarivo that are fast running out of space.

If farmers' meagre harvests do not allow them to honour their debts, some unscrupulous creditors do not hesitate to confiscate their farms.

Land grabs have grown over the years without the state taking any action to stop it. The debt scourge that affects almost the majority of the country's farmers is getting worse. Even more concerning is the fact that the system of *Vary Maitso* has become so corrupted that corporate national and foreign investors have started offering loan products to get their dirty hands on poor people's land.

The government needs to act quickly to end this corruption. If left unchecked, this could lead to the displacement of many vulnerable farmers and possibly create mass social unrest.

The government itself recently tried to seize some land around the suburbs of Antananarivo to build a new capital but their efforts were thwarted by campaigns by civil society and community activists. »

## *It is time to build climate-smart cities*

No concrete mitigation strategies have been rolled out in Madagascar to address climate change-related consequences. The fate of the poor and vulnerable has been left to chance. It is time for this to change.

In 2021, the famine in southern Madagascar was identified as the first famine in the world induced by climate change. Rising ocean heat in the Indian Ocean means that Madagascar as well as mainland countries like Mozambique, Malawi and even South Africa are going to have to contend with more damaging storms, floods and rainfall in the coming years.

Faced with this reality, Madagascar has to start building climate-smart cities fast. It has to invest money in adaptation and mitigation. However, it cannot do that alone; the countries that are most responsible for climate change have to step in and work with Madagascar to roll out key infrastructure.

Madagascar is in urgent need of climate-smart infrastructure. The country has to build more houses, roads, bridges and telecommunication systems that are resistant to intense storms. It also needs to build dams and catchment areas to mitigate the effects of drought.

Farmers need help urgently. The country needs to develop evacuation systems adapted to each region to mitigate the effects of floods. To improve production, extension officers are needed to develop farmer-managed seed systems operated through cooperatives. Farmers should be supported to get more grain for planting. If possible – and why not – some could be incentivised to grow more for the local Malagasy and African markets. However, Madagascar lacks the logistics and infrastructure to export food to other African countries, its closest potential market.

The priority is to provide finance and infrastructure to help Malagasy grow enough rice to meet their needs now. The lack or absence of infrastructure is a barrier to better rice production and even food self-sufficiency.

Regrettably too, no clear policy has been put in place to mitigate the impacts of inflation in the context of the current war between Russia and Ukraine. Instead of providing emergency aid interventions, including distribution of imported rice that does not match the local context and undermines the human dignity of the inhabitants, sustainable initiatives must be implemented urgently.

The government could for example promote local food production by granting solidarity funds and establishing guaranteed purchase schemes. It could also strengthen and equip local markets to build stronger circular economies based on cyclical production and consumption processes such as recycling, reusing, refurbishing, sharing, leasing and repairing materials and products for as long as possible. In that way the economy could be transformed so that none are left behind.

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# Unearthing the human dimension of climate change:

## The reflections of an analytical environmental chemist

By Cecilia Ojemaye

Cecilia Ojemaye is a postdoctoral research fellow based at Environmental Humanities South (EHS) at the University of Cape Town (UCT). Her transdisciplinary research, which cuts across the natural sciences, humanities and social sciences, focuses on the contamination of water, the risk this poses to people and the environment, and how this has been exacerbated by climate change. She obtained her BSc in chemistry from the University of Ilorin, Nigeria and has a PhD from the University of the Western Cape (UWC).

*The pressing issues of climate change and environmental contamination are inextricably linked to social science and humanities, writes CECILIA OJEMAYE. She explains how at first this was a world she found herself lost in, but at the same time intrigued by the way scholars in these disciplines think and try to connect different issues. It is through these interactions that she gained a better understanding of the human dimension of these crises.* ››

Environmental contamination, at its core, is a consequence of human activity. It involves spreading pollutants into our air, water and soil, disrupting ecosystems and posing a risk to human health. My role as an analytical environmental chemist is to identify and understand the chemical fingerprints left by these pollutants, enabling us to trace their origins and impacts. Yet, this scientific pursuit is merely the first step in understanding the broader effect of environmental contamination.

Some of the analytical tools used in this field can elucidate the presence of contaminants such as heavy metals, pesticides, pharmaceuticals and industrial chemicals, but it is the social sciences and humanities that explain the intertwined narratives of environmental injustice, policy failures and human suffering. Environmental contamination often affects marginalised communities to a greater degree, increasing existing disparities in health and socioeconomic well-being.

Climate change is another urgent global challenge, one which presents an even more complex connection between analytical environmental chemistry and the social sciences. The science of climate change relies on analytical chemistry techniques to quantify greenhouse gas emissions, track temperature changes and monitor ocean acidification. This data is crucial for understanding the physical processes driving climate change and informing policy decisions. Yet, the significance of climate change goes beyond the boundaries of chemistry. It is a typical example of a scientific issue that demands interdisciplinary collaboration.

The social sciences and humanities play a vital role in driving the complex terrain of climate change adaptation, mitigation and justice. Climate change is not merely a matter of physical parameters but a profoundly human issue, with far-reaching implications for society and culture.

One crucial aspect of this intersection is climate change communication. As analytical environmental chemists, we can generate precise data on greenhouse gas concentrations — carbon dioxide ($CO_2$), methane ($CH_4$) and nitrous oxide ($N_2O$) — interpret this data and determine their effects on/risk to the environment and humans. In addition, analytical environmental chemists translate this information into messages that resonate with the public and policymakers. However, effective climate communication involves understanding the psychological, cultural and social barriers that hinder action on climate change which analytical environmental chemists along with social scientists and communicators can complimentarily address.

One of the most notable intersections of analytical environmental chemistry and the social sciences is the examination of the environmental injustices associated with climate change. Vulnerable communities often with low-income and minority populations bear a disproportionate burden of the environmental and health impacts caused by climate change and pollution. These communities are more likely to live near polluting industries and experience the adverse effects of environmental contamination.

