Changing Practice course: Olifants

Monthly report: June 2017

Sub-grantee: Environmental Monitoring Group in partnership with the Environmental Learning Research Centre, Rhodes University

Changing Practice course participant, Lorraine Kakaza pointing to how mine blasting is damaging houses.

Written by Jane Burt, Environmental Monitoring Group.
Introduction

In the month of June the EMG/ELRC ‘Changing Practice’ course we marked pre-course assignments and kept in contact and followed the progress of the Changing Practice course participants via the newly set up whatsapp group. There was also a South African Water Caucus/Department of Water and Sanitation meeting early in the month which previous participants of the Changing Practice course attended. Facilitators of the Changing Practice course also attended and raised some of the issues that are coming out of the Changing Practice: Olifants course. Below we give a brief report on:

• the SAWC/DWS dialogues,
• give a summary of the pre-course assignments and request support from AWARD to link into various Change Projectxs.
• Report on June activities of the Change Projects via the Whatsapp group.

Specific Activities

Pre-course Assignments & Setting a baseline

All the participants passed their pre-course assignment. Below is a brief summary of how they presented their projects before the course began. The summaries below act as a narrative baseline for evaluating the Change Practice Course.

Estimated positioning of the Change Projects in the Olifants Catchment
Upper Olifants Catchment

Organisation: Action Voices


Description: Action Voices have been involved, for a long time, in monitoring the streams and wetland around the Emalahleni communities as Benchmark environmental monitors. They have chosen the Bragspruit wetland as the area they would like to work on, in more depth, for their Change Project. The wetland is situated near the KG Mall, near the N4, between Vosman location Extension 3 & 5 and the Emsagweni location. When speaking to them about their Change Project they report how ‘it is hopeless’. People have given up that anything will change and are no longer interested in engaging. The wetland is much worse than it was. In their pre-course assignment they report on how the wetland is filled with animal skulls, dead animals, sewerage and waste that is thrown away, in the informal community, is washed into the wetland. Spiritual practitioners used to practice here but they don’t do so anymore. People that live next to the wetland and have small gardens complain that when they use the water from the wetland their crops die. As it is an informal settlement houses are often flooded in the Summer months when the rain comes and gardens are flooded and die.

Community members report that when the rains come the water smells. The communities often don’t have any tap water and so they are forced to use water from the wetland. Action Voices thinks that the water is contaminated by the abandoned mine in the area which affects the communities living near it. Below are the photographs that the participants took tracing the wetland stream through the area. The picture is of a canal which catches storm water and, the participants believe, sewerage that flows directly into the wetlands.

Challenges: The comments they got back on their assignment suggested that they needed to focus their Change Project. It was clear that they were still a little vague as to what they actually wanted to do. Jane suggested that they need to map out the wetland on a big piece of paper and add to the map all the things that they think are damaging the wetland and the people around the wetland. She also suggested that they list all the things that they think they could do to help the wetland and then consider which ones are possible and which ones they need to check or research further. The group were also encouraged to be more specific, for example, when they say that people no longer care they need to explore why people no longer care. Action Voices challenge is going to be to tell a clear and knowledgable story about this wetland and to be able to identify exactly what is affecting the wetland and how this is possibly dangerous for people living near the wetland. They need to develop a systemic picture of the wetland.
Possible assistance from AWARD: Action Voices have very little knowledge about wetlands and what makes a wetland a healthy wetland as opposed to an unhealthy wetland. They know the wetland is unhealthy from the smell and the reports from community members but they don’t know what action to take or what is the most urgent action to take. One of the actions they thought they should do is remove the grasses from the wetland. When questioned on whether they knew whether the grasses should be there or not. They answered that they did not know. They also want to know what kind of pollution would be draining into the wetland from the abandoned mine dump and what affect this would have on human beings and animals. Their next assignment is building knowledge networks. This is an opportunity for AWARD to engage with Action Voices and share their expertise about wetlands with them to help them build a more detailed, systemic and evidence-based picture of what the issues are.

