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Interviewer: It's the 9th February 2011. Solomon, thank you very much for doing the interview with me - just for the record please state your full name.

Makhanya: My name is Solomon Mkhulu Makhanya

Interviewer: Before I get to ask you questions about the community and some of the organisational struggles, I'm asking everybody a little bit about themselves we want to find out about you, who you are, where are you coming from so we start. Where and when were you born?

Makhanya: I born on 25 March 1952 in Everton and I started my primary education at Magasela Lower Primary school and further my studies I went to Ntsela High school and I completed Standard 9 which is Grade 11 at Phomono Secondary School in Kathlehong in 1970. From there I didn't get work, I was just working temporary jobs and so forth but in 1975 I was employed at Finerd Cables. That's where I worked 24 years and 6 months up until I was retrenched.

Interviewer: So from 1975 for these 24 years you were with the same company, so where is that company located?

Makhanya: The company was located in Vereeniging – it's cable makers

Interviewer: And what job exactly did you do?

Makhanya: I started as an assistant operator and after 3 years I was promoted as operator and after 6 months I was work site clerk and I was promoted to be senior production and control clerk where I was heading the department of work with 11 clerks and I was summarising everything every week in the different departments for the different managers to see their performance.

Interviewer: All this time when you were in school where were you actually living, in what area?

Makhanya: I was living in Everton as I say lower primary to higher primary. From there I went to Natalspruit where I was living in Kathlehong and then after completing my grade 11, I went back home to look for a job.

Interviewer: And home is Everton?

Makhanya: Everton was fine with me and I had no problem because even now everyone in Kathlehong is my friend.

Interviewer: So that's where you live now Kathlehong?

Makhanya: I live in Sebokeng.

Interviewer: When did you start living in Sebokeng?

Makhanya: Just after completing my grade 11.

Interviewer: So since that time you've always lived in Sebokeng?

Makhanya: I've lived in Sebokeng.

Interviewer: Just tell us a little bit about your family, do you have a wife, children?

Makhanya: Yes I was married one year after I got the job.

Interviewer: So just talk a little bit about how you saw the connection between your own situation and the issue of privatisation.

Makhanya: Anti Privatisation, we know that in 1999 we were part of Numsa we know that in the apartheid era they wanted to privatise things and we were fighting privatisation. We knew that privatisation is going to make us out of our work, out of our jobs so in the new government we saw the government privatising before I was retrenched. To us it was a disaster because we knew that most of us are going to lose jobs so when we saw Anti Privatisation Forum we saw that this is the right organisation which we can join because privatisation, retrenching, outsourcing all those things are going together. You cannot subtract one to another.

Interviewer: Just tell me a little bit about the community that you've been living in and the kind of community that it is and what makes up the people, I mean, how has it changed over the years from the time that you were a worker until now in terms of Sebokeng and its own culture there?

Makhanya: As I said because we started as ex-workers we tried to organise all the companies, we have Samancor, we have all these companies. So we started having meetings next to my place. Because of the demands of the community we thought now we must get to the source and how people are losing jobs and how it affects communities. If you've got no jobs you won't be able to pay for services charges, you won't be able to pay up your house so that's when we see evictions so we were able to invite other structures like that. Getting the source will accelerate our struggles to eviction, to electricity, access to water. We even went further to get IDs for the people because if we look at the source of people to lose their houses, if you have no ID the councillors will take your house and give to somebody else. And if you don't have job they take your house and sell it to other bank, to other companies so you will be evicted. We look at that and build that presently as I say one struggle can build up more struggles. So presently we got ID for our people who do not have ID. You find that somebody born here but he or she does not have ID. The young people who are sick or orphan - they take you out of the house, what is the cause? The cause the parents have died and the orphans cannot pay for basic service so we try and get grant for the people and I have a big record of that. I'm still busy working on that according to the demands of the community so that we help as many people as we can.

Interviewer: So in the community now would you say the vast majority of people who live in that community are ex- workers? People who used to work in the heavy industries now they are no longer working?

Makhanya: Yes. Mostly they are not working.

Interviewer: It's retrenched families trying to survive?

Makhanya: Yes, if are not working there are so many things. The homes are breaking, there is separation and divorce so what we are doing we try to keep those people together. Even in 1995 our first struggle was public transport because when they are going to work, going to school they must have a transport so I was struggling with that first. All of those things if the transport is not there, I even have cases where people have divorced because of the wife coming in the morning because of the trains stuck in the middle of the pack and if the wife comes in the morning the husband says where are you coming from?

Interviewer: Tell me a little bit about the structure of ISECC, what is the leadership and its membership like?

Makhanya: Our structure we have 6 executive, which is chairperson, deputy, secretary, deputy and treasurer and organiser. Apart from that we have people to advise us as we said in our organisation there is no superior we are all equal, if the chairperson has done something wrong they do not beat about the bush they tell you straight so that's why we are saying our organisation is democratic.

Interviewer: Tell me a little bit about the positions you have held in the organisation and what's your position?

Makhanya: I'm the chairperson even where we used to have the elections they used to put me as the chairperson I don't know why but if I ask a question when I'm trying to change the people so that they must know exactly how to chair a meeting and everything else they say you are capable of doing the research bring the thing for us. But even though it's like that I take the people because I don't want to go alone because we saw that in our unions people just negotiate the settlements and we find ourselves out of our jobs. When I'm going somewhere I want somebody who must be witness to what I'm doing even when I can die somebody must take it when I've left it.

Interviewer: Have any members from ISECC held positions in the APF? Once you joined the APF have there been any ISECC members that have held office bearers, regional or anything like that?

Makhanya; Yes, I'm the labour coordinator. We've got a lady there by the name of Esther Sikhawule in Coalition she is the deputy chair so both of us we are the people who understand the most about the organisation. We have also youth in our organisation but you cannot always speak about retrenched surplus, housing and so forth but sometimes we speak about their programmes but most of their programmes they need money and then presently we do not have that idea of how to compile information and even I still remember one of your office bearers I was impressed to see the youth because they are not drinking, they are not smoking. Presently I think twelve of them went to open a radio station to announce, to take all our news so there are twelve now. But our youth are +/-30 but the one who went to that project are twelve now. Others are still looking for other project but we still need more workshops, more advice because we want to affiliate them to us. If we get a project we will make sure that our structure is strong because if you get a job we lose our best comrades. For instance when I was working in Metro Rail I used to take my break during the time of the meeting so that I can run to the meeting and come back but I think if somebody cannot adjust himself for that and that makes the organisation to collapse.

Interviewer: What would you describe as the main goals of ISECC, if you were to tell somebody? You said you struggle around evictions, you struggle around retrenchments and all that but what are the main goals of the organisation?

Makhanya: When we started our main goals was labour issues but now it has diverted a little bit, its own balance is housing and labour struggles.

Interviewer: So those are the struggles but what is the goal for the struggles, in other words what do you hope to achieve?

Makhanya: The goals, one, we want to see everybody staying in the house not being evicted that is our main goal. Even when the parents die even the grandchildren must stay in that house, must be protected. Another thing that we would like to see ... maybe most of the people will say xenophobia but we do not believe in that. I will tell you the reason. The reason there is no person who hates other people in South Africa as far as I'm concerned as far as I say I was born here. If we go back before 1952, we had Vendas, we were all staying together as families, living together but the only thing that I've realised that is the lack of resources. It's not a matter of resources to me although other people mostly in our government/ the ANC they use as hatred because mostly I will make you a typical example. There is a business forum in the township and I started to talk about in the APF that there is such thing. The Business Forum said those people are selling things cheap and they are taking their jobs and they cannot copy anymore. The other thing that I've realised is that if you get to that its only ANC members which have been used by higher authority to make that but to us there is no such thing. If you are talking about Banda, the one of Samancor, Banda came to South Africa, I met him once and he was like that. I even take him to the church and we pray together, it's what I'm saying maybe it's just a way of promoting hatred by other people

Interviewer: So evictions, people living together, breaking down the barriers, access to basic services and as you are saying from the beginning labour issues trying to get compensation, that would be the main goals of the organisation?

Makhanya: Sure.

Interviewer: What I want you to tell me about is how your membership, once you joined the APF, how did the APF impact on ISECC in terms of its own struggles? Was it good, was it bad? What did membership in the APF provide ISECC?

Makhanya: I can say some affiliates they supported us, even our meetings they came to our meetings and they were impressed, even sometimes APF can send someone to our meeting. After the meeting we try to get house feelings to improve where we are lacking. I can make a typical example, WCCC –Malapela, Themba Sompane, he came unexpected because we used to paste our meetings on the walls in the townships so they came to support us that was good. Although in our regions, I want to be honest, there is no struggles in most of the affiliates of the APF. Where you can get the struggles is Samancor, WCCC and ourselves and I saw Themba Sompane he came to our meeting and mobilised youth for us at the same time using their programme as youth unemployment because its our youth and they are unemployed so he used that programme and that platform to organise and use and engage the youth of ISECC. But all in all we didn't see anything from the youth of other

affiliates in the Vaal. But I was again impressed by the struggle of Soweto even I said when I can have time to go to Soweto when they are having their events, its SECC their programmes I like them the most. I went to two affiliates and even in Kathlehong I went there, the comrades can deliver. So I can see what they are capable of so we would like to use them even in our affiliates. I don't like the people to see only Makhanya and then say something; they must see another face, other people who will give us the strategy like Sipho in East Rand and of course Ntathe Malapela.

Interviewer: What about, not just the affiliates and struggles on the ground, the activities since 2006 of the APF like workshops and all the other kinds of things?

Makhanya: Workshops ... if you go there and you don't know a thing you just open your mind when you concentrated a lot I don't have to say anything because that will run out of my head and so what I'm doing I adjust. If somebody is saying something I just take it in my mind and when I'm getting home I summarise, I make it my own summary and get an easy way to do that, to improve our affiliates. But workshops are good in the APF and then we had good leadership but the leadership was mostly not from our affiliates. I can say it was good with what it was doing Cde John was good in what he was doing and Cde Malapela of course but mostly I can say even ISECC is better than most of the affiliates which were with APF long ago but we were new in APF we thought that maybe those people will assist us to be strong but then we found that they are weak but otherwise APF is good. The only thing that I think APF should do, there is only one problem, and I want to be open.

Interviewer: Please that's what we are here for ...

Makhanya: Cde Dale doesn't know anything about ISECC, Cde John does not know anything about ISECC but the people in our region knows how ISECC is operating or how ISECC is living but now you find that some people they try to put that as if nothing is happening in ISECC and that is a problem. But I think if APF could start auditing the books, if anybody is asking of us if you are not sure you must go and see how those people are assisted, if you are not sure you must come with suggestions and say instead of doing this like this its better if we do it this way but you are grooming the people. The only area which I don't like is to decline the proforma but finding the people who are not there getting money and wasting that money of the organisation instead of using it for our struggles as working class. I think if that can be monitored correctly I think that would be fine.

Interviewer: On that front just to pursue that, the issue of accountability, the issue of management of funds. What do you think because in the last year, a year and a half this has been a serious issue for the APF, why do you think that is the case? Why do you think this is a problem for the organisation? The issue of accountability and the issue of funds and monies and these kinds of things because it never used to be in the APF why do you think in the last while it's become like this?

Makhanya: I think the management of APF realised that people misuse their funds so there must be accountability, but I think that is not enough, to account with a pen you see as I say I was working with protection and control clerk but I can also balance the figures by pen it doesn't mean that you have done that exactly. What I'm saying is that if it can be audited maybe, for instance I want to say if ISECC wants money for an event maybe for 6 months then you will take people who are honest who will go with the right information to go to

ISECC and sit down with ISECC during a meeting. The office must know; what is our day, when we are meeting or sitting of the region and cross check the people. That's when you are going to find the truth whether Makhanya has used the money for 1, 2, 3 or not or have just taken the money for his bread purpose. I think if that can be done to monitor it can be fine. You find one person coming for a structure, if you say you want five only the person is coming the main problem is when they realise that the person is one there is no structure there is only one so that structure is not there.

Interviewer: Just to shift back to ISECC itself. What has been in the last 4/5/6 years since you've joined the APF, what have been the main tactics in the struggles that you've talked about? You've talked about different kinds of struggles, what tactics does the organisation use to fight those struggles?

Makhanya: By giving us a workshop because a workshop is going to guide you so if you are guided you can even take the matters further. For instance, I didn't know if a person says Cde Dale doesn't qualify for social grant, I didn't know what other action you can do if they say if somebody doesn't qualify for ID I did not know what other measures I can do from that point to that point. But now I'm a professional by workshops so I think workshops have done a great job to ISEEC. Really for that I say salute!

Interviewer: And when I say other tactics I'm also talking about not just using the knowledge that you get from workshops but for example a tactic will be marching or attending work or going to council meetings or the different ways in which you use. What kind of tactics have you employed as ISEEC?

Makhanya: One, we marched to metal industries and then the response was good then shortly we are prepared to go there again but just before we go again the response was good we must sit down and have a meeting. The organisation is not Makhanya himself so I organise other people we go there and we get a positive answer which is good and then other things although it's not on the line items because most of the times we are told labour is not on the line items. And then public transport also but I still remember when we had a big crisis in transport, APF provided us with a taxi and then we were able to change that because even the fare increase was supposed to be implemented on the 1st November 2009 we were able to stop that so I think by the support of APF and funders again even if we can have more funders I think we can achieve more because even now the people say Makhanya we must have a meeting every week because they are happy we deliver to the people other people say Makhanya what do we do now? We must take protection and say no the only thing we can do we must call a meeting and not say a political party but as a community and say Cde John we want to put you there because we trust you we share ideals with you not by political party. It's what we are discussing now. Now I don't know whether it's going to work because we were supposed to have a meeting last week unfortunately we did not .

Interviewer: You talked about some of your successes ... people are saying they want meetings. Since ISECC has been in operation, since you started ISECC what would you say were the victories, the things that ISECC has achieved for the communities?

Makhanya: One, the people got houses in Sol Tsotesi informal settlement and then other people we forced them to be moved. They were living in the muddy place when it's raining

you'll find the house is in water so they were taken in a safe place and most of the people we were able to take to houses. Other success in general people who were struggling to get their monies from different companies got their monies, even Samancor people as I mentioned come to me and say I was injured while I was working and I didn't get anything. We got their money - that is a success. And the people who didn't have ID books they got them and others got the grant because I go with them even though they say we don't qualify they go to the doctor and decline even though that person is sick they are not qualifying even some of the people you'll find that they want to kill themselves so to protect that you had to add impact to that to help that person. So the problem is you are told some of the things is not in the line item that's fine but the problem is that they do not give us a direction. When other administrative shift administration - some administration - they cannot even advise you that if that is not in the line item what we can do to get funds for 1, 2, 3 so that you can run that programme they cannot give you that advice but they are just fighting you and that becomes a problem. But most of the things we do it from our own pockets as I said because if somebody comes and we are having people sick people with HIV/AIDS we bring money together and take them to Pretoria to get ID for them, we take them to the social development office and so forth and even doctors and get sick certificates for them but we will appreciate if that can be allocated in the funds of APF. Most of the things we can say eviction but we don't get deep to it so we say why is it, we must get the source, if we get that one we must not find that one and leave the source.

Interviewer: In that context have you found that ISECC's membership of the APF in the last two years has allowed you to politicise your understanding of causes of things - why is there evictions, why is the government doing these kinds of things? Is it something that you have gotten out of the membership of the APF, the politics of the struggles?

Makhanya: Yes. I told them in the meeting they try to reject that but to us as I say we don't believe in xenophobia even if that somebody has stayed for 15 years without one that somebody is quite viable to be a citizen of South Africa. So we challenge that law not to say that this is not our law it's from somewhere. So I think politically there is a need for APF to have political education strongly.

Interviewer: I just want to follow that question. One of the things that the APF has always prided itself since its formation is its politics, in other words linking the political struggles to big politics, the ANC, neo-liberal, capitalism, and these kinds of things. Did you find when you came to the APF your own understanding of the linkages between what was happening at a local level and what was happening at a local, national and international was that something that improved?

Makhanya: Ya today APF has adopted socialism. Socialism is Ubuntu with our language, ubuntu is we must share whatever we have equally - there is no one who is better than the other. Politically as I said we must not sell our organisation because you will find that people they want to earn out of poor people. If you don't have jobs you will find that I will say I will get jobs for you for R500 next year so we don't want that. I want that when I come to you tomorrow even as Makhanya I must not promise anything they must see what I can be able to do what I can be able to challenge. But APF as a whole I think we are on the right position although I think the members of APF we have affiliated and our understanding is not the same because one if from the ANC. I can say one side you are drinking poison and the other

side you are drinking poison with you to cure that up so we just want to see which one will add up because you see we are fighting ANC policies but I'm the member of the ANC but people are hiding themselves. You'll find what I'm going to say any political party has got something good In it even if somebody is a criminal but there is one thing which is good with that man, take that which is good and leave that man alone, that's what I believe in not to say we must adopt everything about him.

Interviewer: So you are saying, which I think is an important point, the APF has had to grapple with different communities that have relations with the ANC and have different political understandings and sometimes that clash with each other? How in your experience with ISECC in the communities in Sebokeng and inside, how has the state and when I say state I mean the local state, the council, how are they responding to the struggles of ISECC?

Makhanya: They don't want me to come nearer because now I'm teaching people, they tend to be my enemies because I don't want people to ...even when people are evicted they go to the council and then the council is 'Cde Makhanya how do you do things when things are like this, how do you take people inside their houses?' Because I'm clever enough now because I've learned quite a lot of things I mix with other people who got experience. I say you are a councillor what does the PIE Act say. Somebody cannot be evicted and taken out of a house when there is no other room or another place for them so how will you deal with this case? That is your portion of the Act to show your power but you find that the council is running away and I see that person taking that person's house. The people they won't like you even you are taking food from them because if you are struggling, suffering they are making money out of you. So if somebody is helping you free of charge then that's the problem.

Interviewer: You mentioned you are a member of the ANC as well. How is the ANC responding to ISECC?

Makhanya: That's what I'm saying.

Interviewer: Saying what thing?

Makhanya: But only DA is responding positively?

Interviewer: How is the DA responding?

Makhanya: They want to come to our meeting when we are having our meeting. Then the PAC and then the other organisations who are out of the socialist like the PAC and others ... they don't even have other problem they even act. But the ANC and other movement they say we won't do because socialism does not work like that we don't even have money you see.

Interviewer: You described some of the successes and victories in ISECC. What would you say are your main challenges, your weaknesses, and the things you need to concentrate on as an organisation?

Makhanya Our weaknesses is when we cannot provide people with other things. You know for instance, I want to make a typical example; if I fail presently people who are on the waiting list of RDP houses I have not managed to give them houses. Even last year I was

here in the housing department trying to engage them. Those people who are on the waiting list from 94/93 must be the ones who get the houses - that is a challenge to me. Other weaknesses we are not very clear about the different funders to assist us to the different struggles which we have which is not funded or assisted by the APF. I think that one is a very critical role which we are supposed to iron up, to get someone who will teach us how to make a proposal and other things and all that in the correct position as I say people are not working, people are sick, they are all orphans. Where are those people going to get money from? It's a challenge to us as I say we are not working but we are supposed to take money from our pocket every cent that I have in my pocket I sacrifice for that.

Interviewer: So resources are a very big challenge? What other organisation, parties, that sort of thing does ISECC have good relations with? Who else do you work with as ISECC besides obviously membership in the APF? You mentioned PAC, what other organisations?

Makhanya: AZAPO. Even in the departments we have people who are saying we salute you for the good job you are doing even when they say the people are frustrating you on top come to us we will help you.

Interviewer: And that's in government?

Makhanya: In government – it's like social workers and doctors - if I take somebody and explain the case thoroughly so that we must understand all the details of the case.

Interviewer: How do you think the more recent things that have happened politically in the country - Zuma becoming President, all the things in the last 2 years, the youth league some of the tensions between Cosatu, the ANC, the bigger political things - how do you think that has impacted on communities like ISECC and your struggles?

Makhanya: Ever since Zuma was elected everybody is suffering a lot. Everything was privatised. Private transport, it was not supposed to be privatised everything that is rising is rising from the working class as 1994 and before. When I was still a member of Numsa we said we are going to vote for ANC and all our struggles will ... by that time. But after we have the ANC government we said we must distance ourselves from the government so that we must have the chance to challenge what is wrong what the government is doing. But Shilowa went to ANC and that was the end of the story - that means there is a disaster to the country as a whole, you see this privatisation is the most thing to everybody. If we are talking about water, electricity has been privatised so I think we won't survive unless something has happened. If the Left can organise themselves very strong and come up with one strong policy and implement it - not to come up with policy but to implement it. And I think the Conference of the Democratic Left is on a good point but I think taking as a member of CDL but I don't use that policy but I'm going with my own agenda. But for me I think it's trying to disturb the whole system because if I'm ANC I won't change and if I don't want to change I won't change. So I think there is a need for the leadership to know exactly how things is going to be done. I think that one should be done and be going to grassroots; I think that one is going to work, talking about it in the radios, we have Thetha FM, talking about these people because some of the people they cannot even read - they are clever but can only listen so talking about these things in the radio maybe one person this week there can be little change.

Interviewer: In that context also what you are saying is that the quality and the training of leaders is fundamental. Just one last question comrade Makhanya - is there anything that I haven't asked you about your organisation or about the APF or other things that you want to say, something that you think I have left out that you would like to add to the history, to the character of these struggles?

Makhanya: I think so far the APF is on good track but the way we elect people on a democratic way is correct but we must check the kind of people we are electing. Do they have affiliates or not because this becomes a problem. Because if we are talking about misusing of funds because the leadership on top doesn't have affiliates. Because I'm a leader you say Makhanya go and check those people whose affiliates and I don't have one and that becomes a problem and I think if we get somebody, people we trust the most, I mean Cde Siphos doesn't compromise, Cde Moshe doesn't compromise but I tell you if I say go to my friend I will pay you a false report so I think if we can get the right people that way we will be on the right track. ISECC I think if we can have more people who have got knowledge and experience on doing things maybe it will give us what we want more sections to own our struggles, our campaigns we must have how to do it. But now we are doing it maybe we are doing too long and how to do it and challenge them quickly we need the things but I think we must have a workshop, good workshop, we must be taught correctly and when we go out that can be much easier for the organisation to grow. And lastly I think even the policies I think even the Constitution of APF it can be tight - now it's too loose - people are doing their own things stealing the money, nothing happens, doing nothing, nothing happens. I think if that can be earned up even that must be implemented to our affiliates not to APF only to say Cde Dale, you an independent person, go right around through affiliates we just give you a date, don't tell us when you are coming. If I say ISECC is sitting at 9 o'clock at a certain place, VCF and so forth so you go there unexpectedly to get the right information. I think that is the way of doing things, I think so far it's just that we are not in a good position because our leaders is not good but if the organisation who must ask why you are in the office, If Cde Dale is working here who must ask who is responsible for that so APF most of the time doesn't go direct to the issue just trying to put fancy things around a bad thing because that's why we even have this crisis now of the funders because people we use too much democratic you cannot be democratic right through. You must be democratic and autocratic at the same time, Cde Dale you negotiate some of the things but at some point you say I don't want this nobody will come in my house at 10, finish. I don't want this just that. You don't have to negotiate it, we don't have to argue about that so the organisation must use two administration not one. You must not be autocratic you must also be democratic, you must mix the two - that's how I see things. And the last thing I don't know Cde Dale ... will you assist us where we need assistance to raise funds and so forth because this skill we don't have it.