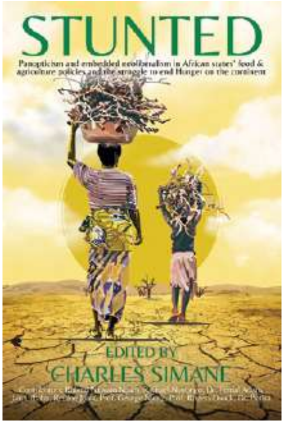
The field of environmental psychology, for instance, explores how individuals perceive and respond to environmental risks and climate-related information. It investigates the factors that influence people's attitudes and behaviours toward these issues, providing insights into strategies for promoting them. The success of climate policies often hinges on the ability to engage diverse communities and overcome resistance to change.

My work as an analytical environmental chemist has taught me that addressing environmental contamination as well as climate change requires a multidisciplinary approach. The complexity of these challenges demands collaboration between scientists, social scientists and humanities scholars. We must collectively confront the environmental injustices, ethical problems and human consequences of our actions.

However, bridging the gap between these disciplines is not without its challenges. Each field has its own methods, language and priorities. Effective interdisciplinary collaboration requires open dialogue, mutual respect and a shared commitment to finding solutions to our shared problems.

In my journey as an analytical environmental chemist, I have come to appreciate the profound importance of communication. We must convey the implications of our scientific findings to policymakers, the public and fellow scientists in a way that resonates with their values and concerns. The social sciences and humanities provide invaluable insights into how to craft messages that inspire action and promote environmental stewardship.

In conclusion, as an analytical environmental chemist, I have been exposed to the intricate interplay between scientific inquiry and the human dimension of environmental contamination and climate change. While my laboratory work is grounded in precise measurements and data analysis, I am acutely aware of the profound human implications of my research. The social sciences and humanities enrich our understanding of these crises, offering insights into the social, psychological, economic and ethical dimensions that underlie them. As scientists, we must embrace interdisciplinary collaboration and engage with researchers from diverse fields to develop comprehensive solutions that address the complex challenges of our time. By doing so, we can work toward a more sustainable future that respects the environment and upholds the dignity and well-being of all people. NA




# Stunted

## Panopticism and embedded neoliberalism in African states' food & agriculture policies and the struggle to end Hunger on the continent

Charles Simane (ed)
Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, Southern Africa, 2022

*Review by Rachael Nyirongo*

"African states are being monitored through the hegemonic institutions of the Global North, to produce a certain type of policies that are meant to favour or to engender certain interests as well as certain outcomes, mainly for the capitalising classes of the Global North producing in Africa, of course, the corporate heist and corporate controlled agri-food system." – *Charles Simane, speaking at the launch of the book in Cape Town in November 2023*

*Stunted: Panopticism and embedded neoliberalism in African states' food & agriculture policies and the struggle to end Hunger on the continent,*" presents a compelling and timely exploration of the interconnected challenges facing Africa's food system. Edited by Charles Simane, the book brings together diverse perspectives to analyse the deep-rooted issues exacerbating the region's dependency on food imports, especially in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

At the launch of the book, Simane explained the reasoning behind including "Panopticism" in the title. He drew a compelling parallel between Michel Foucault's concept of the Panopticon and the dynamics of observation and discipline in African societies. They explore how the gaze of hegemonic institutions, primarily rooted in the Global North, influences and disciplines African states, shaping policies that often favour the interests of capital over the well-being of local communities.

The introduction to the book by Simane contextualises it within the broader global challenges, emphasising how the pandemic revealed the vulnerability of the global food supply chain. The subsequent invasion of Ukraine further disrupted the recovery from Covid-19, affecting the availability of fertilizers, food prices and inflation. The book underscores the disproportionate impact on African nations that are reliant on food imports, emphasising the geopolitical and economic consequences.

The contributors engage in analyses to address critical questions about Africa's food condition. They investigate why African countries are heavily dependent on food imports and dissect the historical, political and economic factors sustaining this reliance. The negative human impact of the food crisis on the continent is vast, and the book advocates for a systemic transformation of agriculture whilst considering the harsh climate and political instabilities.

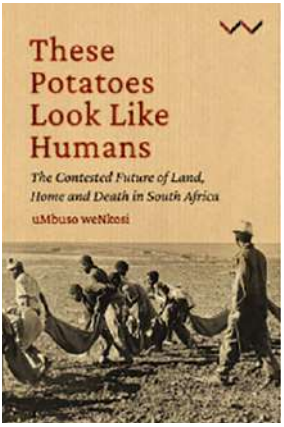
The authors delve into the historical development of Africa's agriculture, the impact of Structural Adjustment Programmes and the perpetuation of colonial agriculture. They also explore the intersection of neoliberalism and panopticism in shaping agriculture policies, warning against the dangers of emergency finance without addressing the root issues.

They acknowledge that a failure to address these root causes will only continue to throw the continent into a cycle of similar patterns. A comprehensive breakdown of Africa's dependency on specific food items is presented, accompanied by clear policy solutions to reverse this trend. The book calls for a shift from market-driven fixes to holistic, people-centred solutions that prioritise local consumption, small-scale farmers and indigenous farming methods.

The book examines the increasing frequency of climate shocks and their impact on food systems, emphasising the vulnerability of industrial agriculture. Water-related conflicts are analysed and recognised as a serious threat to global food production, as the climate conditions continue to worsen. The value of the anthropology of food in understanding Africa's ongoing food crisis is emphasised in the book. It explores the cultural dynamics and ethnography of the crisis, offering insights into the biosocial aspects of food as they relate to social justice, social reproduction and identity.

In the concluding chapters, the authors advocate for reclaiming the soil, addressing threats like land enclosures and indigenous seed criminalisation. The book concludes by asserting the importance of social movements, academics and activists in reclaiming a rights-based approach to food, transcending limitations and embracing an anti-capitalist, ecofeminist and decolonial perspective.