Organisation: CULISA

Change Project: Investigating corporate compliance of the Calcide Waste Dump by Elvis Komane and Nthabiseng Mahlangu

Description: CULISA start their pre-course assignment with the following description:

“Life in Coal city is just amazing and challenging, the day to day of life chasing coal for the production of energy with coal fueled power stations operated by Eskom, increase air pollution by refineries of steel, vanadium, iron ore, chromite, siliceous/silicone smelters, raw sewer and random domestic waste from the community. This practice is pre-ECA and has left a negative impact in our communities, land quality and sustainability. Such as sink holes, health impacts, rehabilitated land, polluted air, polluted water, underground water and polluted water tables. We believe all this pollution happening in the upper catchment of the Olifants River affects the whole catchment until the lower catchment. With the work we are doing with AWARD this is our focus area.”

Their pre-course assignment is a mixture of facts about how mining waste pollutes water and how this is dangerous to humans and to the environment. They also list a series of questions which they have decided to ask community members to find out how much they know about the effects of mining. The questions are well thought through although rather broad. Finally right at the end of their assignment they describe the focus of their Change Project: the Evraz Calcite Mining Dump which they believe has “negative health impacts” on the rivers and streams as well as on people living close to the dump. They have identified that the dump contains vanadium and that this is toxic to people. CULISA has already written a letter to the mine about their concerns. The letter describes how the smelter plant was owned by the Russians and has been in operation since 1957 but was then bought by the Chinese and it is the second steel producer in South Africa. In the letter
CULISA argue that Vanadium is in the street dust that blows over communities located close to the dump. They ask for the dump to be removed. Evraz management replied to their letter saying that Evraz Highveld commenced business rescue on the 13 April 2015 and would like to meet with CULISA to discuss the matter with CULISA.

Challenges: CULISA assignment is very rich but the information is unfocused and it is unclear what they are trying to do. Although not reported in their pre-course assignment the meeting with Evraz Highveld resulted in the company committing to an awareness raising campaign in the community about the effects of vanadium. This is why CULISA list a lot of questions that they want to ask communities. They see this as preparation for the awareness campaign. Jane encouraged their focus on one mining waste and suggested they use this as an experimental ground to see how a CSO organisation can engage with a big corporation and what the possibilities and challenges are. Jane writes, “I would also carefully document all your interactions with the mine and with the communities affected by the mines and this means a lot of writing. So when we meet on Wednesday we need to chat about how to make your writing a little clearer. Don’t be afraid to write your story with as much passion as you tell it.” CULISA also struggled to clearly articulate their challenges in writing. From their talk, during Module 1, it is clear that they have a very detailed understanding of the many issues that contribute to the environmental disaster that is the Evraz Highveld mining dump so it is a matter of learning to be able to also write about it in a way that states the evidence and builds the argument. This includes learning how to use pictures to demonstrate what they are talking about. The team had also not shown any engagement with other stakeholders which they said they would do during Assignment one.

Possible assistance from AWARD: CULISA collect samples of the dust on the roads around the community and soil from the mining dump. What they want is evidence of the toxicity of the dump and also exactly how it affects people and water systems. Jane suggested to CULISA that even if they don’t get someone to test their samples they can still draw on other research about the effects of vanadium and suggested that they get hold of AWARD to find out about the research that AWARD has done on how toxic elements found in the Olifants affects the well-being of human’s. They could also look for studies on air pollution studies on vanadium and try and link this to health issues.

Middle Catchment

Organisation: Khulumani

Change project: Gardening project at Jack Morare Primary school to alleviate rural poverty

Description:
Khulumani have negotiated a piece of land from the Principal of Jack Morare Primary school. They want to start a gardening project at the school which they hope work towards addressing food security for the children attending the school as well as the whole community. To get to the school one needs to drive down a dirt road which, when it rains is often difficult to drive to get to school. Clean water is also a challenge for the whole village. The school has been given JoJo tanks to try and ensure water for the children. Khulumani report that most of the children come from homes where they have lost one or both parents. Unemployment in the villages is high and most people depend on social grants. Khulumani is hoping the school garden may provide fresh vegetables for the learners as well as their families and that the community may get involved. The problem is the land is infertile and needs to be cared for before anything can be planted. Teachers did try to grow beans to feed the soil but animals came in and ate the beans because the area is not properly fenced. Khulumani is hoping to be able to fence the area, tend to the soil and get support from a community member to care for the garden over weekends. There is an eco-school committee at the school which Khulumani is hoping to work through to mobilise support from the learners for the home food garden.

