

eco~
INSTIGATOR

A PUBLICATION OF HEALTH OF MOTHER EARTH FOUNDATION

ISSUE #13

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**WHEN
NIGERIAN
BIOTECH EXPERTS MET**

**WHAT DO THESE
anti-GMO ACTIVISTS
WANT?**

**THE GROWING MENACE OF
THE MONSANTO-INDUCED
PRO-GMO
LOBBY IN NIGERIA**

**BEING HUMAN:
DEATH, DEVELOPMENT AND
EARTH'S DEFENDERS**

The Eco~Instigator is a quarterly publication of
Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF)

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Welcome to another packed edition of Eco-Instigator. Someone suggested that this should be the 14th rather than 13th issue, but we could not skip a number because of superstition. Otherwise we would skip the 13th day of every month and possibly the 13th questions on examination sheets. So, here you are with a loaded 13th edition!

We serve you with reports from the ongoing debates on the genetically modified organisms (GMO) debacle in Nigeria. We also bring you the submission by key activists against gene drive technology to the recently concluded conference of the IUCN.

Ogoni/Niger Delta Clean-up is picking up and there are concerns about the methods of tackling the resurrected militancy that stop Niger Delta. Will wielding the military big stick (Operation Crocodile Smile) solve the problem?

This edition has two key articles on environmental justice – one is on the rising martyrdom of earth defenders written by Hannibal Rhoades of Gaia Foundation. The second article is on what it means to fight for environmental justice in the Maghreb. That article is penned by none other than Hamza Hamouchene – an outstanding Algerian activist and writer.

In Books You Should Read, we highlight *Living in Fear*, by Juan Lopez Villar. It is a book on the unending Wars, conflicts and natural resources in central Africa. It is one book that you should do all you can to read.

Do you have a story to tell? A poem, photograph or an article/report to share? We are waiting for you.

Until victory!

Nnimmo



When Nigerian Biotech Experts Met

If anyone needs sensitisation in Nigeria about GMOs, it is the biotech promoters. They need to be sensitised that Nigerians don't want GMOs and certainly do not want to be ambushed into eating what they do not want to eat. We have a right to choose what we eat. No one should have anything forced down his or her throat. There are other areas that modern biotechnology can focus on without having to tamper with our food systems in a process that would also introduce toxic chemicals that accompany their herbicide tolerant monocultures.

Three Nigerian ministries had top level representation at the Biotechnology and Biosafety Experts Meeting at Sheraton Hotel, Abuja on 15 August 2016. The Minister and Minister of State for Environment were present. So were the Ministers of Agriculture and Rural Development, as well as the Minister of Science. Interestingly, rather than the Minister of Science making remarks at the opening session of this meeting, he ceded the space to the Director General (DG) of the Nigerian Biotechnology Development Agency (NABDA).

In his remarks, Chief Audu Ogbeh, the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, asked, 'Who will educate the politicians?' That quote, he informed the gathering, was from a one-time president of the USA, Richard Nixon. He then went on to say that genetic engineering is about science but that it had a cloud of fear, doubts, sentiments and political agitation hanging over it. He pointedly stated that at the end of the day 'science will prevail.'

Probably because his comments were brief, he did not expatiate on what he meant by that statement. He, however, said that the truth lay somewhere between the fears and the facts.

When the Minister of Environment, Amina Mohammed, took the floor she emphasised that the meeting was a starting point from where further conversations would be held and the larger public would have the opportunity to weigh in. She stressed the need to invest in knowledge and to strengthen the nation's biosafety policy.



She also touched on the communication gap between the scientists and the public. According to her, the wide store of indigenous knowledge must not be ignored in the building of broader understanding of the issues at stake. She generally called for healthy debates on the issues.

The progress of golden rice is not hampered by Greenpeace but by its failure to deliver on its promoters' promises.

