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UPCOMING EVENTS

30 November 2011

13:00

Global forest land –use change: FAO remote sensing survey

15:30

Methodologies for REDD+: Drivers, costs and reference levers

15:30

EU support for capacity building on finance

18:00

Sustaining systematic observation from space and related capacity building and training activities

Jobless Durban men and good ideas take top exhibition honours

By Mike Loewe

The South African government was “amazed” at the way the South African public had responded to the UN’s COP17 Climate Change convention in Durban. This was said at the announcement of the winner of the inaugural SA Green Awards for exhibition builders last night.

The outdoor stall winner was Climate Smart Cape Town’s outdoor building made out of colourful plastic milk crates and bottles by eight unemployed Durban men, described as “working class heroes” by project leader Stephen Lamb. Environmental Affairs Department deputy-director Peter Lukey said public interest had led to the creation of the SA Climate Change Response Expo, a massive 18-tented mini-citadel, erected at a cost of over R5m, which sprung up on the fringe of the main COP17/CMP7 event.

But the expo had humble beginnings. Lukey told an audience of scores of exhibitors it all began with a lone Durban solar panel entrepreneur who called him and asked if he could “stand up in front of COP17 and present his panels”. Lukey’s first diagram of the proposed Climate Change Response Expo was a naïve piece of paper containing his “egg drawings”. But his Environmental Affairs director-general Nosipho Ngcaba had gone with the idea and the result was “absolutely remarkable. It went way beyond our wildest dreams.” He said the UN conference was “formal” and “not open” to a public hungry for ideas. However, after day one he felt the expo had attracted good numbers, including six school groups. Yesterday exhibitors realised that many

of the COP17 participants were moving through the expo looking “very focused” on getting to the Durban International Convention Centre. “So exhibitors chose to use coffee as a way to invite them to stop and have a look. They have been blowing locally roasted coffee fumes over the convention, and are also offering a number of eateries, much along the lines of South Africa’s famous National Arts Festival which has craft markets and food stalls on the fringe of the main events. “We tried to create a festive atmosphere for a public which felt excluded, to give

“Let’s take up the (green) challenge and do good things.”

people a sense that they can be part of it. This (expo) is a positive way of saying ‘Let’s take up the (green) challenge and do good things.’

Director-general Ngcaba told the crowd she was “elated” at having an opportunity to present the new awards. She said big ideas often started with small projects like this. What she enjoyed most was the manner in which exhibitors had “thought through the ideas” and come up with workable, green criteria. Other green stall builder winners were the World Wildlife



KIDS GET IT ... Capetonian Stephen Lamb and Geriat Pierecy show schoolchildren the award-winning stall they and eight unemployed Durban men built together with the Climate Smart Cape Town coalition at the Climate Response Expo. Pic: Mike Loewe

Fund SA, Standard Bank, Biodiversity, the EU and the SA Department of Arts and Culture. The winner, Capetonian Stephen Lamb of Touching the Earth Lightly, said their stall had been a joint effort combining great ideas from architect Andre Rade-meyer who worked with a group of nine “subbies” (subcontractors). But the “real heroes” for Lamb were the eight local unemployed Durban men who were waiting at the gate of the ICC “cap in hand” two weeks ago.

Letter from the publisher

A team of 10 journalists representing the Reporting Development Network Africa (RDNA) is covering the United Nations Climate Change Summit, popularly referred to as COP17, in Durban, South Africa from 28 November to 9 December. This team drawn from Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, South Africa and Zimbabwe will be producing a daily newsletter and also filing stories to their individual media houses. Check all the updates and in-depth stories on <http://reportingDNA.org>.

RDNA is a project of the Highway Africa Centre at Rhodes University (www.ru.ac.za) and exists to support journalists in acquiring skills and knowledge to cover development issues in an in-depth and nuanced manner.

I am most grateful for the financial and logistical support of the South African Government's Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) which has enabled us to cover COP17. This project would not have come to fruition without the vision of Blessing Manale, Deputy Director-General in DEA.

I am also very grateful to my colleague, Nqobile Sibisi, who has done much of the logistics and liaison work. I wish to thank Wendy Tlou and her team at The Communications Firm for all the assistance with accreditation, working space and access to key COP17 events.

My last thanks are to the team that will bring you the news you need to know – Steven Lang (Editor), Effa Tambe (Cameroon), Rebecca Quaicoe (Ghana), Nii Laryea Sowah (Ghana), Joseph Warungu (Kenya), Raisa Meiswinkel, Thobile Hans, Mike Loewe (South Africa), Anesu Chingono and Wisdom Mdzungairi (Zimbabwe).