**Challenges:**
Khulumani need to ask themselves ‘why a food garden in a school’ and ‘how is this going to be sustainable after their involvement with the school ends?’ Environmental projects at schools always start with a home food garden and yet many do not succeed. There is also criticism that learners are just used as cheap labour to grow the food and there is no real learning that takes place. As there is an eco-school committee the school has obviously tried school gardening before but have not succeeded. Why do Khulumani think it will succeed this time and how to they think the garden will help the whole community. These are very high expectations. Jane suggested that Khulumani are testing an idea and so they need to put their energy into documenting their idea and reflect on whether they have achieved what they set out to achieve. If it did not why not? If it did why?

**Possible assistance from AWARD:**
There are other projects within AWARD that are working with schools and with gardens. It would be useful to link the Khulumani group to these projects so they could question them on what works and what are the pitfalls when starting a project like this.

**Organisation:** Come-Act
Communities in Mining and Environmental Activism (COME ACT) is an organisation made up of various community based organisations, its purpose is to provide support and mobilise communities behind a common challenge and it is operational in the Bushveld complex, Twickenham, Surbiton and Hackney farms in the Fetakgomo Greater Tubatse Local Municipality Sekhukhune Region which form part of the middle Olifants catchment.

**Change project:** Piloting a case of monitoring a mine by a host community by Elton Thobejane & Provia Sekome

**Description:** Come-Act argue that they are ‘host communities’ to mines and it has become common place that mines are no longer held accountable to their social and labour plans or their water licence obligations. They argue that the Department of Mineral resources does not have the competancy to monitor non compliance and it is falling to communities to do so. Come-Act are attempting to monitor the Twickenham mine by getting hold of their social and labour plans, the water license and the environmental plans. They want to study these plans and then carefully monitor whether the mine is fulfilling their obligations. From living in the community they already know that the mine is non-compliant. The access roads are in a bad state, blasting is damaging community houses and the water sources are contaminated. People also have to share water sources with animals as there is no clean potable water. People, who can afford it are having to buy water and those that cannot afford to buy water have to travel far distances into the mountains to get uncontaminated water. The community has already protested that the social and labour plans were drawn up without community consultation and there have been no job opportunities from the mine. Those who were originally employed, as stated in the social and labour plans were later retrenched and replaced with machines. Come-act reflect on what the area looked like before the mines came and how it has been damaged now. They have also witnessed how, in 2000 pipes were put down for raw water supply to the mines. The blasting from laying these pipes damaged the homes of five families. The families fought the mines for 15 years for compensation. During that time they were isolated from the rest of the community who believed the mine would bring work to the area. Come -Act describe it as ‘they went through hell’. They were deprived from accessing water and had to travel great distances to get water. Now the whole community is without water and has to add bleach to their water before drinking it. In 2016 1000 workers were retrenched which has led to many families being in serious debt and not being able to cover their basic needs.

**Challenges:** Come-Act’s assignment was very clear and well thought through. Jane suggested that it would be important to document the challenges that they face as they try and monitor the mine through the different documents that they have chosen. She said this would be very useful for other communities who want to do the same. Although they took great photographs they didn’t use them effectively.
Possible assistance from AWARD: AWARD has done a lot of research into the effects of mining on water and into water licences. It would be useful for Come-Act to connect with the people that have done this research and to possibly work with them to identify the key aspects of the licenses they want to monitor and how they could do this.

Organisation: Itumeleng Youth Project

Change project: Investigating waste and the damage it causes

Description:
The Itumeleng Youth project works in the Ga-Mampuru village. It is made up of passionate youth who want to make a difference in their communities. The project has no offices and meets wherever it can. The Ga-Mampuru villages is facing a problem of illegal waste dumping at many levels. First off, the village gets no basic services and so bars and schools dump their waste in the streets and next to the river. There is also a massive problem with baby nappies being thrown in the river and polluting the water. They also have a mines in the area which and an iron smelter which they believe is illegally dumping their waste into the river. In 2008 13 people died and hundreds were hospitalised. No clear explanation was given to the community as to how this could happen. The community suspects that the water was polluted and became especially toxic leading to the deaths of people and livestock.