The outcome of the meeting has been presented to the public as being a plan by the Federal Government to sensitise Nigerians on the benefit of genetically modified organisms (GMOs). To some of us that were at that meeting we would not endorse such a summation. Why do we say so?

The meeting, although jointly called by the three ministries mentioned above, was driven by Open Forum for Agricultural Biotechnology in Africa (OFAB), a biotech industry (non governmental?) organisation headed by an assistant director in NABDA and deeply embedded in NABDA. Indeed, before the meeting started, a continuous stream of video clips were used to serenade participants with the success stories of GMOs and the wonderful process that gave birth to Nigeria's National Biosafety Management Act 2015 and the National Biosafety management Agency (NBMA). When the

Minister of Science gave way to the Director General of NABDA, she took the stage to sell GMOs to the crowd of mostly converts to the technology. Those of us with strong doubts and who reject modern biotechnology as the panacea for Nigeria food issues were a token sprinkle you could count on the fingers of one hand.

The Director General stated that GMOs started from the time of Adam and Eve in the Biblical Garden of Eden. Imagine modern biotechnology as old as Adam and Eve. She further on cited the roundly discredited letter signed by 109 Nobel Prize laureates that claimed that Greenpeace was hampering the adoption of the so-called Golden or GMO rice engineered for enhanced levels of vitamin A. The truth is that the rice in question is yet a failed project and is not hampered by anyone other than its failure to deliver on its promoters' promises. The Institute of Science in Society and the Third World Network had this to say of the Golden Rice: The 'golden rice' – a GM rice engineered to produce pro-Vitamin A – is being offered to the Third World as cure for widespread vitamin A deficiency.[Our] audit uncovers fundamental deficiencies in all aspects, from the scientific/social rationale well as financially bankrupt agricultural biotech industry.

The scientific/social rationalization for the project exposes a reductionist self-serving scientific paradigm that fails to see the world beyond its own narrow confines. The 'golden rice' is a useless application. Some 70 patents have already been filed on the GM genes and constructs used in making the 'golden rice'. It is a drain on public resources and a major obstruction to the implementation of sustainable agriculture that can provide the real solutions to world hunger and malnutrition.

There were three panels, all of which had a paper presenter followed by panel discussions. The first panel was on the Socio-Economic Effects of GMOs and the lead presenter was Prof Ishyaku Mohammed, a key player in the development of GMO beans in Nigeria. The second panel was on Strengthening Biosafety Institutional Framework with Jeremy T. Ouedraogo – Head of NEPAD West African Biosafety Network Regional Office of the African Biosafety Network of Expertise. The third panel looked at Strategies for Effective Education and Communication. The lead presenter here was Prof. Diran Makinde, Senior Adviser, African Biosafety Network of Expertise (ABNE).

Some of us do not accept that nutrition and food security must be manufactured in science laboratories. And we should never forget that Nature is the ultimate scientist. The wise person works with Nature because fights against Nature are not only often futile but could become fatal.

The good thing about this meeting was that there were some voices on the panels speaking up on the known socio-economic, health and environmental dangers of GMOs and citing examples of countries that have banned agricultural/food applications of the technology. The biotech promoters used the platform to characterise food sovereignty campaigners as acting out scripts of supposed funders in exchange for a life of luxury in air-conditioned officers, cars and what not. The response to that was that this was cheap blackmail that would not deter opposition to risky technologies.

In the panel on strengthening biosafety institutional framework, the lead speaker mentioned two errors that National Biosafety laws could fall into were either

being too permissive or being too restrictive. A close look at the National Biosafety Management Act 2015 shows that it is highly permissive and was couched for easy entrance of GMOs and related products in Nigeria. We gave examples. First is the fact that the Governing Board of NBMA is populated by biotech promoters, besides the statutory membership of federal ministries. The only slot for NGOs is conditioned on the representative being from a conservation NGO. Membership of the Board includes NABDA, an agency set up to promote GMOs in Nigeria. This agency teamed up with Monsanto Agriculture Nigeria Limited to apply and receive permission to conduct confined field trials of two GMO maize events in Nigeria. This shows a clear case of conflict of interest and we duly called for the removal of NABDA from the board of the Biosafety Agency. If NABDA partners with Monsanto we need to be convinced that they are depending solely on funds from the Ministry of Science for the discharge of their duties and that they are working under undue external influences.

