



DECLARATION

WOMEN STAND THEIR GROUND AGAINST BIG COAL

19-24 January 2015

Women stand their ground against Big Coal is a gathering of women's rights and feminist activists from the Southern African Region, convened by the Women and Mining (WoMin) alliance and nearly two dozen organisations.

African economies are highly dependent on the extraction and export of raw materials. In an era marked by a boom in commodity prices, closely associated with rising demands from emerging economies in the Global South, this structure has been further entrenched. In South Africa, industries are concentrated in the minerals energy complex and play a controlling role in the economy. Coal dominates the extractives sector with a 94% share of the energy mix, resulting in South Africa being the top contributor to carbon emissions in the region, and ranking amongst the top twenty emitters globally in 2013. This model of development, which is deeply exploitative of labour and environment, is not a model other African economies should emulate. A growth and profit-oriented model of development only deepens inequality, fuels unemployment and destroys existing livelihoods.

Coal generates immense environmental, health and social costs. They start at the point of extraction and include coal's transportation, combustion and processing into other products. Who bears these costs? Local communities, workers, and especially peasant and working class women. Women's cheap and often unpaid labour subsidises the profits of polluting coal corporations. Women are the providers of food, the bearers of safe drinking water, the gatherers of fuel and the care givers, including to male (and female) coal miners and workers in related industries who are still subject to colonial and apartheid-era migrant labour conditions. Where there is ill-health, where lands are stolen and food insecurity increases, where water supplies are diverted to industry needs and polluted, and where there are increasingly more common man-made afflictions of droughts or floods, these burdens fall most heavily on women. The 'externalisation' of these costs is a growing burden on public services (like health care, water, environmental monitoring and rehabilitation), poor and working class communities (who are mostly black), and women in particular. This shifts costs away from coal corporations and power utilities who are thus able to preserve the myth of cheap coal.

WOMEN STAND THEIR GROUND

Coal is the fastest growing fossil fuel and the single largest contributor (40%) to carbon emissions which cause climate change. But women and our allies are resisting, leading to the scrapping of planned expansions, closure of existing mines and plants, and a shift to alternative sources of energy. This global attack on the coal industry is vital because we are on track to a 4-degree temperature increase (according to the World Bank), but for Africa's interior that will mean up to 9 degrees. Women will take the brunt of this unprecedented catastrophe, which the charity Christian Aid estimates could kill 185 million Africans this century.

Scientists recommend that 50-80% (with a scientific journal this month insisting on the upper end of the target) of existing coal reserves must remain underground if we are to avoid runaway climate change. "Leave the coal in the hole" is the demand that women activists have been making since at least the COP17 in Durban, in 2011. Despite scientific evidence and growing calls for action on climate change, powerful corporations, financial institutions and mainly Northern governments continue to pursue development policies that fuel climate change, dispossession and inequalities. Many of our governments in the region have been captured by the big corporates and state machinery is used to repress the struggles of communities who oppose the exploitation of their natural resources, the destruction of eco-systems and climate change.

Under these conditions, the time to build popular alliances against Big Coal for system-wide change has never been more urgent. Women in Southern Africa are mobilising and opposing the deadly effects of coal. We celebrate women's struggles and women's bravery in the face of coal's power, profits and ties to state repression.

We therefore resolve as follows:

- We need major economic, social and political transformation if humanity and the planet which hosts us are to survive climate change. Development strategies must recognise that humans and nature are co-dependent, and that there are limits to the exploitation of eco-systems and natural resources. Economic development cannot be sustained if it is biased towards corporations and elites, maintains its current fetish with GDP growth, and exploits natural resources (and labour) by ignoring externalised costs.
- We need a form of development that privileges life, well-being and the needs of the majority of our countries' and the world's citizens, with working class and peasant women at the forefront of setting this agenda. We need development to redistribute land and other natural resources to poor women and men, to protect the resources we already depend upon, to help us make investments that deepen and expand our existing livelihoods, and make infrastructure investments that are determined by local and regional needs decided democratically by workers, mining communities and peasants, especially women, as opposed to big corporations who capture significant benefit through state subsidy.
- We oppose the privatisation and financialisation of our lands and natural resources. We are also deeply against the privatisation of public assets and services, such as water, energy, health, education, and transportation.
- We need development that recognises and supports the work of care and reproduction, which is principally the work of women. We want to see the expansion of state services framed by the needs of peasant and working class women and under our control. We demand more state investment in and remuneration for our work of caring, especially home-based healthcare, childcare and early childhood development.
- We need a new form of development in which our governments and regional and global multilateral bodies are accountable to poor citizens (women and men) and advance our interests as opposed to those of the corporations and financiers.
- We need a form of development that rapidly transitions us into low-carbon economies and creates safe decent work in the areas of renewable energy, affordable public transport, housing, organic agriculture, green production, non-materialistic consumption and a zero-waste philosophy. We support and are inspired by the work of the Million Climate Jobs Campaign. We demand that the energy needs of women, peasants and small local producers are prioritised in a climate-just world.