Challenges:
The list of challenges that the Itumaleng Youth Group identify are huge and they could focus on any one of the sources of illegal dumping and that could be their Change Project. They could do this or they could do an investigation of all the sources of waste and create a systemic picture of the problem they are facing. This would be a considerable amount of work. Jane suggested to the IYP that whatever they decide it would be important to document the history of the illegal waste dumping as well as they can, based on the oral histories of the community. This would be important particularly in relation to the deaths that the community experienced and experiences changed with the iron smelter and mining began in the area.

Possible assistance from AWARD: AWARD’s investigation into the effects of mining on water quality would be important for the IYP to get access to as this might help them make sense of the effects that this level of pollution could have on people and animals. AWARD has also been involved in following the pollution caused by nappies and it would be important to link the IYP to others who are also trying to deal with this issue.

Organisation: Sekhukhune Environmental Justice Network (SEJN)

Change project: The causes of deteriorating water quality in the Motse River

Description:
SEJN is a six month old community organisation that works in Makagala District near Burgersfort. All the members of SEJN have been community monitors for five years.

The Change Project that SEJN is investigating aims to document the deterioration of water quality in the water sources that their community uses. The community does have boreholes but these have dried up and when they do have water in them, the community suspects it is polluted. SEJN reports that there are more than 10 mines operating in and around their area and they suspect that these mines are responsible for bad quality water. The mines also have tailing dams which sometimes overflow into the water system. SEJN describe how man-made streams have formed since the mines started discharging water from underground. These streams flow through the community and livestock drink from them. SEJN has begun to engage with livestock farmers as they are experiencing an increasing loss of livestock due to the polluted water. They also report that the dumping of nappies is also a problem and adds to the problem of deteriorating water quality.

**Challenges:**
As with the other Change projects around illegal dumping of waste and mining, the problems that SEJN face are difficult to address. Jane suggested that SEJN is already forming an alliance with livestock owners and this may be an important place to focus their work for the Change Project. Jane also suggested that they need to be clearer about the sources of pollution and try and link this to why the livestock are dying. What mines are in the area? What do they mine and can they find any reports on the dangers of the waste products of this mine on water quality?

**How AWARD could assist:**
As with the other Change Projects, AWARD has done extensive research into the effects that mining has on the water quality in the Olifants catchment. This research could help SEJN link their lived experience of contaminated water with more scientific explanations of why livestock are dying and whether or not the ground water could be polluted.

**Lower Catchment**

**Organisation:** Young Water Professionals

**Change Project:** The effects of upstream practices on downstream users by Ivo Arrey & Fhumulani Mathivha

**Description:**
The South African Young Water Professionals is a non-profit organisation registered under WISA, to encourage young professionals to get involved in the water sector.

The Young Water Professionals want to understand what are the key sources of water quality pollution related to water, land and energy usage upstream that effect the quality of water in the lower catchment. They also want to understand why this is the case, for example, is it poorly enforced policy and regulation that is making the situation worse. In their pre-course assignment they give two examples of upstream practices that are effecting the water downstream. One is the Bosveld mining complex in Phalaborwa which was responsible for a massive spill into the system, another is the poor farming practices in the Lydenburg (Mashishing) area which has led to increased nutrient loads and sediment in the Olifants system.

**Challenges:**
The challenges for the YWP’s are different to those of other participants. The YWP have easy access to research studies and expertise. They are also well educated scientists who can make clear statements about the systemic effects of different practices on the water quality of the river. Their challenge is to make this ‘story’ relevant, meaningful and useable within social movements. Jane suggested that they choose a user in the lower catchment and develop a narrative about this user and how their practice is being affected by upstream practices. What they need to experiment with is telling this story both from the perspective of the scientific knowledge systems that they feel comfortable in as well as to document the lived experience of the people who experiencing the effects of deteriorating water quality on their daily lives. The YWP briefly mentioned the effects up stream practice on the fisherman in the lower catchment. Jane suggested this could possibly be the group they want to start working with. She suggested that they try and link the effects of upstream practice on the fisherman to what is the other Change Practice participants are struggling with in their area. This will help them to weave a story that encompasses all the Change Projects and can be used by the other participants as evidence in their work. Given that the YWP have the ability to test water and to interpret scientific data this puts them in a unique position to help all the Changing Practice participants to gain access to this evidence through their own Change Project.

