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# SUMMARY ANNUAL REPORT

2000

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## ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING GROUP

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## **1 Background**

The Environmental Monitoring Group was established in Cape Town in 1991 as an independent environmental non-governmental agency. We aim to encourage the development of environmental policies and practices that address environmental injustice and promote sustainable development, and to strengthen the participation of civil society organisations and community groups in decision-making processes that affect them.

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Our mission is to  
empower people to take charge of their own environment,  
so that the right to a healthy environment can be enjoyed by all, now and  
in the future.

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In pursuing our mission, we see our role as building bridges between decision-makers and community groups most affected by such decisions. As an independent NGO, we are able to retain credibility with both decision-makers and civil society organisations. The building and strengthening of bridges in different situations require different strategies. These include brokering, research, capacity-building, networking, information dissemination, advocacy and lobbying.

In all our interventions, we strive to develop capacity with both civil society groups and complementary agents in government and business, so that a continuing dynamic of adaptation to change can be sustained without our ongoing involvement. We also strive actively and regularly to reflect on our own actions, on the problem dynamics, and on what we are learning, as we help find solutions.

## **2 Staff**

The following were staff members of EMG in 2000

Michelle Pressend, Stephen Law (Director), Jessica Wilson, Noel Oettle, Matthews Hlabane, Nariman Laatoe, Mymoena van der Fort, Liane Greeff, Nontembo Bam, Makume Tlaleane and Quentin Fredricks.

## **3 Trade and environmental governance programme**

Our work in highlighting the impacts of the global trade regime on environmental governance in South Africa continued throughout the year with a focus on both our NGO allies in the SADC region (through meetings, workshops, and publications) and on Government (through input into the process to develop a National Strategy for Sustainable Development). To supplement this work, an “action research” case study was launched to evaluate threats and opportunities of global trade for marginalized small-scale Rooibos Tea producers in the northern Cedarberg area.

### **3.1 Aims**

Through this programme, EMG aims to increase the capacity of civil society organisations, including ourselves, to engage with government around Constitutional environmental rights affected by policies, procedures and plans relating to international trade agreements. A particular focus is on exploring the impacts of trade

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liberalisation on groups of vulnerable and disadvantaged people in the agricultural sector.

### **3.2 Some highlights**

- A joint workshop on *Globalisation and the WTO* was organised with the Alternative Information and Development Centre (AIDC). This was attended by representatives from civil society organisations and networks, government departments, Parliament, trade unions and featured high-profile speakers from Zimbabwe, the Caribbean and South Africa. The workshop drew together activists from round the country and identified the need to establish “trade focus groups”.
- With the SA office of IUCN, we organised a roundtable discussion on the new National Environmental Management Act (NEMA).
- EMG provided a resource person at a regional IUCN training workshop on environmental policy held in Harare
- EMG was asked to make presentations at a Department of Environmental Affairs & Tourism (DEA&T) multi-stakeholder workshop on the National Strategy for Sustainable Development.
- Two briefing documents on environment and trade-related issues, namely “sustainable consumption” and “regional integration” were published.

A significant component of the Project was an “action research” programme which focused on marginalised small-scale Rooibos Tea producers in the northern Cedarberg area, a semi-arid area some 400km north of Cape Town. The research aims to explore the status quo of small-scale producers in the industry, their share of the market and opportunities and constraints for them to increase their share in the market, their responses to global trends and the potential impacts on their livelihoods and the environment. The information gathered through desktop research and interviews with the small-scale producers, commercial producers, rooibos tea companies and other role players provides a basis for a research report, academic paper, policy brief, workshops and popular articles that will be compiled and made available in 2001.

Some basic investigation was done to assess the feasibility of a similar research programme on the potential implications of global trade and the South African fishing industry. Of particular interest is how this impacts on artisanal/traditional fishing and livelihoods in coastal communities.

### **3.3 The future**

This project has contributed hugely to EMG’s own capacity and expertise in understanding the complex field of global trade and its impact on the environment and on environmental justice issues. The near future will see continued focus on demystifying these extremely complex issues, and no doubt the 2002 World Summit will be a key catalyst to helping to politicise and popularise these issues.

### **3.4 The team**

The people working on this programme were Jessica Wilson (Project Manager) and Adèle Arendse (Deputy) with input from Stephen Law (EMG Director).