Neither farmers nor consumers are represented on the NBMA board. Indeed, the Biosafety Board as presently constituted by the Act can be seen as an old boys' club. If, as was agreed at this meeting that, the Biosafety Act is basically not to stop GMO, we need to know if it is NBMA's duty to promote GMOs.

We also stressed that there should be a board that would consider recommendations of the Biosafety Agency before permits for GMOs are granted or rejected. At present decisions by the leadership of the Biosafety Agency with regard to applications are not subject to any form of oversight in the Act. This must be redressed.

Recommendations should be subjected to consideration by either the Agency's Board or preferably by an inter-ministerial committee. It is too risky and utterly dangerous to place the food safety and future of Nigeria into the hands of one person. The GMO approvals given to Monsanto and their partner NABDA, were approved within a few months of the filing of the applications – a record of Olympian proportions.

The present Act allows for the display and receipt of comments on GMO applications to be made within only 21 days. In the case of the approval for Monsanto's GMO cotton, the application was displayed only at Zaria and Abuja. There was no public hearing or consultation before the approval was given. The Agency was acting as empowered by the clearly deficient Act. This must be rectified to ensure that sufficient time is given for submission of objections/comments and that there are public hearings before decisions are made. Such applications must also be displayed at accessible locations across the nation and where possible in language that the public can understand.

Health of Mother Earth Foundation's review and comments of the Nigerian Biosafety Act identifies many loopholes that raise red flags about the Act and thus demand action. <http://www.homef.org/sites/default/files/pubs/national-biosafety-act-homef-review.pdf> That is the Act that one of the lead presenters declared is so robust it requires no review!

Knowing the trend in development of GMOs – veering towards extreme biotechnology such as gene-editing and what is termed gene drives, scientists are working to overturn nature, avoid the sharing of traits that happens in natural reproduction, and instead pass on a

predetermined trait in every reproductive event, to the extent that wiping out species through having offsprings that are of same sex becomes a possibility. The danger in this trajectory is that for some organisms a release of just one engineered individual could wipe out all relatives in the environment over a short period of time. Experiments are ongoing on utilising this technology to fight rats on an island.

If the public requires sensitisation, what is needed is to inform the public about the Biosafety Act, so that Nigerians can judge for themselves whether GMOs are the solution to food shortages in Nigeria. It is also essential so that the public would know their rights or lack of rights in the biosafety administration in Nigeria.

Some of us do not accept that nutrition and food security must be manufactured in science laboratories. And we should never forget that Nature is the ultimate scientist.

The wise person works with Nature because fights against Nature are not only often futile but could become fatal.

It cannot be the duty of government to sensitise Nigerians about the desirability of GMOs. Government has a duty to assure Nigerians that we have a sound and truly robust Biosafety Act that they can depend on for environmental and food safety.

The biotech promoters should campaign for funding from government to carry out their experiments in their laboratories and continue to build knowledge and expertise. We are fed by smallholder farmers and experts assure that it will remain so into the future.

GMOs are not silver bullets that solve all problems. Our farmers need extension services, rural infrastructure and access to markets. We must learn from the failure of GMO cotton in India, Pakistan, Burkina Faso (watch the video) and elsewhere. Having experts make excuse for a failing and risky technology cannot be said to be the best way to do science.

If anyone needs sensitisation in Nigeria about GMOs, it is the biotech promoters. They need to be sensitised that Nigerians don't want GMOs and certainly do not want to be ambushed into eating what they do not want to eat. We have a right to choose what we eat. No one should have anything forced down his or her throat. There are other areas that modern biotechnology can focus on without having to tamper with our food systems in a process that would also introduce toxic chemicals that accompany their herbicide tolerant monocultures.



IF I WERE A PERFECTIONIST

If I were a perfectionist, I would be perfect. I sleep an hour and a night
Hold five thousand jobs same time
Can't figure out how any human could be jobless
Broke my eye in a dream
And now I see you with a new perspective
Today I take on a new job
Uncoupling sustainability from your greed, Returning the corks to unquenchable thirsts

If I were a perfectionist, I would be perfect
Just one elbow into mouths full of proud squawks, Ears open to piercing whispers
I would finally know what you almost said
And awake from my dream walk seeing you
Are totally sold to falsehood and lofty myths
And millions of wish sayings beg for interrogation
it is the fittest that survive
How come the truck pusher passed out
As coins trickled into his sweat-soaked palms
And the farmer sleeps hungry after a huge harvest?

If I were a perfectionist, I would be perfect

Only tests can assure Nigerians there is NO GMO rice in Nigeria.

HOMEF

HOMEF and other concerned groups are concerned that our regulatory agencies, such as NBMA and the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) may use the cover of “non official release of GMOs” to avoid monitoring the markets and thus allowing illegal flooding of our markets with risky and unhealthy GMOs.

The attention of Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF) has been drawn to the response of the National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA), through its Director General (DG) at a recent press conference, to the fears of Nigerians as to the presence of genetically modified (GMO) rice in the markets here. While trying to allay the fears of Nigerians, the DG was reported as stating that “there was no iota of truth in the report” and that no GM rice has either been imported or released officially into the country.

“The DG missed the point,” says Nnimmo Bassey, Director of HOMEF in reaction to the NBMA response. “The clarification the agency should make is whether there is GMO rice in Nigeria even if such were

brought in illegally. It is also not enough to say that since there are no known commercially grown GMO rice in the world and no legally released GMO rice in Nigeria, or since there is a ban on the importation of rice, therefore there is no imported rice in Nigeria. That argument cannot stand. The job of NBMA is not only to approve GMOs or to track only approved products. The Biosafety Agency has to oversee everything biosafety in Nigeria, illegal or not.”

On whether GMO rice has been commercially released anywhere in the world, we wish to recall that illegal LibertyLink variety 601 GMO rice was tested for and found in the Nigerian market by Friends of the Earth Nigeria in 2006 as well as in 2007.

“I was part of the team that collected rice samples and we tested rice from Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Cameroon,” says Mariann Bassey Orovwuje, Food Sovereignty campaigner of Friends of the Earth Africa/International. ”

That illegal rice variety was approved for release in the USA in November 2006 after complaints of its contamination was raised around the world. Indeed, at that time, the illegal rice was pulled off the shelves in some countries in Europe. Unless, and until, tests are conducted the assurances are mere talks.” According to Gbadebo Vivour-Rhodes, “ the matter of GMO contamination of our foods cannot be waived off by hosting a press conference.

NBMA should talk less and get to work on addressing fundamental deficiencies manifest in the regulatory system and ensuring that risky technologies are not allowed into Nigeria.”

HOMEF and other concerned groups are concerned that our regulatory agencies, such as NBMA and the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) may use the cover of “non official release of GMOs” to avoid monitoring the markets and thus allowing illegal flooding of our markets with risky and unhealthy GMOs.

“If NBMA has the laboratories and capacities it prides itself to have it should immediately audit all suspected food products in the Nigerian market, including those distributed to IDPs. Once suspicion is raised, it is results from laboratories that we want to hear about. The risk of contamination is always there and cannot be wished away,” Bassey added.

HOMEF reiterates its call for the urgent repeal or drastic review of the highly permissive NBMA Act 2015 to assure Nigerians of protection of our biodiversity and safety of our food systems. We also repeat our call for the withdrawal of permits hastily granted to Monsanto to conduct field trials of GMO maize and to grow GMO cotton in Zaria and neighbouring areas.