**How AWARD could assist:**
As one of the YWP’s is an intern at AWARD she could share any research that AWARD has done with the participants on the course that would be of use. She can also share her own experiences of working with communities and developing stories of lived experience collaboratively with communities. This will help the YWP deepen these skills.

**Outside the catchment (EMG funded participants who support the Mpumalanga Water Caucus)**

**Organisation:** Mpumalanga Water Caucus

**Change Project:** Piloting home food gardens as a a step towards self-reliance and confidence by Thelma Nkosi & Bernerd

**Description:**
As members of the Mpumalanga Water Caucus Thelma and Bernerd see their role as supporting the local communities with home food gardens, small scale farming and encouraging community members to attend catchment management forums.
This Change Project is situated in four villages in the Nkomasi municipality although all the villages are under the rule of traditional authorities. It is in the Incomati catchment which flows into Mozambique. The communities in the area are poverty stricken and yet there is an opportunity to farm and the soil quality is good. Some of the tribal land was given up to coal mining. In the past this land was used for livestock grazing and traditional healers collected herbs in the area. Now this is not possible. As time has gone by the community has become disillusioned by the mine as it has not brought any change to their community and limits their access to land that they could use for their own subsistence. The mine does not secure the area around the mine and this often leads to accidents with people being injured and livestock dying. Thelma and Bernerd also report that the water quality in the area has deteriorated since the mines arrived which exacerbates the problem. Traditional healers will no longer use the water in the river for rituals. They say the ‘the mines have created an unnatural space in the river.’ Another problem is sand mining. Communities are allowed to remove sand from the river to build their own structures but in recent years some community members have turned this into a business and cart away many truck loads of sand from the river which is destroying the river banks. Communities members are scared to keep challenging the sand miners as those that do receive death threats.

**Challenges:**
The challenge for the MWC is to better articulate what they are trying to do and how all the challenges they face can inhibit this. Jane suggested that the MWC is testing a theory that if people have home food gardens they will become more self-reliant and no longer need mining to uplift the community but there are many challenges. The MWC need to document the challenges as well as the successes as it will help other organisations understand what it takes to encourage self-reliance in this context. They also need to link the challenges they face more directly to their Change Project. They should reflect on whether their theory is true that home food gardens can help in this situation or are there other things that need to be done as well. She also encouraged the MWC to examine the way in which they are talking about different gender roles when it comes to the reasons why people could farm and the division of labour.

**How AWARD could assist:**
As mentioned above AWARD is working on supporting farming and gardens in other areas. It will be useful for the MWC to link up with this work and see what they can learn from AWARD and whether the challenges that they face are similar to the challenges in other areas. AWARD is also funding the ‘Amanzi for Food’ programme run by Rhodes University which both the MWC Change Project and the Khulumani Change Project could link up with.

**Sharing and Reporting over Whatsapp in June**
The Changing Practice participants report on two Whatsapp groups
1. the Olifants catchment CSO group
2. the Changing practice group.

Below is a summary of some of the activities reported on in June.

**Action Voices**  
1st June 2017

Lorraine Kakaza was part of a call to stop the funding of the Biokarabelo coal mine by Australia’s export credit agency. This was part of a campaign by ActionAid Australia  
[http://youtu.be/qD6fGrR00n0](http://youtu.be/qD6fGrR00n0)
SEJN
3rd June 2017

Posted a report from Action Aid South Africa that the Australian export credit agency as backed away from funding the Boikarebelo coal mine in south Africa.