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### 3.5 Funding

The bulk of the work under this programme was made possible by a grant from the International Development and Research Centre, Ottawa, Canada.

## 4 Programme on Water Justice in southern Africa

At the basis of this programme is EMG's involvement in the *World Commission on Dams* (WCD) process. With the Cape Town-based WCD Secretariat literally on our doorstep, EMG was in an ideal position to channel information and analysis between this critical process and organisations around the world. Our increasing level of skill, expertise, and 'insider knowledge' made EMG key to the strategic discussions and planning sessions of the global civil society coalitions involved. While the WCD process was global, and we engaged with organisations around the world, our special interest was in the southern African region.

### 4.1 Aims

The World Commission on Dams (WCD) as a multi-stakeholder process, attempted to institutionalise participation through drawing Commissioners from a wide range of sectors, as well as setting up the WCD Forum, a wider reference group.

- EMG's aim was to service global and southern African civil society sectors by
- Facilitating the dissemination of information about the WCD and its processes to and from NGOs and affected communities,
- Facilitating submissions to the WCD process from NGO and community groups in the SADC region
- Monitoring and assessing the work and activities of the WCD

### 4.2 Some highlights

Information flow to the global civil society community was channelled largely through the International Committee on Dams, Rivers and People (ICDRP). Through the course of the project, EMG became a key member of this Committee and co-ordinated a number of their meetings times to coincide with the formal WCD hearings. Other ICDRP members included the International Rivers Network, Swedish Society for Nature Conservation, the Berne Declaration, MAB, NBA, and FIVAS. With such close proximity the Cape Town-based WCD Secretariat, EMG was able to provide valuable information and analysis on the work of the WCD to a range of organisations around the world. EMG was also in an ideal position to ensure that NGO input into the WCD process was delivered in the most effective way. With an increasing level of skill, expertise, and 'insider knowledge' EMG became key to the strategic discussions and planning sessions of the ICDRP.

While the project had a strong global process, our own special interest remained our own region. EMG helped to facilitate nine of the 32 presentations at WCD's Cairo Meeting, and completed the *Interim Report on the Southern African Hearings for Communities Affected by Large Dams* in time for distribution to Commissioners and delegates at the WCD Meeting in Cairo. Subsequent to the official launch of the WCD's final report, EMG together with the Environment Development Agency, hosted a preparatory workshop to discuss the implications of the WCD for Southern Africa, and to prepare a press statement endorsing the global call to governments and financial institutions. EMG assisted representatives from the dam affected

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communities of the Gariep, Van der Kloof, Inanda, Maguga and Lesotho Highlands Dams to attend both the preparatory meeting and the WCD launch. A number of other awareness and mobilisation events around water issues were organised throughout the year. EMG made much use of newspapers and periodicals to highlight the role of dams in development and the importance of the WCD Process in fully assessing this.

The WCD's period for accepting submissions on the subject of large dams ended in April 2000. EMG was involved in commissioning and submitting positions on international financing; participation, negotiation & conflict management; regulation & compliance; electricity supply and demand side management; and global climate change.

EMG was tasked with organising and raising funds for a meeting of southern African NGOs to formalise a network. The meeting led to the birth of the Network for Advocacy on Water Issues in Southern Africa – NAWISA. EMG was nominated to be the host organization for 2001/2. Project manager Liane Greeff was elected as chair of the NAWISA Steering Committee.

The publication of the WCD's final report entitled *Dams and Development: A New Framework for Decision-making* was in itself a major achievement. This report will undoubtedly make a major difference to the way in which dams are planned, communities are affected and environments are protected for decades to come. When the ICDRP reflected on their "Absolute Bottom Lines" and "Very Important Points" – they found that all were included in the Final report. Although some debate on the extent to which they have been included and the specific wording should take place, the final report of the WCD is a major achievement of the ICDRP.

### **4.3 The future**

The WCD itself has no mechanism to regulate or enforce future dam building projects. For adherence to its recommendations it relies solely on the intrinsic "moral" commitment that stakeholders made by joining and remaining with the process. However, many governments, dam builders and financiers will be tempted to ignore the findings, or apply them selectively. A key future task of EMG will be to popularise and disseminate the findings in southern Africa so as to prevent this.