*Stunted* is a groundbreaking work that not only provides a comprehensive analysis of Africa's food challenges but also offers tangible solutions grounded in a deep understanding of the political, economic and ecological factors at play. It serves as a vital resource for scholars, policymakers and activists seeking to effect meaningful change in the continent's food systems.




# These Potatoes Look Like Humans

## The Contested Future of Land, Home and Death in South Africa

uMbuso weNkosi
Jacana Media, 2023. R330.00
Wits University Press, 2023. R310

*Review by mpho ndaba*

### *Introduction*

The land holds memories of the violence. This is violence, and its ongoing-ness, in the case of what currently exists as South Africa, has a secured future in the life of this country. Already ordained into the everyday state of ontological negation of black children, and what their mothers and fathers have encountered in the formation of South Africa, land, then, not only remains a critical site of violence. There are also memories of trauma, grief, and yearning for reparative practices of justice (Mzileni & Diko, 2022:72; Madlingozi, 2018; Canham, 2023).

With black people being the figures around which the organisation of life in this part of Earth — South Africa — takes place; how political and racial abjection was and remains the calculus of dispossession, partition, and labouring, sociologist eMbuso weNkosi by writing this monograph, drawn from his doctoral dissertation, expands onto the existing texts with which we think, engage, and attend to the unresolved land question.

This time around, the focus is on the history of Bethal, in Mpumalanga province. Looking at the creation of the black labouring subject on potato farmlands, which was ramped up using the judicial system's criminalisation of black people during the apartheid era, in which, for instance, black people who were found to have committed petty crimes were given the option of jail time or going to work on these farmlands for next to nothing (pp, 80-81), weNkosi, draws from the Marxian critique. Demonstrating how racial precarity is capital-driven; here, the logic is that black life is only useful if it labours; but most importantly, these acts of labouring are impossible without racialised death and dying. With this text, then, weNkosi attends to capitalism and how this abhorrent system affects the interiority of black life.

And although any text can hold stories, albeit without completeness, weNkosi, in a total of seven chapters, all of which fall into just under 200 pages, weaves a narrative that speaks to how death, in the history of South Africa and in the lives of black people, is interwoven with the life of the Earth. Here, the reader is called to think about how colonial modernity, as part of settler colonial imposition, appropriates various material objects and life forms (Mellet, 2020: 99). In the case of the farmlands of Bethal, weNkosi theorises using the figure of the potato.

In the book, weNkosi also uses death and life as a narrative devices to demonstrate how racial violence keeps the machinery of extraction and land exploitation alive. The capacity of colonial modernity to continue to live, as shown by weNkosi, relies on the over-availability of dying, death, and debility as largely targeted at black people. For scholars of environmental humanities, planetary studies, labour politics, food studies, and resistance politics, what weNkosi does with this book is to critically expand our understanding of violence as that which extends beyond black people. Meaning, we are called to consider how the Earth has been a witness to the forms of racial harm encountered across generations. Meaning, such histories are impossible without black people.

The critical intervention weNkosi makes – from which the reader is left thinking about three sets of figures and their interrelation: the black ~~subject~~, the White subject, and the potato – is to offer a critique of the ontological decimation of the black sovereignty and being.

weNkosi demonstrates how, although settler colonial violence affects nature and other Earthly material objects for the purposes of White comfort and claims to South Africa via land and generational practices of land farming, we learn how White people through the histories of violence enacted on the Afrikaners during the Anglo-Boer War, could summon death as a way to mark a form of nationalism whose infrastructure cannot be understood outside of the land. As such, death, in the history of South Africa, is contested (weNkosi, 2023:17). Here, there is the valueless nature of black life, which shapes how the deaths of black people are historically not treated in the same way White deaths are handled in the minds of the Afrikaners.

Interestingly, then, what weNkosi does, is to pose a question: How might White death and its relation to inheritance be something that is contested, when in fact, colonialism opened up space for White farmers, through lineage, and the familial histories of stewardship of the land become deemed as people whose subjectivity could not be understood outside of working the land? Here, Whiteness reconstructs itself, an encounter that becomes possible through partition, racial violence, and land theft (weNkosi, 2023:18). By drawing from resistance politics that operationalised blood flows in which black people were killed and buried in these potato farms, weNkosi demands that we expand our understanding of what it means for the land to rebel. And this is precisely important when we take note of the forms of separation that come with settler colonial break (Madlingozi, 2018). This is the same kind of "break" Sol. T Plaatje articulated following the institution of the 1913 Land Act.

In the writing of this book, considering the recent discourses around the failed market driven willing buyer willing seller approach, and the need to rethink the legal frameworks around the appropriation of the land without compensation, the unresolved land question, then, places black people as those who are permanently racially marked. One of the things I wish weNkosi did with the necessary level of clarity, is how *being* as it relates to ontology – by which I mean the absence of coherent metaphysical infrastructure – is formed through land dispossession. And while he does introduce the ➤➤

notion “ontological nowhereness”, which gives way for questions related to what might repair look like as tied to land restitution, there is lack of theoretical clarity as to what this Otherisation translates into; despite that land is very much a feature of this violence.

While weNkosi’s work can best be described as sociological, his methodological deployment of historical archival materials and interviews analysis is generative in the sense that the book lands itself across various fields of study, amongst these philosophy and Africana existentialism.

And by inserting himself in these past-present-future histories, doing so by breaking the academic tradition of research, writing, style, and form, weNkosi, methodologically, then, proposes that we are all, in one way or the other, implicated in the things we research and write about. By returning to the archive, weNkosi (2023:21) argues that this act itself, sees the researcher already being confronted with violence.

Here, the usual expectation is that whoever deals with the archive must account for the problem of violence. And often the question becomes relegated to methodology and ethics. Perhaps there is something to be said when we imagine what constitutes the archive; thinking beyond materials and objects such as documents, photographs, etc (Sharpe, 2023:251). And rather begin treating the black body and life in general as an archive. And this is precisely because dispossession permanently racially marks.