SEJN
4th June 2017

"On the 18th May 2017 I visited Morapaneng village, the community stay between two shafts is about less than 1km away from one another. It is between Hackney shaft and Twickenham shaft. Mr Thobejane Morwamakoti is the old man who is also the owner of cattle. He is 90-something when I met him he started to talk some of the sad stories. He also said it's not like they don’t want ninety take the minerals and they do’t fight the mines but the problem is that the mines don’t respect or take them as people and when I ask him what is it that the mine is doing he said “We used to live here with your grandparents herding our livestock with no problem and we were making a lot of money taking care of our family” and he also said since the mines comes what he sees is only the lot of everything that belongs to the community. Mr Thobejane lost 7 cattle among them 2 were calves and in 2016 his cows miscarried a lot. And he believes that the problem is the water they drink from Motse that is being contaminated by the water from the mine stream. They don’t have a choice as Motse is the only river they have. Fortunatley their goats don’t go to the river. That’s why they survive because Motse is far. They buy water for the goats and they always come home to drink. But for their cattle they don’t have a choice because it is next to the grazing land. They no longer wash themselves at the river when they are at the field because they develop rash and the body starts to itch. And Mr Thobejane says if the mine can buy them land at Lolo’s where most of the cattle owners use to take their cows because there is fresh water and enough grazing. They can be happy and they will make sure that they look after their cattle there. Mr Segopotse also lost his cattle in 2014. One day he was at the field and he realised that one of is cattle is missing so he went to the stream with his brother. Luckily they found the cattle by the stream but the cattle were stuck in the mud. They tried to pull the cattle out but they couldn’t. Mr Segopotse and his brother went to the mine security to ask help and fortunately they came with mine Van and managed to pull it out of the mud. The cattle was weak so they left the cattle there and he was always going to the stream to see if it’s getting better but the cattle was becoming weaker everyday. On the fourth day they decided to go with an axe to kill the cow. After killing it they foud 2 calves inside the brown one and the black one. The situation made him angry because he was just come back from Gauteng and with his pension money thinking that his father’s livestock will keep bread on the table for him and his brother and thinking about the 2 calves that was found it make the situation worse for him. Mr Segopotse and his brother they always take their cattle to the Lolo Mountains because the are not that old they manage to climb the mountain easily. They use to do this
every winter and they come back when the grazing is there during August and September. But since the mines started to operate the cattle are weak to climb up the mountain and they just watch them die.

Action Voices  
5th June 2017  
Today I was going to town when I was about to approach Standard Bank I heard a bad smell it was a terrible smell. I was wondering what could it be. Guess what, it was a sewer. I couldn’t believe what I saw with my eyes. I went straight to the municipality and reported it. They told me that they are going to attend it tomorrow. I’m not happy at all because next to it there are shops that sell food and potato chips. This is happening at the main road called Vortrekker and Stern street. Customers are no longer buying. They ran away and again there are no signs of danger and I’m 100% sure that when children are passing there they will be in danger. I have reported many unattended sewer but none of them are being fixed. Two weeks ago there was someone who lost their life in a sewer.

Action Voices  
6th June 2017  
Communities living next to the mines

Communities living next to the mines suffer for the rest of their lives. It’s was so painful to hear people complaining about the mines that operate next to them. Yesterday I visited a small community of Masithande which is surrounded by three mines which is Phembani coal mine, East Side and Pit which has left already and has been by POM’s.

All these mines are open cast. They just operate without the community concerns. Instead they create more problems like teenage pregnancy, drugs and unemployment. They don’t hire local people and this affects the youth. So this creates division. Mrs Vilakazi says “we had a challenge of water. We don’t have water but when you pass the mine you will see at the washing plant they do have water. The municipality took a long to come with water. They came once or twice a week. When we are sick we had to go to town if the clinic doesn’t have medication we must go to hospital and you have to queue till late. I’m old but I’m tired of the dust that came from the mine because I’m coughing and the mine is not
willing to pay for us when we ask questions they will be telling us to go to the municipality to report. What is it that we must report because they treat us so badly. We don’t have flush toilets. We had to dig a hole to have a toilet. Again it’s too risky for my grandchild and it’s a walking distance. When it’s full we had to dig another one. As I’m getting a pension grant the money is not enough. It was going to be better if I had a garden.

“We breathe black air from the coal dust everyday. We don’t have water and sanitation but mines got everything on their side. It took me years to build my house I used to stay at the mud house until I get fed up of rain because we would sleep when it’s raining. We don’t have roads. Nothing that shows that our government cares at all.

I was with my crew doing a survey trying to find out the transformation of extractive industries for sustainable economic and social development and the real change. To be honest the company is undermining. Destroys the efforts of the community to build itself and its economy than supporting them. Communities around Mpumalanga they hate mining. It doesn’t bring any change but it brings hunger, poverty and conflict to people’s lives. Masithandane is found at Carolina under Chief Albert Luthuli municipality.