Happy reading.
Chris Kabwato



Raising awareness in South Africa

By Matthew Gaylard

The Climate Action Campaign is being initiated by the South African Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) in keeping with the call in the National Climate Change Response White Paper to:

“Design, develop and roll-out a climate change awareness campaign that makes all South Africans more aware of the challenge of climate change and the need for appropriate responses and choices at individual and community level.”

While COP17 presents a unique opportunity for launching the Climate Action Campaign, DEA's vision is for a long term campaign as part of the COP17 Legacy Programme and the implementation of the National Climate Change Response.

The objectives of the campaign are to:

- Build awareness of the causes and effects of climate change
- Mobilise South African businesses, households and stakeholders to take action to build climate resilience

“Climate resilience” encompasses actions that mitigate climate change and that respond to the effects of climate change, in particular those actions that achieve both.

The Climate Action Campaign will focus on five key action themes:

1. Conserve Energy – emissions from coal-fired power stations and transport are the leading sources of greenhouse gas emissions in this country. Conserving electricity and switching to public transport is critical to achieving our mitigation goals.
2. Conserve Water – South Africa is a water scarce country, and our fresh water resources are under stress. Climate

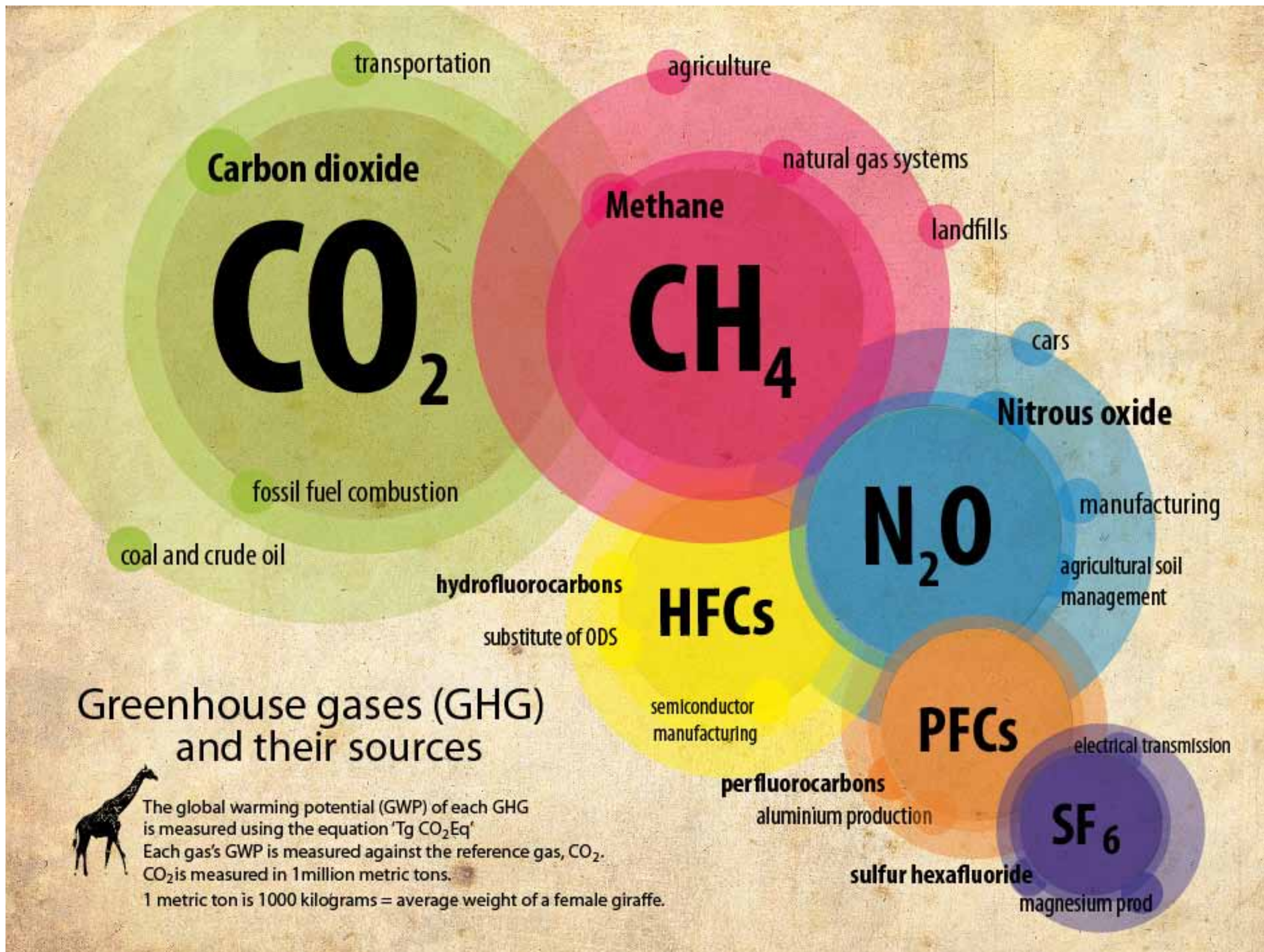
Change will exacerbate this situation and conserving water is a vital tactic for making the country more climate resilient.

3. Reduce, Reuse and Recycle Waste – minimisation and proper management of our wastes both reduces greenhouse gas emissions and conserves forests, which absorb carbon dioxide.
4. Consume Responsibly – goods and services that are environmentally friendly and locally produced will usually have a lower carbon footprint than imported, and buying locally creates jobs.
5. Plant indigenous trees, start a vegetable garden – food gardens promote food security and poverty alleviation. Planting indigenous trees and clearing alien invader plants restores natural eco-systems and conserves water.

A fundamental requirement for the Climate Action Campaign is that it speaks to all South Africans, while recognising that social inequality interacts directly with the appropriateness of different messaging. Climate change impacts are felt disproportionately by the poor who contribute relatively little to the causes, while behaviour change by the wealthy has a significant role to play in mitigation of climate change.

Social mobilisation and stakeholder engagement are central to the Department's conceptualisation of the Climate Action Campaign. The Department wants messaging about climate change to reach all South Africans, and for opportunities to engage with the issue to be afforded to all. Stakeholder engagement will therefore be critical to the success of the campaign, and civil society, labour and business must be active participants and partners in the campaign.







Linda Selvin demonstrates the three different power settings on this solar powered light. Pic: Steven Lang

Personal power station

By Steven Lang

Linda Selvin throws a small twig into the smokeless stove that leaves virtually no ashes after combustion. Pic: Steven Lang
Personal power stations can really turn you on. Linda Selvin, a New Yorker now based in South Africa has been demonstrating a range of products aimed at reducing power consumption at the COP17 Expo Centre. These products include a cellphone charger, an anti-theft alarm, a solar powered light and a smokeless stove pictured above.

She says that the personal power station “will not only save money, but it will help make the lives of women and children easier”.

Selvin was also demonstrating a small smokeless stove that works off a battery capable of providing up to 21 hours of cooking time. The small stove has an attractive stainless steel exterior and the interior walls are made of high tech ceramic material. A fan forces air into the combustion chamber to ensure efficient burning so that a couple of twigs generate enough heat to boil a couple of litres of water or cook food.

The smokeless stove will help mitigate the effects of global warming because it will use much less fuel to provide for the needs of rural people.

Adaptation, mitigation – or both

By Thobile Hans

The essence of the climate change discussions in the United Nations Framework on Climate Change conference (UNFCCC) of the Conference of the Parties 17 is to reach treaty on adaptation and mitigation factors on climate change.

Unchecked climate change caused by high greenhouse gas emissions (carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide and water vapour) means more natural disasters, more outbreaks of disease, more food shortages, and more sea level rise.

Climate change adaptation and mitigation underpin the UNFCCC and form the basis of the international COP17 climate negotiations which began in Durban International Convention Centre on Monday, November 28 and run through until December 9, 2011.

Adaptation refers to all the action the world needs to take to try to deal with the impact of the climate change, such as changing the kind of agriculture to suit dry conditions or building infrastructure to cope with increased flooding.

Mitigation in the context of climate change is the human intervention required to reduce the sources or enhance the “sinks” (ocean and forestry) of greenhouse gases. Examples include using fossil fuel more efficiently for industrial processes or electricity generation, switching to renewable energy (solar energy or wind power), improving the insulation of buildings, and expanding forests and other “sinks” to remove greater amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

How do we know climate change is inevitable?

We know because of the high levels of greenhouse gas emissions already in the atmosphere. As the level of greenhouse gases (GHG) increases, so does the global temperature. However, because of the complexity of how global climate works, there is a “lag” in the time it takes for the climate to respond. Also, carbon dioxide has a long lifespan. So even if the entire world stopped all the greenhouse gas emissions today, the climate would continue to change because of the emissions that are already in the atmosphere.

If climate change is inevitable, what is the point of cutting emissions?

It is a question of scale. The more we pump gases to the air, the worse the climate change will be. If the COP17 negotiations can get the world governments to reduce GHG emissions soon enough, we can possibly reduce the severity of climate change.

How much do we have to cut emissions to avoid dangerous climate change?

Scientists say a two percent increase in average global temperatures is the highest we can go if we want a 50% chance of avoiding the worst of climate change. Although it may sound small, a two percent increase will make the world a very different place from what we know today.

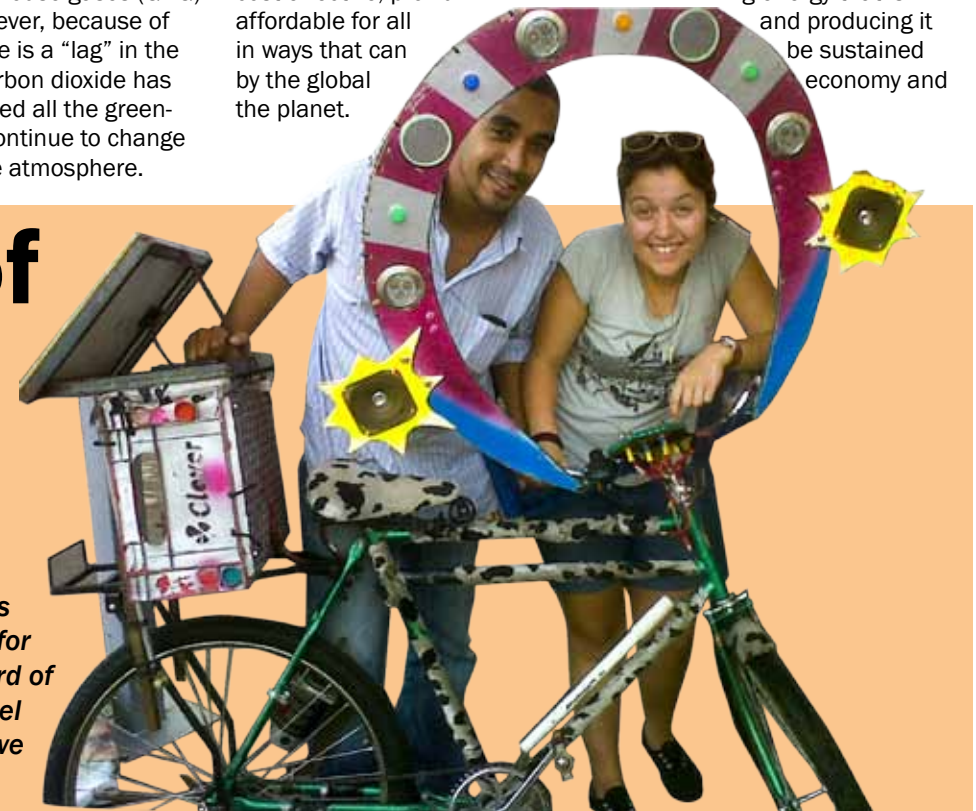
The average global temperature increase so far is just under 0.8 degrees Celsius, and we are already seeing the effects with an increase in extreme weather events: floods, heatwaves, droughts, and stronger cyclones. To stay at or under two degrees Celsius, our global carbon dioxide emissions cannot go higher than 450 parts per million. They are already at 380 part per million (ppm). Before the industrial revolution they were at 280 ppm.

The suggested solutions

WWF envisages that by 2050 the world could get all the energy we need from the renewable sources, provided the world commits to the suggested measurements of GHG. This will solve most of the problems of climate change and dwindling fossil fuel resources. We can show that such a transition is not only possible but also cost effective, providing energy that is affordable for all and producing it in ways that can be sustained by the global economy and the planet.

Power of cycling

The Pollution Revolution, a green play showing at the civil society exhibition, features this solar power-generating bicycle. The “Supersonic Time Travel Machine”, has travelled to 100 schools around Johannesburg as a lively prop for actors Jaques de Silva and Joni Barnard of the Well Worn Theatre Co. A solar panel runs the sound system. Pic: Mike Loewe



Why they came to Durban



Zama Magwaza – Durban – “You can attach your leaf as a symbol of your contribution to caring for our environment and creating jobs in the creative industries.”

Thousands of people from all over the world have gone to Durban to participate in the COP17 climate change meetings. Our editor, Steven Lang, chatted to some of the people to find out about their own special missions



Vishanthi Arumugam – Johannesburg “I’m reporting on what’s happening on the ground at the CCR Expo”



Sean Hide – Pretoria - “I’m here to get grade one children to learn about the importance planting seeds. It should be in the school syllabus”



Paul Okongo – Kenya “When I was young, I saw the food and it was good. Now we are victims of chemicals we use in fertiliser”



Luncedo Walaza – Port Elizabeth “We are here to demonstrate renewable energy projects in Eastern Cape.”

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