The anxieties of having to show respect to the archive might generate different questions: meaning, these anxieties become secondary to how the ‘everyday’ becomes confronted as a thing through which racial abjection is lived. Further, the land question, in contemporary discourses, thus becomes an interesting way in which blackness is not treated as separate from the land. When we contend with the violence of the settler colonial project, we therefore come to understand how the objectification of the land was in fact the production of the black condition.

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# Democracy only works if Parliament works

## Parliament as the cornerstone of public participation

*By Moira Levy and Martin Nicol*

Martin Nicol, former trade unionist, then trade ambassador for a democratic SA, is editor of *New Agenda*, the flagship publication of the Institute for African Alternatives (IFAA). Moira Levy is its Production Editor, IFAA's Media Manager and the project leader of Decode.

*IFAA recently held a colloquium on 'Democracy can only work if Parliament works – South Africa after Zondo,' which was addressed by Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court Raymond Zondo, former President of the Republic Kgalema Motlanthe and Rivonia Circle Director of Programmes Tessa Dooms.*

In Defence of our Constitutional Democracy (Decode) is committed to making sure that the report of the Zondo Commission of Inquiry into state capture does not suffer the same fate as its many predecessors, including the Hugh Corder and Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert reports and the 2018 report of the High Level Panel on the Assessment of Key Legislation and the Acceleration of Fundamental Change, which was chaired by former President Kgalema Motlanthe.

These and other commissions of inquiry, which systematically interrogated the risks and challenges facing South Africa's democracy and proposed comprehensive and much-needed reforms, have one after the other been relegated to the archives of Parliament. The objective of IFAA's Decode project is to keep the findings and recommendations of the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of State Capture, Corruption and Fraud in the Public Sector Including Organs of State – commonly known as the Zondo Commission – alive and kicking in the public arena. »


IFAA invited Chief Justice Raymond Zondo to give the keynote address at a Decode colloquium held in Cape Town in November 2023, titled "Democracy can only work if Parliament works – South Africa after Zondo". As we explained in our invitation to the Chief Justice, the project's aim is to "advance the reforms proposed by the Zondo Commission and follow up the work that still needs to be done in terms of the framework of the Commission … in order to preserve, even revive, public hope that they introduce much-needed transformation in our Parliament and our beleaguered country".

In his acceptance of the invitation, and in the subsequent public address, the Chief Justice generously "applauded" IFAA for this initiative and declared he was "very pleased to be part of this discussion," saying "it seems to me that there could not have been a more appropriate time for a project such as this.

"The Institute for African Alternatives and other civil society organisations have made it their mission to ensure that the recommendations must not be allowed to be ignored, and have said that they would make it their business to make sure that its recommendations were implemented," Chief Justice Zondo said.

With its focus on "Parliament as a Cornerstone of our Constitutional Democracy," Decode singled out the 16 recommendations in the Zondo report that address Parliament and its failure to carry out its constitutional oversight duty.

"I think it is quite appropriate for an organisation of the size of this Institute to decide that out of the many recommendations of the Commission its focus would be those that concern Parliament and it seems to me that focusing on the recommendations that relate to Parliament is quite critical.

> **... to preserve, even revive, public hope that [the Zondo recommendations] will introduce much-needed transformation in our Parliament and our beleaguered country.**

"Parliament is a very important institution in any constitutional democracy. It makes laws by which all of us are bound but apart from that it has a constitutional obligation to oversee executive action and to hold the executive to account."

He referred to the challenges that Members face that were identified by the Commission – for example, lack of capacity, skills and education. "But it seems to me that the biggest problem may have been that members of the majority party did not want to be seen by their colleagues as 'behaving like the opposition'."

In his speech he dealt with the contradiction between the oath of office all MPs must take before taking their parliamentary seats in which they swear to be faithful to South Africa and to uphold the Constitution of the country. On the other hand, they also make a declaration – separately – of loyalty to the party they represent.

"I have absolutely no doubt in my mind that there are many men and women in Parliament who are people of integrity and who put this country and its people first. How do we help them to change this situation so that the people of South Africa never again lose R58 billion" (an estimate of the direct costs to the country of state capture and the corrupt behaviour considered by the Commission).

He referred to the role of citizens "and the many organisations in South Africa, including the Institute for African Alternatives, which have stood up and said we will not allow this huge investment of the people of South Africa to go to waste. We will do what we can to make sure that [the Commission's] recommendations are implemented.

"I think that all of us who want to make this country a better country ... can play a role in making sure that state capture never happens again," Chief Justice Zondo said.

Former President Motlanthe is Director of the Board of IFAA who hosted the colloquium in conjunction with the University of the Western Cape's Institute for Social Development. In his opening presentation, he also raised the problem of the MPs' dual loyalties.

In his view, the "ineffectiveness of Parliament" stems from the tension between what is best for the country and what is desired by the party leadership. Reminding the colloquium that the Constitution of the Republic is supreme or preeminent over any party's constitution he said, "we are aware that elected representatives are eternally indebted to those who have secured a high place for them in the party list. Hence the reluctance to hold party leadership to account.

"This begs the question: how seriously do Members of Parliament take the oath they swear when they become parliamentarians."

Referring to the colloquium theme -- democracy can only work if Parliament works – the former President said this asks "whether an alternative system needs to be in place to protect the independence of public representatives. ››


"If we want democracy to work. then the duties of public representatives to the Constitution of the Republic need to be carried out within a structure of direct accountability. We must also ask what is it that jeopardises the independence of parliamentarians?"

He cited the Electoral Act – recently amended amid much controversy – which stipulates that it is parties and not individuals who contest elections. "Therefore, Parliament is made up of people on party lists who are selected on the basis of internal party processes."