Already, the capacity of civil society to engage in southern African water issues has been significantly enhanced as a result of EMG's involvement in the WCD process. There is a much stronger network of NGOs, media, scientists and community based organizations involved in water issues in South Africa, Southern Africa, and even further to other partners in West and Central Africa. EMG plans to continue its lead role in NAWISA and in using the network as a vehicle for developing solid African and southern African NGO positions at the 2002 World Summit.

### **4.4 The team**

Liane Greeff managed the project.

### **4.5 Funding**

The bulk of the work under this programme was supported by the Swedish Society for nature Conservations.

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## 5 Rural Resource Management programme

Under this programme, EMG continued to lobby for the development of a National Action Programme under the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). At a more hands-on level, we increased our involvement with a community of small-scale farmers in the Suid Bokkeveld, a semi-arid area in the Northern Cape.

### 5.1 Aims

While the link between poverty and environmental degradation in poorer rural areas can easily be seen, the causes are always complex and call for innovative, integrative approaches. This programme aims to illustrate the value of participatory approaches to working with rural communities that have immediate impacts on the lives of people and improve levels of service. At the same time the programme aims to develop arguments for better policy and practice that address land degradation while maintaining biodiversity, agricultural productivity and local livelihoods.

### 5.2 Some highlights

EMG was commissioned by the UNCCD's Global Mechanism to develop and "pilot", for a global audience, a *Community Exchange and Training programme* in which EMG would facilitate a process of knowledge exchange, facilitated learning and planning with small-farmers and rural households of the Suid Bokkeveld. The aim was to test process and methodology through which community groups could improve their lives while at the same time promote the sustained use of natural and cultural resources, in accordance with the principles of the UNCCD. The programme centred on structured "learning visits" by Suid Bokkeveld community members to other communities. A key component was the steering and ownership of the project by the participants themselves, and the involvement of provincial government extension workers. A tourism exchange visit took place in August where Suid Bokkeveld community members visited community-based tourism projects in Paulshoek, Eksteenfontein, Kuboes, Sendelingsdrift, Lekkersing and Pella. An exchange visit for Rooibos tea farmers took place immediately after the tourism visit. It encompassed a visit to the tea making facility at Wupperthal, a meeting with small-scale tea farmers at Eselbank (an isolated outpost of Wupperthal) and a visit to a tea processing facility at Graafwater. On their return from the exchange visit, the rooibos tea farmers group called a meeting, which agreed to form a producer association for the processing and marketing of their tea. Since this is a global pilot project, the documentation of the process and outcomes is important. A video producer was engaged to film and prepare a comprehensive, professional documentary of the process, and an adult education specialist contracted to produce a Farmer to Farmer manual and a Rooibos Producers Handbook.

Together with the Suid Bokkeveld rooibos tea farmers, EMG identified the European organic tea market as a potential mechanism for increasing farmers income while generating a net benefit for the natural environment of the area. EMG staff met with representatives of European fair trade organisations and organic importers, and researched procedures for organic registration.

EMG has been invited by the Northern Cape Provincial Department of Agriculture and other bodies to run a number of workshops with community groups in similar situations in other parts of the country – as a first intervention step, teaching a process

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called Participatory Impact Monitoring in which the community groups themselves identify sustainability indicators and methods of monitoring them.

While EMG's involvement and approach in the Suid Bokkeveld is being promoted by the Northern Cape Provincial Department of Agriculture as a model for local development co-ordination in the province, our attempts to lobby national government have been frustrating. In 1995 South Africa ratified the UNCCD. Since 1997, the national Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEA&T) has talked about drafting a National Action Programme in terms of the Convention, but has yet to begin drafting such a programme. EMG served on the National Steering Committee under a loose mandate from the Environmental Justice Networking Forum. EMG was also instrumental in the functioning of the CCD Scientific Task Group and the CCD Awareness Raising Task Group, Desert Margins Programme Steering Committee. EMG supported the preparation and development of country positions for the Conferences of Parties of the UNCCD and was part of the official South African delegation at COP 4. EMG was also involved in the conceptualisation and preparation of a series of "fact sheets" and a book about land degradation and desertification aimed at provincial government workers, and the general public respectively. Despite our energetic attempts to provide support and encouragement, to mobilise scientific expertise, and to profile and raise awareness about the Convention's central role in ensuring sustainable development in dryland areas, DEA&T officials have consistently reneged on their commitments. At the end of the year, the Department announced that it had downgraded the UNCCD to "low-priority" status – a position totally at odds with the Department's political leadership – and thus a source of great tension and frustration.