**Action Voices**  
**8th June 2017**

I’ve spent the rest of my day at the field doing a survey at the community of Kazuka. The survey is about transformation of extractive industries for sustainable economic and social development and real change. Kazuku community they are always happy to see me because they share their stories with me. They explained to me about their living conditions. They first thing that I have heard from each household is blasting and cracks. It’s so disturbing. They don’t tell them when they are about to blast. There’s no siren. Nothing. POM’s is doing blasting without their concern and without confirming. This hurt their dignity, culture and human rights. They have lost hope in a way that they felt as if they can stop the mines. They are not allowed to collect wood. The mine has danced the area if they caught you collectingn woods to make fire they arrest you. They normally do blasting around 11am and 3pm. Those who have phones do receive SMS from the mines that they will be blasting. Our children’s even fear to play outside either inside the house when they are outside they faint. When they are inside they thought the house will fall and they have noticed a bad smell after blasting. When I ask, what is the smell they respond it smells like a chemical and after that they will have headache. When it’s raining they don’t sleep. The houses that have been built by the mines are full of cracks, the ceiling is falling down, some of their houses are built in the wetland. Their children are studying far at the location using the government bus but they live at home most of the time with an empty stomach because their parents and grannies are not working. It used to be better when they got money from the South African social service agency for children and pensioners. If they run out of money the children depend at the food scheme at school. During the weekend they are home so they will make a plan. They are only having one alternative to borrow money from
SASSA. The only hope they have now is if they can tell their story through the documentary that will teach others about the negative impacts of mining when it comes to land, water, air quality, livestock and the lifestyle changes from better to worse even to high rate of mortality. They message that they left this to their children. They can’t finish at school. They run away with mine workers and fall pregnant and we, as parents, have to face the consequences. Children around Carolina are on drugs. There’s crime in South Africa, let’s unite and tell the world that mining kills our environment, and the earth is at risk. Let’s unite.

Action Voices
9th June 2017
On the 8th June I was at Groovilei farm doing the survey. The more I get to a household I felt like I crying. It’s really difficult to see people living in bad situation at the same time they are surrounded by mines. When I ask about the mines that are they honest people were telling the story of mining industries and their behavior. Mam Nkambule related her story to the mine that operated there from 1990 -1991 but the mine didn’t stay for long it was operating without the water use licence and there was no health and safety representatives that leads to 2 mine workers who died and that resulted to the mine to be closed, but they can’t remember the name of the mine now.

MamNkambule explained that she grew up at the farm her parents used to work for the farmer named Hans he then passed away after he passed away all the farm workers took over.

As time pass the manucipality came and build them toilets, electricity and water for few house and as the community they donated money to connect water pipe so that they can’t work a long distance but the water is not drinkable is only for household's chores and irrigation, and the electricity is not for free they had to buy at the Chief Albert Luthuli manucipality under Gert Sibande District.

But there’s something that it’s so disturbing the manucipality doesn’t want to build them the RDP houses cause they said to the community they took their money of Rdp’s and bought the land for them.

On the other side they said if they can’t handle this place it will be sold again and yesterday some manucipality official came and told them to wait for their new houses.

The mine didn’t hire people who are staying at this farm.

When the mine left they didn’t rehabilitate the area or even close the sinkholes, it was an open cast mine two boys died at the spot they were digging coal their families we were never compensated there was no open case this took place in 2010 by July. The mine won’t give them the two bodies that died...

They have even lost their livestock.

They can’t grow their own food if they have to hire a truck R800.00 per Hector , R250.00 diesel and pay R1450.00 for two hectares and R2000.00 for crops,fertilizer.

Still they don’t expect good results at the end when its time to harvest.

The majority at this farm are not working either at the mine or any way, and these affect the young generation there are no schools or creach and the mines don’t support them through everything they survive from a child grants.
12th June 2017
“At Tinjakel, CULISA food gardens - turning a dump into a garden. It’s a continuous project that we are busy with. You come at your own time between 8am - 4pm. Our plan is to develop such gardens in all our nearest communities.”

“From waste dump to food garden”

19th June 2017
CULISA have developed a hashtag - #corporatecompliance. On the 19th of June they reported on what they had been doing on their Change Projects so far.

“As CULISA we continue with our change project this are some of the feedback we would like to report. We met EVARZ on the 30th May 2017. We submitted the 2014 memorandum and responses accompanied by the draft awareness pamphlet. We further engaged with the Young Water Professionals and the medical research council with the Environmental Working group based in New York to assist us with taking the work forward and we were assisted by Stella of AWARD with a list of contacts. We have already collected water samples and will be sending them to the YWP as soon as they have responded to our request.