Tessa Dooms, the Rivonia Circle's Director of Programmes presented a civil society response to the presentations by the Chief Justice and former President. In her speech she challenged the notion that the party list system absolves voters from any responsibility in the selection of those who represent them.

She reminded the colloquium that the people voted for the parties who decided who would fill Parliament's 400 seats. "We actually have some say in deciding who are sitting in those seats. Party lists are openly available to us. We need to do the work as citizens to find out about the people who are on those lists."

The Constitution asserts South Africa is a democracy of the people, she said. "We, the people, own the House, and the people who occupy the seats do so at our behest. Yet we don't know who they are, and that should be an anomaly in a democracy." She said citizens must:

- Know *who* parties have nominated for election – not just their names, but their individual track records.

> **… how seriously do MPs take the oath they swear [to uphold the Constitution] when they become parliamentarians?**

- Actually read their manifesto, and interrogate them.
- Object to the laziness of MPs by confronting them individually on how they intend to vote on different issues.

“We hire them. They do not get hired by the parties. They are our employees, not the parties. The parties don’t even pay them. We pay them.”

She said Parliament will never change as Members will not voluntarily accept, or enact, changes that challenge or undermine their power. “Never in history have turkeys voted for Christmas,” she said. It is up to citizens to change Parliament.

“Parliamentarians are not going to change Parliament by themselves. It’s not in their interests [to do so], but it is in our interest and we can do it.

“A fundamental reason why our Parliament is not working is because we allow it to fail. We have allowed our Parliament to descend into a vacuous place where people we don’t know do things we don’t care about.”

The Decode colloquium raised some of the consequences of the failure of Parliament and the threat that posed to the success of South Africa’s democracy:

- Citizen cynicism and apathy that results in their disinterest in holding their public representatives to account;
- Capacity deficits among MP, not only in their skills and training but most importantly in their integrity and independence when it comes to serving the people they represent; and
- The compromised principle of the separation of powers, especially when it comes to the duty of the Legislature to hold the Executive to account.

The colloquium reminded one attendee of the issue Sherlock Holmes confronted when a crime was committed, but the guard dog did not bark. This was because – as Holmes reasoned correctly – the dog knew the perpetrator. Parliament does not bark when the Executive is culpable, because the Executive is made up of the party leaders who decide who gets fed!

*IFAA thanks Fazeela Mohammed for performing as master of ceremonies and all the sponsors of the event, including the Australian High Commission, whose support enabled Decode to launch its activities in the significant year before the 2024 South African elections.*

Australian High Commission
South Africa

# 'How can we help and support MPs?' – Chief Justice Zondo

In his speech to the colloquium the Chief Justice said: "I think that Parliament has a very important role to play in bringing down levels of corruption in our country and it has the power to do that. The question is whether it will be prepared to use that power." He went on to say, "I think that it's our duty to do what we can to help Parliament and work with it to try and see what solutions can be found."

He mentioned a few key points that are needed to support MPs and help them to make Parliament more effective, echoing some of the recommendation in the Zondo report:

- MPs need to have access to expert skills to do their work properly.
  - This could be through education and induction for MPs so they can understand the purpose of the portfolio they follow in the committees to which they are assigned.
  - It could involve more resources for portfolio committee researchers to enable them to explain key details to Members.
  - It could involve calling on expertise from sector experts.
- MPs need a system to follow up on questions and recommendations made by committees.
  - The Executive often 'forgets' to answer questions posed in portfolio committee meetings or does not respond to committee recommendations.
  - The Executive and government departments are not bound to do what Parliament recommends, but they are required to consider the issues and to respond.
- MPs must learn from the mistakes made during state capture.
  - A key error, which pre-dates the Commission on state capture, was the ruling party's rejection of calls by the Opposition for a public inquiry into the allegations of corruption that were surfacing at that time. "If Parliament had allowed the [parliamentary] motions for the establishment of a public inquiry, in all probability state capture would have been stopped because of what would have been revealed."
  - He referred to the case of PRASA. For five years Parliament did nothing, despite mounting evidence of inappropriate expenditure, which increased every year and was each year flagged as a problem by the Auditor-General.
  - The unwillingness of MPs mainly from the ruling party to act against corruption points to the need for a permanent commission on corruption and state capture, which would act independently of any party bias. This would ensure that "whatever Parliament might try to slip under the carpet in terms of allegations of corruption and state capture can be investigated and brought into the open … and hopefully a strong public opinion would force Parliament to do the right thing."

# Here's what young people think of the state of democracy in SA

## and what they plan to do about it: voting is just the first step

*First-time voters participated in a Decode workshop titled 'Our Vote is our Voice', but they argued voting on its own won't be enough; real change will be achieved only through communities coming together to speak with one collective voice.*

"Democracy means the power of the people. But that power is only on loan!" This was according to one of the young people who attended a session on "Our Vote is our Voice", the third in a series of citizen workshops held in Cape Town on 27 October 2023 as part of IFAA's "In Defence of our Constitutional Democracy" or Decode project.

The implications of his statement were clear, and reflected the mindset of most of the young participants: Power belongs to the people, not the party or politician. It is transferred to our political representatives if we vote for them, but must be returned if that trust is abused.

The workshop targeted first time voters. The programme allowed them to comment on the state of democracy in South Africa today. And it asked them to spell out what they thought they could or should be doing about it.

Decode is a one-year project that highlights the role of Parliament and constitutionally elected public representatives in making our democracy effective. Just as our elected representatives have to conduct oversight of the Executive and call these political leaders to account, citizens have to check that representative are making effective use of the peoples' power that is on loan to them.

Decode is funded by the Australian High Commission in South Africa and the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation.

The young participants were questioning and challenging, and demonstrated their political insight and maturity. In a session on active and responsive citizenship, ➤➤


participants were given real-life scenarios reflecting daily realities in the lives of the poor, for example:

*Andile is aware that his good friend and neighbour Peter steals copper wires. This means the trains cannot run. Andile's sister lost her job because she could not get to work. Andile also knows Peter is stealing because he has no job and must feed his large family. Andile knows he should report crime as a responsive citizen. However, he understands Peter's situation.*

*Mary lives in a neglected area. The municipal trucks have not been around to collect waste for six weeks. The place is filled with litter. Plastic bags blow in the wind. There is a smell of sewerage everywhere. People are getting sick. They have had no water for many days. People are complaining that the municipality has forgotten about them.*

Participants had useful advice for "Andile" and "Mary". Clearly familiar with the challenges presented in the exercise, what stood out in their responses was their compassion and empathy. It appeared more important to them to provide "Peter" with some form of support from the community than to punish him. Suggestions ranged from trying to help him find a job to sharing with him and his family whatever food or resources they could spare.

"Mary" was advised to organise a petition for better services in her area or to call on her neighbours "to come together as a community and organise a community clean up". The emphasis was on speaking out with a collective voice, exercising pressure as citizens and the need to "raise awareness to make South Africa aware of what is happening in our communities".

Some of the creative initiatives they put forward were described by workshop facilitator Mike Pothier, a lawyer and activist with the Catholic Parliamentary Liaison Office, as effective programmes for community action and civil society mobilisation.

Later the workshop held a "speed dating" exercise with a twist. In two facing rows

> **Power belongs to the people, not the party or politician.**

they were given a few minutes to convince the person in front of them that they should go out and vote when the time comes next year.

Decode's partners on the ground are many and varied. For the youth workshop Decode has a shout out of appreciation to Civics Academy, an independent, not-for-profit online education initiative that offers training and free video and audio content aiming to inform and strengthen democratic values and responsible citizenship.

The Catholic Parliamentary Liaison Office, a project of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference, has supported Decode from the start. It is the official vehicle for contact and dialogue between the Catholic Church in South Africa and the country's Parliament and government and provides an avenue for the Church – as part of civil society – to contribute to debates on issues of public policy, and to help shape legislative and policy developments.

Participants came from non-government organisation Ikamva Youth, which is committed to empowering young people from under-resourced communities, and lobby and activist group My Vote Counts, as well as local Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges.

The workshop surfaced comments about the pressure new voters sometimes face to vote for the same party their parents had always voted for. Pothier urged them not to make choices based on what had happened in the past. "And tell that to your parents," he said. "You don't vote because of something you remember. You vote for the future, not for the past."

Pothier asked them to list ways in which they could hold their elected representatives to account. How do you exercise responsible citizen oversight over those in positions of power – not by throwing stones or setting tyres alight! The participants' responses went well beyond exercising their right to vote. "Use the media to expose corrupt politicians"; "use the law and take them to court"; "withhold municipal rates" to demand effective delivery of services.

At the end of the day participants' assessments of the workshop reflected that they had learned a lot about how South Africa works – its system of proportional representation; the three-tier government process; the rules and practices of Parliament; and so on – but the day's discussions were not about whether or not they were going to vote. The participants' responses went well beyond exercising their right to vote. Their emphasis was on community activism; their solutions were "get together, organise with other people, mobilise".

As Pothier said, "no one can say 'there is nothing we can do'. The power is in our hands. It is up to us to decide how we use it."

Before they left, participants were given handouts from the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) on how to register as a voter and how to vote and they were encouraged to share them with family, friends and members of their communities. NA

# Democracy & development

***Progressive partnership in pursuit of transformation in Africa and beyond***


Prominent figures in the University of the Western Cape's academic and administrative leadership, led by the Rector, Professor Tyrone Pretorius, gathered with former President Kgalema Motlanthe, Director of the Institute for African Alternative's board, and board members Acting IFAA Director Emeritus Professor Ari Sitas and Cosatu Deputy Parliamentary Officer Tony Ehrenreich.

The event was the launch of the partnership between IFAA and the university's Institute for Social Development, a collaboration that has been more than a year in the making.

Describing this as "an extraordinary partnership between two venerable institutions," Professor Pretorius said: "This isn't just a collaboration; it's a convergence of intellectual powerhouses dedicated to spearheading social and economic development and transformation."

Speaking at the launch at UWC's School of Public Health on 15 November 2023, which was followed by a celebratory luncheon, he said, "the genesis of this partnership lies in an unwavering commitment to democracy, ethics, and human rights. Over the past three years, UWC's ISD and the IFAA have forged an indomitable alliance to tackle our society's most pressing issues."

The two institutes signed a memorandum of understanding earlier this year to form a strategic partnership around social and economic development and transformation in Africa, focused on joint initiatives in research, training and communication.

Cooperation began in 2021 around IFAA's first annual Ben Turok Memorial Lecture. A successful partnership has subsequently been formed in the joint publication of IFAA's flagship journal *New Agenda: South African Journal of Social and Economic Policy,* with the release of the first jointly published issue, issue 90, in September 2023.

# Another milestone reached:

## Partnership with ISD sealed

*By the New Agenda editorial collective*

*"The journal should continue to be listed on the DHET accredited list on condition that the suggested improvements are implemented by the end of 2023."*

-ASSAf Panel review of New Agenda, 2022

As described in previous issues of *New Agenda*, the original publishers of the journal, the Institute for African Alternatives (IFAA), has taken active steps to ensure that *New Agenda* retains its accreditation with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

These moves follow the recommendations of academics on an expert review panel assembled by the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) after they asserted that *New Agenda* — in the period 2017 to 2019 — did not meet the proper standards for research-led academic publishing.

In one of the most significant moves in the year-long process to transform *New Agenda* to meet the rigorous requirements for accreditation, the partnership between IFAA and the University of the Western Cape's Institute for Social Development (ISD) was launched. This will provide the journal with an academic home and significantly strengthen its standing as an academic publication.

The two institutes have agreed to collaborate on matters relating to accreditation, the editorial board, peer review processes and monitoring, sharing of databases, and the use of digital platforms to expand the readership and reach of the magazine.

