

PS 3.4

**SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: THEIR ROLE IN ADVOCATING TO REDUCE THE
NEGATIVE HEALTH EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

| BACKGROUND

Social movements have played a vital role in the history of public health. They have campaigned for the abolishment of slavery, the introduction of votes for women, improved sanitation and water in cities, protection of natural environments, and for reproductive rights to name a few examples. Thus these movements have played a very significant role in improving health conditions over many years, in most countries and globally.

There are numerous social movements around the globe that campaign on the issues of climate and health. Some movements are more focused on protecting the environment for its intrinsic value and other more concerned with actions directly related to health. Protecting the environment and biodiversity as part of combatting climate change is crucial to health because of the increasing evidence that contact with nature and spending time in natural places is good for mental and physical health. Other social movements are centrally concerned with the impact of climate change on health. This sub-theme will consider both types of movements and links between them. Examining the links between health and climate change social movements is vital because people may be more likely to support action for climate change if they understand the health issues global warming will give rise to.

This session will also provide opportunities to learn from the experience of earlier social movements that have led to healthy change. The advocacy for treatment rights for people living with HIV/AIDS is a powerful example of such a movement. The tactics and strategies they used holds lessons for social movements campaigning on climate change and health.

Social movements use many different strategies including political lobbying, public protests, social media activism, boycotts, shareholder activism, petitions, and direct action. Examples of each of these will be highlighted in this session. Most of the tactics are aimed at advocacy for change. The importance of advocacy to public health has been explained as:

Advocacy is necessary to steer public attention away from disease as a personal problem to health as a social issue, and the mass media are an invaluable tool in this process. Advocacy is a strategy for blending science and politics with a social justice value orientation to make the system work better, particularly for those with least resources' (Wallack et al., 1993, p. 5).

| OBJECTIVES

The session will:

- Examine the role of social movements in advocating for climate action
- What lessons can we bring in from other health social movements?
- Consider the way climate social movements use health arguments in their advocacy
- Examine the strategies used by social movement to determine their effectiveness



Speaker

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

NAME: Mbalenhle (Mbali) Precious Baduza

POSITION TITLE: Legal Researcher at SECTION27 and Deputy-Secretary at the Climate Justice Coalition

EDUCATION/TRAINING:

Rhodes University, South Africa	BA 2011:	Legal studies, and Political Science and International Relations
Rhodes University, South Africa Honours	2012:	Political Science and International Relations
Rhodes University, South Africa LLB	2014:	Law
University of Edinburgh, Scotland	LLM 2021:	Human Rights Law

A. PERSONAL STATEMENT ON CLIMATE JUSTICE WORK

I am a legal researcher under the Health Rights Programme at SECTION27, and I am also the Deputy-Secretary of the Climate Justice Coalition of South Africa. My work at SECTION27, which is a public interest law organisation, matters because out of necessity we are both lawyers and activists who seek to achieve substantive equality and social justice in South Africa.

My contribution to SECTION27 is that in 2020 I initiated the Environmental and Climate Justice Project, and lead the team made up of health, education and budget researchers, a communications officer, and an environmental intern. Our mandate is to explore and advance policy and legislative issues associated with climate change and the clean energy transition by putting climate justice at the centre of our strategies in the realisation of both the rights to access to healthcare services and basic education. We use law, advocacy, rights and climate literacy, research, and community mobilisation to achieve: 1) the integration of the climate crisis into the human rights discourse, specifically the rights to access quality healthcare and to basic education; and 2) accountability and requisite compliance from the state to its existing domestic and international obligations.

Over the past two years, I have also led the formation of the Climate Justice Coalition, which comprises of trade unions, grassroots, community-based and non-profit organisations. We work to advance a transformative agenda in tackling the climate crisis in a manner that works to also tackle inequality, poverty and unemployment that pervades South Africa. Our campaign #GreenNewEskom calls for the transformation of the largest climate polluter on the African continent – South Africa's national utility, Eskom. One of the demands of our campaign is people-centred, where we call for a rapid and just transition to a more socially owned renewable energy powered economy, providing clean, safe, and affordable energy for all, with no worker and community left behind in the transition to lower carbon economy and society. Connected to this campaign is the call to change the biggest governance obstacle to a just climate, energy, and mining future – the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy which continues to push for the establishment of new coal fired power stations.

I have been thinking deeply about the role of health and education sector in meaningfully responding to the climate change. As a developing country, the need for schools, clinics and hospitals remains especially in rural areas. Those that exist are near dilapidation, vulnerable to extreme weather events and are intermittently without water and electricity. Does our social infrastructure project policy include climate change and clean energy considerations? Do the departments of Health, Education and Infrastructure have the knowledge, skill, and capacity to even contemplate climate resilient infrastructure and the procurement of clean energy technologies to be used in schools, clinics, and hospitals? I am in the process of planning a sectorial gathering for health and education sectors, in 2023, to explore these questions and develop plans of action.

B. POSITIONS, APPOINTMENTS, AND HONOURS

2021 EcoChampion for Mail and Guardian's Green for the Future Series

2021 Master of Laws, with Distinction, University of Edinburgh

2020 - Present Legal Researcher, SECTION27 (Health Rights Programme)

2020 - Present Deputy Secretary, Climate Justice Coalition

2017 - 2019 Manager of Lawyers for Human Rights, Upington (Land and Housing Programme)

2016 - 2018 Co-Founder, CEO and Tutor at Ahanang Tutoring (Pty) Ltd

2015 - 2019 Legal advisor at Gilfillan du Plessis Inc (Land and housing)

2015 - 2017 Candidate attorney at Lawyers for Human Rights (Refugee and Migrant Rights Programme, and Land and Housing Programme)

2011 - 2012 Honours in Political Science and International Relations, with Distinction and full Colours, Rhodes University

2012 Runner Up in the Glenister Anti-Corruption Challenge - where my team and I had to draw up legislation and an explanatory Memorandum, on how to curb corruption; and published on the IFAISA.org website.

C. Contributions to climate justice discourse

1. Climate emergency risks becoming a mental health emergency (8 October 2021), Spotlight
2. Climate justice in our lifetime or never (11 November 2022), News24