Itumeleng Youth Project

20th June 2017
“We are doing our change practice observation. Around we saw an old woman holding a bucket to fetch some water. And she is old and sick but she is forced to go and fetch water as there is no one to fetch water for her. The state of the water was dirty but because she can’t to the river she is forced to drink that dirty water. At least we managed to help her with 60 liters. We put everything on hold for about 30 minutes and give her our time. It was heartbreaking. It is too difficult outside guys.”
SEJN
20th June 2017
“I received a call from the Department of Water and Sanitation yesterday and I was referred to contact the Mpumalanga DWS because of the catchment they say they won’t assist me so I need to start again and write a letter of complaint to Mpumalanga Province. Our government is failing us. Stella I will forward the email to you to see their response.”

CULISA
21st June 2017
“CULISA Change in Practice #corporatecompliance. We have managed to collect 4 water samples on 18 June 2017 (Sunday) and we have sent them to UNIVEN to the attention of the YWP TODAY. The samples will assist us in determining the extent of pollution by the Calcite Stock pile and the Rehabilitation of coal mines. On Saturday we will conduct Zero Waste Community cleaning Campaign at Santa Village from 9am in Emalahleni”

MWC/Action Voices
23rd June 2017

Meeting about the Amendment of the mining charter bill in Steve Tshewete Municipality.

MWC: “Moral at Middleburg mining charger amendments.

Action Voices - “Today at the Mpumalanga prinvice they are having the Amendment of the mining charter bill at the municipality district which is Steve Tshwete at Middleburg. The event was supposed to start at 9am but it hasn’t started yet. The Ministare hasn’t sat down ever since. Now its 10:36 the communities of Mpumalanga are refusing to allow the Minister to breath. They suspect that he’s been sent by the Gupta’s nad not consulted with provincial leadership. Will update you.
“They have started now and the minister has seated as well.

MWC: “Themba Sgudla on podium told the meeting is to stop. Minister now agreed to engage with leadership.”
“Meeting stopped.”
“Themba Sigudla from practical radical economic transformation (PRET) addressed that the meeting be stopped due they didn’t consult with Mpumalanga premier and they are invited by the municipal manager not the Mpumalanga leadership. Meeting stopped and Minister agreed to go back and consult by protocol

Action Voices
23rd June 2017
“Violence at Witbank, the community and long distance taxi drivers has waged war against the Nigerians after the Nigerian guy promised 3 young ladies jobs and they were raped by the Nigerians. All shops of the Nigerians were vandalised and others were assaulted by the community and taxi drivers. There’s now an exchange of gunds in downtown. Please don’t go out at night in the streets at Nedbank centre, Khadima streets next to Jellicoe and next to Cosmos Park. Please tune in to Emalahleni FM 98.7 for news.”

CULISA
24th June 2017
“#Zerowaste community cleaning campaign held today at Santa village by CULISA. We are continuing with our Change Project taking a step in cleaning our community.

SEJN
26th June 2017
“Good morning comrades I received a call this morning from Limpopo Department of Water and Sanitation. We made an appointment with them they will do water test next week Wednesday 05/07/2017 and they will invite Department of Environmental Affairs. My SEJN and other organisations around our area are welcome to come and witness the process. We will also have my team of livestock owners. Patience pays at last. This response is for a letter I sent to the Dept last year in April.
Developing budgets for Assignment 1

Another activity at the beginning of June processing all the organisational budget’s for doing their Assignment one. During Module 1 we had a session on how to plan and submit a budget. Each organisation submitted a budget which was then commented on, with any discrepancies noted before the money was allocated to each group. During Module 2 we will explore how to reconcile a budget and each organisation will resubmit a budget for Assignment 2.

Conclusion

Reading through the pre-course assignments and comment on them again brings home the difficult situations that the Change Practice participants are dealing with. One of the core mechanisms of the course is that the Change Projects will help the participants form collaborations and knowledge networks with other institutions. The first place to start this is obviously AWARD and, as facilitators, we look forward to seeing how this progresses and how the Changing Practice participants and AWARD staff find ways of working together.