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- We need development at the global-scale that recognises how Northern governments and wealthy consumers of the Global North (including parts of Southern Africa like wealthy Johannesburg suburbs) are responsible for rapid climate change. Paying this climate debt means that these governments must set emissions targets that will keep climate change under the 2-degree temperature increase that the United Nations supports, and a binding global commitment to keep 50-80% of all known fossil fuel reserves under the ground.
- Development which supports women's access to and control over natural resources, our voice and decision-making, our labour of care and the redistribution of this work within our families, communities and to the state through the rendering of key public services, as well as access to safe decent work for women, is what we aspire to. Accompanying these changes we want societies and a world in which women and girl children are valued, treated as equal and respected, and in which violence against women is condemned, criminalised and eliminated.

These are the structural changes we aspire to. In the short to medium-term we call on our governments to implement the following crucial reforms:

- Respect our constitutional, legal and human right to free prior and informed consent for developments that will affect our lands, natural resources, and community life. Ensure that we, women in communities, are fully informed and participate equally in decision-making processes that are open and transparent.
- Regulate and monitor these polluting industries! Listen and take action to address our complaints about polluted air and water. Reform law, policy and strengthen regulatory authority to internalise ALL costs to the polluters with great urgency. Clean up and remediate our environment at all cost to polluters and shut down industries that are not adhering to best accepted international standards!
- Ensure independent social and environmental impact assessments, which outline all the short term and cumulative costs of extracting and benefiting coal. These analyses must not be done by the corporates and their lackey consultants. Affected communities must receive financial assistance to secure their own researchers and advisors. We want long-term cost-benefit analyses for every application to mine and all major infrastructure investments, with a full consideration of all alternatives with a view to promoting the greatest local choice and benefit.
- Our lands, our forests and our waters have been taken through forced dislocations. We want a full and open inventory of what we have lost, taking specific account of common resources upon which our livelihoods depend. Compensatory land must be equivalent if not greater in size and quality, and access to infrastructure, markets and social services must be guaranteed. We reject cash compensation for the resources upon which our livelihoods depend. Compensation for social costs and trauma (to women and children especially) must be made. Our ancestral graves are an important part of our history and our identity. They must be respected, fully compensated for, and relocated if absolutely necessary as per traditional custom.

To strengthen and deepen our resistance to destructive Coal, we resolve to take the following actions in our communities, organisations and countries:

- Undertake research to understand more deeply the impacts of Coal upon women, and document women's resistance
 - Put in place systems for monitoring air and water pollution at community level, expose environmental impacts and demand redress (which takes account of the specific impacts on women mentioned above) from governments and corporates
 - Organise women in our communities and build bridges between collectives of women through solidarity, exchange and campaigns
 - Work with others to build the widest possible alliance on coal (and other fossil fuels) energy and climate change, bridging environmental and climate justice, women's rights, youth, health, and labour organisations and movements
 - Take legal action against and mount campaigns targeting corporates that are polluting environments and creating devastating social impacts for women and communities.
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At a regional level, WoMin will continue to:

- Deepen the alliance of organisations fighting coal (and other fossil fuels) from a feminist perspective
- Support research and country level organising and campaigning
- Disseminate information and run training programmes for women activists and leaders including building local capacity for alternatives to mining
- Facilitate solidarity between communities and women impacted by coal across countries
- Undertake a coordinated day of action of women's rights organisations and movements across the Africa region on climate change (and targeting dirty fossil fuel industries) in October 2015, in the run up to the UNFCCC in Paris (December 2015)
- Support women bring a complaint against an offending Coal company to the Southern African People's Tribunal on Corporate Impunity in August 2015 and build a coordinated global Campaign against this same corporate for justice for affected women
- Advocate to sub-regional (SADC and COMESA) and regional (African Union) institutions for the needed reforms.

LEAVE THE COAL IN THE HOLE, THE OIL IN THE SOIL AND THE FRACKING SHALE GAS UNDER MOTHER NATURE'S GRASS!

Collaborating organisations:

WoMin, a regional alliance of women's organisations and movements, leads the exchange in partnership with (in alphabetical order): ActionAid South Africa, Centre for Natural Resource Governance (CNRG) (Zimbabwe), Centre for Trade Policy and Development (CTPD) (Zambia), Council of Churches (Zambia), Forum Mulher (Mozambique), Global Environmental Trust (South Africa), groundWork (South Africa), Highveld Environmental Justice Network, International Coal Network, Mining Affected Communities United in Action (MACUA), Mupo Foundation (South Africa), National Climate Change Coalition (Botswana), Southern African Green Revolutionary Council (SAGRC) (South Africa), União Nacional de Camponeses (UNAC) (Mozambique), Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance (VEJA) (South Africa), Rural Women's Assembly (Zambia), Women from Mining Affected Communities United in Action (WAMUA), and Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association (ZELA).

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