In terms of the agreement, future joint issues of *New Agenda* will be published on UWC Scholar – UWC's online publishing system managed by Mark Snyders and his team at the university's Scholarly Communication Unit of the Main library. They provided the *New Agenda* team with training on Open Journal Systems (OJS) — the world's most widely used journal management and publishing software — and made available to IFAA the use of the university's journal management and publishing software.

ISD staff members sit on the newly constituted editorial board and nominated scholars from around the world to join as board members. The editorial board held its first meeting in October 2023. ➤➤

*Former President Kgalema Motlanthe is escorted by UWC Rector Tyrone Pretorius to the launch celebration*

At the launch of the partnership Professor Tyrone Pretorius, the Rector of the University, described the co-hosting of *New Agenda: South African Journal for Social and Economic Policy*– founded in the early 2000s by the late Professor Ben Turok – as one of the major achievements of this alliance.

"Today, it is a platform for incisive examination of governance issues. The hybrid left-leaning journal – which has its academic home here at the ISD – is the vital interface between academic research, policy debates and interventions, and citizen mobilisation by informing and engaging readers to play a constructive role in social, political and economic transformation and development.

"Crucially, it is used by our policymakers to inform their decisions to find solutions to our society's most profound challenges."

Another milestone in *New Agenda's* transition was the inaugural meeting of the new editorial board of the journal, now comprising a range of international scholars. Their names can be found on the opening page of this issue.

The new editorial board and the formal acknowledgement of the role ISD will play as the academic home of *New Agenda* follow other key steps to implement the improvements suggested by the ASSAf panel by the end of 2023. These are the upgrading of peer review processes, the documenting of the workflow in a database to allow for analysis, and the review of guidelines for authors and reviewers. As described in *New Agenda* issue 90, the journal is now making use of Open Journal Systems (OJS).

*New Agenda's* call for papers for 2024 is on the website at https://epubs.ac.za/index.php/newagenda/announcement/view/5

This includes links to the guidelines for authors and a statement of the citation standards required for academic articles.

We welcome advice and feedback from readers as we re-position *New Agenda* in a new digital publishing environment. Send your comments to production@ ifaaza.org.za NA

# Dateline Africa

## *1 September 2023 – 31 November 2023*

### *November*

**9 November**: The JSE, South Africa's biggest stock exchange, introduced trading on a new local voluntary carbon market. Carbon markets allow for the buying and selling of carbon credits (one carbon credit is equal to one ton of carbon dioxide or other greenhouse gasses). The credits can be used by enterprises to offset their carbon footprint. The JSE Group said that establishing active carbon credit trading markets in SA will be essential in achieving the country's emissions reduction commitments, especially given that it is among the largest carbon dioxide emitting nations globally.

**1 November:** Kenya announced an end to visa requirements for all African visitors by the end of 2023. President William Ruto told an international conference in the Republic of Congo: "It is time we ... realise that having visa restrictions amongst ourselves is working against us." Visa-free travel within the continent has been a goal of the African Union (AU) for the past decade. Only three countries: the Seychelles, the Gambia and Benin offer entry without a visa to African citizens.

### *October*

**22 October:** A Nigerian television thriller, "The Black Book", about corruption and police brutality in that country, has taken the streaming world by storm, spending three weeks in the top 10 English-language titles on Netflix charts in 69 countries globally, peaking at No. 3 in the second week.

**13 October:** Burkina Faso and Russian state nuclear company Rosatom signed an MOU for the construction of a nuclear power plant in the landlocked Sahel state. This follows a request made by Burkina Faso junta leader Captain Ibrahim Traore to Russian President Vladimir Putin during the Russia-Africa summit in St Petersburg in July and reflects the country's move closer to Russia after its 22 September military coup and its efforts to break away from its former colonial power, France.

**18 October:** Turkish energy supplier Karpowership restored power to Guinea-Bissau after supplies were cut off for almost two days. Karpowership said it switched off all the lights in the capital, Bissau, following a protracted period of non-payment. The company signed a deal in 2019 to supply 100% of Guinea Bissau's power.

**19 October:** Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) halted all its life-saving surgical activities at Bashair Teaching Hospital in south Khartoum, Sudan, including trauma surgery and caesarean sections, when surgical supplies ran out after a month-long blockade imposed by military authorities on their transport from Wad Madani to south Khartoum. In the previous five months MSF's surgical team had performed more than 3,000 surgical procedures in that hospital. ➤➤

**19 October:** Uganda's National Environment Management Authority made an urgent call for legislation to impose a total ban on single use plastics, which pose numerous risks of environmental degradation and marine pollution as well as health-related ripple effects such as hampering the fight against rising malaria due to poor drainage that causes stagnant water.

**13 October:** The International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia reported large-scale war crimes and crimes against humanity since the conflict in that country began on 3 November 2020. In a report to the UN it said the Ethiopian National Defence Forces, Eritrean Defence Forces, regional forces and affiliated militias perpetrated violations and abuses in Tigray "on a staggering scale". These included mass killings, widespread and systematic rape and sexual violence, sexualized slavery of women and girls, deliberate starvation, forced displacement and wide-spread arbitrary detentions.

**22 October:** Tanzania signed a 30-year port management deal with leading international port operator, Dubai-based DP World, to invest US$250-million in four quays at Dar es Salaam, Tanzania's largest port. Well-functioning ports are important for building the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) as they reduce transport costs.

**19 October:** Carbon Green Africa (CGA), a Zimbabwean company involved in generating "carbon credits" to offset carbon emissions, announced its separation from South Pole, the largest company involved in selling these credits after credible evidence showed that South Pole sold credits to its clients for carbon reductions that were not real. CGA is also involved in Kariba REDD+, a community project that is part of a UN climate change mitigation framework that allows developing countries to receive results-based payments for emission reductions when they reduce deforestation.

**10 October:** A report by international monitor Human Rights Watch (HRW) says Rwandan authorities and their proxies were using violence, judicial mechanisms and intimidation to try to silence criticism from Rwandans living around the world. The report described "a global ecosystem of repression", to muzzle dissenting voices and to scare off potential critics. It has documented more than a dozen murders as well as forced disappearances, combined with surveillance, misuse of law enforcement and abuses against relatives living in Rwanda. Rwanda chairs the Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions.

**10 October:** South Africa's 2022 population census results showed a total population of 62 million people, up 20% since 2011. The census was delayed by Covid and had to be statistically adjusted for large counting errors. The results will be used to allocate national budgets and to redraw the boundaries of election districts. The Western Cape province replaced the Eastern Cape as the third most populous province.

**5 October:** Multinational bank, Standard Chartered, highlighted obstacles to the African Continental Free Trade Area agreement. "African markets face complex and uncertain trade rules, poor governance, underdeveloped infrastructure, and high costs of capital," it reported. Conflicting national and regional objectives limit market access and hamper efforts to build integrated regional value chains. On the other hand, it said African economies are on the verge of significant trade growth in the decades ahead if they can marshall the right policies, to build better connections within the continent and beyond.

**3 October:** The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace called on the US to "fund and support" the African Minerals Development Centre (AMDC), the paper entity responsible for coordinating and overseeing the implementation of the long-neglected African Mining Vision (AMV). The AMV was developed by the African Union in 2009 for the "optimal exploitation of mineral resources to underpin broad-based sustainable growth and socio-economic development." The purpose here is to lessen US dependence on China for critical minerals. Many of the refined minerals sourced from China originally come from Africa.

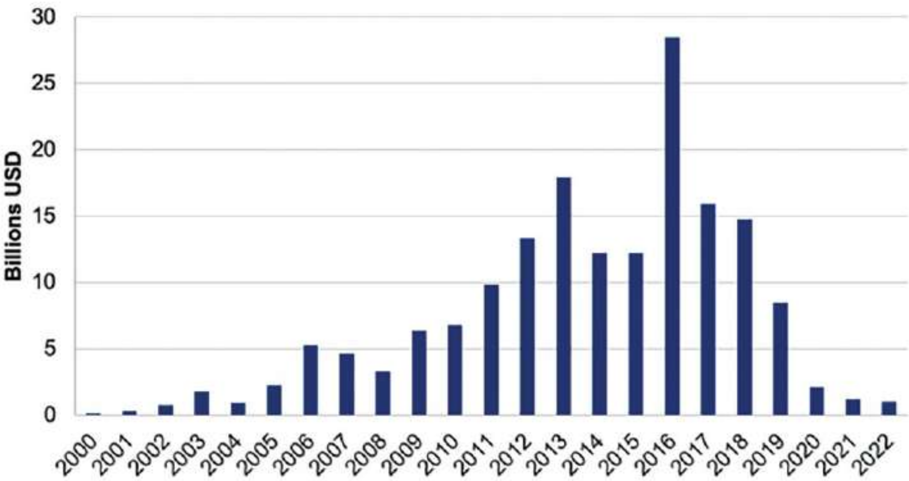
**2 October:** The Presidents of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Zambia met on the Congolese bank of the Luapula River, the border between the two states, to lay the foundation stone for a 345m cable road bridge to be built over the swiftly-flowing river at the mid-point of the Kasomeno-Mwenda Toll Road (KMTR) project. GED Africa, a venture based in Mauritius, will also tar the road for 90km either side. This will speed up the passage of trucks from the rich mines west of the river, as they travel 1,500km through Zambia and Tanzania to the port of Dar es Salaam.


*President of the Democratic Republic of the DRC, Felix Tshisekedi, and President of Zambia, Hakainde Hichilema*

**24 September:** French President Emmanuel Macron announced an end to bilateral military co-operation with Niger and the departure of all its 1,500 troops in the country by the end of 2023. Between 2013 and 2022 France led an anti-jihadist operation in Burkina ➤➤

Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger at the request of their governments. Recently, military leaders across the Sahel have staged repeated coups, often with the help of hired Russian mercenaries.

**18 September:** Researchers at the Boston University Global Development Policy Center published a study that shows dramatic cuts in Chinese loans to Africa due to the difficulties facing the Chinese economy. The researchers expect "more loans with smaller values under $50 million and loans with more beneficial social and environmental impacts" in future.




*Source: Chinese Loans to Africa (CLA) Database, 2023. Boston University Global Development Policy Center*

**13 September:** In the wake of the G20 Summit, the US State Department announced the EU will be part of a joint feasibility study on "greenfield rail expansion" covering the southern portion of Angola and continuing across most of Zambia. It also referred to an associated project to provide US "loan assistance" for rail refurbishment from the port of Lobito (in Angola) to Kolwezi in the DRC. These promises are part of the G20's "Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment", a late challenger to China's Belt and Road Initiative, which celebrated its tenth anniversary in October 2023. NA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You have the right to know, and we are committed to sharing the knowledge and information that our readers have come to expect from us.

For 25 years we have published *New Agenda: South African Journal of Social and Economic Policy* to provide you, our readers, with informed and impartial analysis that you can rely on. We publish sound and reliable information that you need to call those in power to account.

"Our huge inequalities in wealth are intolerable, including the incredible gap between top managers and employees. Our legacy of social discrimination based on colour is unacceptable, including the persisting divide between affluent suburbs and desolate townships. Our state-owned enterprises, which are supposed to be engines for development, are actually serving as employment agencies for a small overpaid middle class. The public service has been allowed to slip into a dream walk where form filling and token effort is enough to bring in a stable income for officials.

"All this points to an urgent need for civil society and progressive intellectuals to raise their voices and demand a much more serious effort by all concerned to rebuild our country on a better foundation. Let us work on that." Prof Ben Turok, 26 June 1927 – 9 December 2019 Former editor of *New Agenda*

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