### **5.3 The future**

Given the uncertainty and frustration surrounding the further development and implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification, EMG may withdraw or at least scale down its involvement with DEA&T on this issue. The focus for the future is likely to be on further development of the Suid Bokkeveld as a desertification case study. There is much social and scientific data that needs to be collected in order for the case study to realise its full potential. EMG also envisages further work on behalf of the UNCCD Global Mechanism to disseminate our Community Exchange and Training approach in other southern African countries.

### **5.4 The team**

Led by Noel Oettle, the team has at various points included Makume Tlaleae, Adele Arendse and Jessica Wilson.

### **5.5 Funding**

Various parts of this programme have been funded by GTZ, UNEP, the UNCCD Global Mechanism and the Knowledge and Learning Centre of the World Bank.

## **6 Local Issues – Local Action Programme**

EMG's own relevance as an organisation is highly dependent on strong partnerships with other civil society organisations, particularly those with a strong community base. These partnerships enable local community groups to be active, resilient and ultimately independent of policy advocacy and service NGOs like ourselves. The bulk

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of our work under this programme has involved community capacity building around mining and environmental issues, but has also cover issues of nuclear waste disposal and integrated domestic waste management.

### **6.1 Aims**

The aim of this programme is to help nurture and build a strong environmental movement by assisting community-based groups to understand, strategize and deal with marginalisation and environmental injustice.

### **6.2 Some highlights**

This year was also the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of operation for EMG's satellite office in Witbank, an industrial town in the heart of the coal mining belt, and the centre of EMG's Mining & Environment project. With the Parliamentary component of Government's proposed largely completed in '99, this year focussed on developing the capacity of a core of environmental activists around the Witbank area, and in setting up a number of multi-stakeholder discussion forums where issues of mining policy and practice could be discussed – the most high profile of these forums included the SA Chamber of Mines as a key participant.

EMG maintained ongoing strong links with the Namaqualand Environmental Justice Action Network, one of who's current concerns is the operation of a large nuclear waste disposal site in the region. EMG has provided information and strategic advise through the year to assist them in their campaign for greater community involvement and full transparency in the management of the site and environmental monitoring.

The poorer areas of South Africa's large cities suffer, in general, from poor quality waste removal and cleaning services, and the city of Cape Town is no exception. EMG assisted the local authorities in Khayelitsha in their programme to develop better and more appropriate waste removal systems. This involved a status survey and the beginnings of a set of community feedback workshops.

### **6.3 The future**

EMG's relationship with community-based organisations will continue to be an important part of our work. Obviously our focus will be within the 3 programmatic areas sketched above, but we will continue to work with community organisations in Witbank, and will continue offer our skill and experience to organisations in and around Cape Town.

### **6.4 Funding**

The mining work was funded by Heinrich Böll Stiftung while other aspects of the programme were covered by Hivos and Interfund.

### **6.5 The team**

The mining project in Witbank is managed by Matthews Hlabane. Other EMG staff involved in this programme included Stephen Law and Michelle Pressend.

## **7 Partnerships and networking**

Key partnerships this year were formed with environmental NGOs Group for Environmental Monitoring (GEM) and the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and

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resulted in a number of joint activities. EMG and GEM agreed on the formation of a “strategic alliance” the details of which will be worked out. Our work on mining and national policy issues is the result of jointly planned and fundraised projects together with GEM. Plans exist to further develop project-based partnerships with other NGOs in the future.

With a small group of other organisations, we were instrumental in raising the foundation awareness of southern African NGOs with respect to the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development.

## **8 Communication**

EMG produce a regular monthly e-newsletter, the *EPI News*, to over 160 people from various sectors to stimulate debate on national and global environmental policy issues and is currently subscribed. We also established concrete links with two parliament-based organisations, namely GLOBE Southern Africa (Global Legislators for a Balanced Environment) and Contact.

We continued to contribute articles on globalisation, trade and the national environmental management act, water and dam issues, etc. to various local and international journals, and devoted more effort to keeping our website current ([www.emg.org.za](http://www.emg.org.za)).

## **9 Funding**

I would like to thank and acknowledge the support of those institutions who generously provided funding for our work through 2000, in no special order, Christian Aid, Heinrich Boll Foundation, Hivos, International Development Research Centre, United Nations Environment Programme, GTZ, CCD Global Mechanism, World Bank, National Botanic Institute, and the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation.