

Loadshedding Crisis Leading to a Dark South Africa

By Lerato Tala

Release Date: 29 April 2023

On Saturday, 22 April 2023, the Climate Justice Coalition (CJC) and the Cry of the Xcluded (CoX) hosted a mass meeting to discuss and plan working class responses to the energy crisis currently gripping the country. The meeting took place at the Witwatersrand University. A lot of organisations attended.

In an interview before the meeting began to find out more information from the organisations regarding the energy crisis issue, said Nesta who lives in a small farm community in Sedibeng told Karibu, “I am from an organisation called Women Revolutionary Council which focuses on women and children in the mining communities. In my community, we lost a transformer that supplies us with electricity, and it has been 6 years without having electricity.”

Nesta continued, “We survive by using gas and paraffin. From this workshop, I am looking forward to learning about the just transition and my question is where are we as women in this just transition? There are other issues that are affecting us in the community, there is a cholera outbreak due to the sewer [leak] and there is no service delivery at all. There is also a lot of waste-dumping which causes our children to get sick from smelling the waste as the smell goes inside our houses.”

Several organisations shared their inputs on loadshedding, austerity and privatisation.

“Small businesses are affected, [the] children are not going to school, people cannot access medication because of loadshedding. Gas is expensive, and solar systems are expensive to install,” said Keabetswe Mokoena from Sisonke Revolutionary Movement.

“The government is talking about 50kW free basic electricity in some cases some developers are not even providing that anymore. I work in the energy space; the bulk of my clients spend 50kW to 70kW on a daily basis so how do they expect entire families to survive on 50kW for the month? The sole debt of Eskom alone is over R400 billion, its odious debt given for corrupt purposes, given to build Medupi and Kusile, it is not fit for purpose [as] our lights are still off. It must not be repayable, so Eskom debt is [an] odious debt. We need to cancel it and refuse to pay it, we will be able to save Eskom that way and transition to a new green Eskom,” said Sunny from Debt for Climate.

Delegates raised important issues about how loadshedding is affecting the working class and what should be done to save the company so that there is no loadshedding in the future.

Delegates from many organisations said that they are tired of workshops but want action. They agreed that there should be a workers' party that will be for the working class to go to parliament.

Andile Zulu from the Cry of the Xcluded shared insightful points about the ‘Full Cost Recovery Model’.

“[the] Government says Eskom must adopt the full cost recovery model. What this means is that Eskom, through the sale of electricity to us as end users, Eskom must make a profit and through the profit, it must take that money in order to build power stations and it must take that money in order to do maintenance it essentially means that Eskom must run like any other private business where the profit that you get is how you then use that profit to improve your operations,” said Zulu during a presentation.

Activists at the meeting said that if Eskom became a private company the working class would suffer, and the whole country would remain in darkness as most of its people are the working-class communities.

This article was submitted on 25 April 2023. You may republish this article, so long as you credit the authors and Karibu! Online (www.Karibu.org.za), and do not change the text. Please include a link back to the original article.