It has become a tradition for me to state clearly from the outset where I stand politically and ideologically because I simply don't believe in neutral discourses. My perspective is not one of academics and university people who choose to be neutral in face of injustices and oppression, and who justify this by saying they are objective in order to be accepted by the dominant discourses and other structures of power.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO FIGHT FOR "CLIMATE & ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE" IN THE MAGHREB?

By Hamza Hamouchene

My perspective is one of an activist, which I hope is progressive, radical, and decolonial in the sense that it is anti-systemic and resolutely in active solidarity with the oppressed and the "wretched of the earth" in their struggles to achieve social justice.

I am going to explore three themes in this article. I will start by giving an idea about the ecological and climate crises in the

Maghreb region (Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia) then go on and illustrate how the neoliberalisation of environmental governance is being enacted there. I will end by putting forward a critique of some of the concepts of "justice" used to talk about the injustices of facing and dealing with environmental degradation and anthropogenic global warming.

The ecological and climate crises in the Maghreb region

Anthropogenic climate change is already a reality in the Maghreb and it is undermining the socioeconomic and ecological basis of life in the region. Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco witnessed severe heat-waves during the summer of 2015 and an ongoing drought this year (2016), which has been catastrophic for agriculture (particularly for small peasants in Morocco). The desert is growing, eating the land around it. This places huge pressure on already-scarce water supplies. Seawater intrusion into ground water reserves, as well as groundwater overuse will put these countries in the category of those who suffer from absolute water poverty.¹

The effects of climate change and the climate crisis are compounded by environmental degradation and the exhaustion of natural resources caused by a productivist model of development based on extractive industries: oil and gas in Algeria (and to a smaller extent, Tunisia), phosphate mining (in Tunisia and Morocco), other forms of mining (silver, gold, and manganese in Morocco), and the water-intensive agribusiness model paired with tourism (in Morocco and Tunisia).

Alongside pollution, environmental destruction, and the rising prevalence of some diseases like cancer, throughout my research visits to extraction sites of fossil-fuel and mining industries, I saw clearly what David Harvey calls "accumulation by dispossession"² as well as what Samir Amin describes as "development of under-development".³

It is possible to state with confidence that the poverty in these areas is related to the existence of significant natural resources. There are numerous examples: the gas

and oil towns of Ain Salah and Hassi Messaoud in Algeria, the Gafsa phosphate mining basin and Gabes in Tunisia, the industrial town of Safi and the silver mining town of Imider in Morocco.

This is the paradox of extractivism under capitalism, where sacrifice zones are created in order to maintain the accumulation of capital. When I say sacrifice zones, I really mean it: Ain Salah in Algeria is one of the richest gas towns on the African continent but it is an ugly town with very poor infrastructure. Residents call the one hospital they have the "hospital of death". Gabes in Tunisia, the only coastal Mediterranean oasis in the world, used to be called "a paradise on earth" before the installation of a chemical factory on its shores to process the mined phosphate in the 1970s. That factory has caused an ecocide in the oasis by pillaging its waters, polluting its air and sea, and killing some of its fauna and flora. Some even talk about environmental terrorism in a context of highly saturated, anti-terrorism discourse. These are just two examples amongst many, underlying some of the ills brought about by extractivism.

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1. Hamza Hamouchene and Mika Minio-Paluello. *The Coming Revolution in North Africa: The Struggle for Climate Justice (in Arabic and French)*, 2015. Ed. Platform, Environmental Justice North Africa, Rosa Luxemburg and Ritimo.
 2. David Harvey. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford, 2005. Oxford University Press.
 3. Samir Amin. *Delinking: Towards a Polycentric World*, 1990. Zed Books

What do I mean by extractivism? The term refers to those activities that remove large quantities of natural resources that are not processed (or processed only to a limited degree), especially for export. Extractivism is not limited to minerals or oil. It is also present in farming, forestry, fishing, and even tourism with its intensive water use. I was appalled to see the construction of golf courses in arid and semi-arid regions in Morocco. Fanon has been right all along with his critique of tourism, which he regarded as a quintessential post-colonial industry where our elites have become “the organisers of parties” for their Western counterparts in the midst of overwhelming poverty.⁴

The extractivist model of development has been a mechanism of colonial and neo-colonial plunder and appropriation. It has been put into practice regardless of the sustainability of extractivist projects or even the exhaustion of resources.⁵ Dependency on metropolitan centres via the extraction and export of raw materials has remained practically unaltered to this day in Maghreb countries, albeit with some changes to a few relevant aspects of traditional extractivism by bringing about increased state intervention into these activities.

You might think that I am exaggerating, but I was surprised and saddened to repeatedly hear in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia statements comparing the ravages of post-colonial industries to the colonial ones. In some instances, it was even suggested that the French colonialists were more clement. To me, these comparisons call into question an internal

colonialism, facilitated by an extractivist model of development that dispossesses populations and shifts the resulting socio-environmental costs to them.

People in these regions have long-standing grievances and sometimes these burst into uprisings. Examples include the case of Ain Salah, where people rose up massively in 2015 against plans to frack their land and pollute their waters; the emergence of an unemployed movement in 2013 in Ouragla, close to the oil wealth pole of Hassi Messaoud; the 2008 uprising of the Gafsa mining basin (met with bloody repression by Ben Ali's regime); and the ongoing struggle of Imider communities against the royal holding silver mines that are robbing the commune's natural resources (including water) and impoverishing the area.

The neoliberal governance of the environment in the Maghreb

Faced with all these injustices and destruction, who is shaping the environmental discourse and crafting a response to climate change in the Maghreb?

4. Franz Fanon. *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1967. Penguin Books

5. Alberto Acosta: *Extractivism and Neoextractivism: two sides of the same curse*. In “Beyond Development Alternative visions from Latin America”, 2013. Transnational Institute / Rosa Luxemburg Foundation.





Institutions like the World Bank, the German GIZ, and European Union agencies are ubiquitous and vocal, organising events and publishing reports throughout these three countries. They highlight some of the dangers of a warmer world, argue for urgent action, more renewable energy, and adaptation plans. Given the shortage of alternatives, they seem to have comparatively radical positions when compared to that of local governments.

However, these institutions are politically aligned with the powerful. So their analysis of climate change and the ecological crisis doesn't include questions of class, justice, power, or colonial history. The World Bank's solutions are market-based, neoliberal, and take a top-down approach. They re-empower those who have wealth, without addressing the root causes of the ecological and climate crises. Instead of promoting the necessary emissions reductions, they give polluting permits and subsidies to multinational and extractive industries. There is no reference to the historic responsibility of the industrialised West for causing climate change, of the crimes of oil companies like BP and Shell, or the climate debt owed to the Global South.

The vision of the future pushed by the World Bank, GIZ and much of the EU is marked by economies subjugated to private profit and further privatisation of

water, land, and the atmosphere. The latest episode of this development includes the Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) being implemented in every sector, including the Moroccan renewable energy plan. These privatisations and grabs for resources fall under the rubric of "green capitalism," clearly visible in the agricultural model of these countries, especially in Morocco where water-intensive, export-oriented agribusiness dominates. The government's 2008 Plan Maroc Vert (Green Morocco Plan, PMV), supported by the World Bank and setting out the country's agricultural plan for the period between 2008–2020, aims to quintuple the value of export-oriented crops by shifting land-use away from staple cereal crops, promoting private investment in agriculture, and removing restrictions that stand in the way of private property rights.⁶

These hegemonic institutions have the financial and human resources to shape and co-opt local civil societies by funding and helping to set up numerous environmental organisations. I was astonished to see the huge number of such associations and organisations that claim to be working on environmental issues in Tunisia and Morocco.

6. Adam Hanieh. *Shifting Priorities or Business as Usual? Continuity and Change in the post-2011: IMF and World Bank Engagement with Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt*, 2014. *Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 42:1, 119-134.

To my knowledge, most of them are apolitical and seek actively, and sometimes opportunistically, EU and foreign funding.

This phenomenon has sometimes been dubbed the "NGOisation of the world." It is supposed to "empower civil society," and yet contributes to the creation of an artificial and non-independent civil society sphere, useful only for deepening the marketisation and privatisation of the social. One example worth mentioning here is the emergence of some environmental mafias where supposedly-green organisations connected to real estate circles campaign to close down the chemical factory in Sfax, Tunisia, so the land can be developed for private profit. In a few words, the funding that comes from these neoliberal institutions won't be destined to fund progressive initiatives committed to a radical transformation of society. On the contrary, this funding is a powerful tool for continued domination.

Decolonising concepts of justice: are they applicable to the Maghreb?

I want now to focus a little bit on the decolonial part of my work, which has involved an attempt to deconstruct some of the concepts I have been using. Based on my conversations with people in the Maghreb, the concept of "climate justice" is alien and unintelligible. This is not the result of a fault with "Orientals." The reason behind its unintelligibility lies in the fact that the concept is foreign and has no roots (at least not yet) in the region. The Arabic translation sounds odd and has no resonance with the locals. Even the larger concept of "environmental justice" is not widely used.

My work in the Western NGO world introduced me to such concepts. Beyond

environmental and climate justice, we have energy justice and democracy, as well as food and trade justice. It is understandable that NGOs come up with these terms to talk about certain issues through the lens of justice and democracy, all in order to attract an audience. I feel that there are some risks involved in going down that path. The tendency to fragment such notions as justice and democracy could give the illusion that one can have justice (or democracy) in one field without the other, without putting into question the whole capitalist system that generates these interlinked injustices.

Activists, intellectuals and organisations in the Maghreb working on issues of climate change and environmental degradation generally do not use these concepts. And in the few cases where they are used, it is the exception rather than the rule. In some instances they are imported from Europe without critical reflection and proper definitions. I strongly believe that importing and imposing concepts on populations is not only counter-productive but could end up helping to maintain some of the hegemonic structures between the North and South, as this domination can also exist discursively and epistemologically.

While it is still useful to interact with and learn from movements elsewhere, we need always to contextualise our concepts and discourses and look at their history.

For example, environmental justice (EJ) is born (in its sociological usage) in the United States as the result of struggles against waste dumping in North Carolina in 1982. Since the 1980s, hundreds of reports have shown that "people of colour" and low-income populations have suffered from greater environmental harm from waste sites, refineries, and transportation infrastructure than white and well-off communities.

For the people involved in this struggle, the fight against environmental injustice was equated with the fight against racism.⁷

Climate justice has been introduced and developed by Environmental Justice Organisations and emerged during the early 2000s in an era of extreme, globalized state and market failure. Climate justice only arrived on the international scene as a coherent political approach in the wake of the failure of a more collaborative strategy between major environmental NGOs and the global capitalist managerial class.⁸ It was the outcome of linking social justice to geographically-specific ecological problems. The lineage of the climate justice movement includes a variety of traditions and shows that it was never separated from other struggles such as anti-racist environmentalism, the fight against Northern financial domination of the South, and the global justice movement that came to the foreground around the 1999 Seattle WTO protest.

Do we have then to rely on terms such as "climate justice" to talk about the unjust politics of dealing with climate change? Or, do we need to rethink our concepts, situating them more precisely to focus on specific issues that directly affect the livelihoods of, in this case, Maghrebi people - issues such as water scarcity, drought, industrial pollution, and sovereignty over resources. I am one of those who favour the latter scenario.

There is always an ecological element in the struggles I've come across, but that dimension was secondary to more pressing issues of socio-economic rights such as jobs, development of urban and rural infrastructure, the distribution of generated wealth, more popular inclusion in decision-making processes. Therefore,

environmental problems in the Maghreb (and elsewhere) need to be analysed in a comprehensive way with consideration to social justice, entitlements, and fair redistribution.

Conclusion

How can we plan for a just transition towards renewable energies and sustainable ways of producing our food and materials when our natural resources are being plundered by multinationals and when our land and water resources are taken over by agribusiness and destructive industries?

We need to fight for sovereignty and democratic control over natural resources and energy and food systems. We need to fight against land and water grabs. And we must strive for more transparency against the corruption in extractive industries.

Every year, the world's political leaders, advisers, and media gather for another United Nations Climate Conference of the Parties (COP). But despite the global threat, governments allow carbon emissions to rise and the crisis to escalate. Corporate power has hijacked the talks and promotes more profit-making "false solutions." The Paris COP (COP21) in December 2015 received much attention, but the political leaders failed to deliver the necessary cuts to ensure survival. In this respect, the COP22 that will be held in Morocco in November 2016 won't be different.

7. Joan Martinez-Alier et al. *Between activism and science: grassroots concepts for sustainability coined by Environmental Justice Organizations*, 2014. *Journal of Political Ecology*, Vol 21, 19-60.

8. Patrick Bond, *Politics of Climate Justice: Paralysis Above, Movement Below*, 2012. University of KwaZulu-Natal Press

In order to design and implement a just transition away from fossil fuels, we need to recapture our environment from the clutches of market mechanisms and recast the debate around issues of justice, accountability, and the collective good.

We must move away from the logic of capital that compartmentalises, commodifies, and privatises our livelihoods and our lands. At the centre of this lie meaningful and radical forms of local engagement and organising, as a counterpoint to the hegemony of those formalized international negotiations that submit to the dictates of the market.



Hamza Hamouchene is an Algerian writer, activist and co-founder of Algeria Solidarity Campaign (ASC). His writings appeared in the Guardian, Huffington Post, Counterpunch, Jadaliyya, New Internationalist and openDemocracy.

FEARS GROW OVER RUMORED NIGERIAN REBEL TALKS

After months of violence, threats and unofficial talks, the main militants in Nigeria's oil-rich delta region have agreed to dialogue with the government. In what it calls a show of good faith, the Niger Delta Avengers -- the group blamed for pipeline bombings which recently brought local oil production to below one million barrels per day -- has declared a cease-fire.

So has the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, or MEND, another militant outfit believed to wield substantial influence in the region.

The groups say their agitation revolves around alleged exploitative and unethical activities by oil companies as well as a failure of the Nigerian state to develop the region which supplies so much of the country's wealth.

Nigeria depends almost entirely on revenue from the crude oil found in the delta.

However, critics have told Anadolu Agency they fear the groups are seeking a pay-off similar to a 2009 amnesty scheme for former militants which has swallowed millions of dollars.



Nevertheless, in spite of its recent deployment of troops to the area as part of Operation Crocodile Smile, Abuja has said it is willing to sit down with the insurgents.

Analysts say the government could no longer ignore the militants whose activities Vice President Yemi Osinbajo on Tuesday said had led to daily losses of at least one million barrels of crude in the past six months. Nigeria had aimed for daily production of 2.2 million barrels per day in its 2016 budget estimates. This came as the price of crude hovers between \$40 and \$45 per barrel, down by about 60 percent from the 2014 average.

However, opinions are divided on the proposed talks.

Some have warned the government not to talk to the militants, fearing it may lead to payouts after the groups sabotaged the economy. These skeptics want the government to crush the insurgents,

dismissing them as criminals.

An ongoing government amnesty program for militants who embraced peace in 2009 has gulped millions of dollars in monthly payouts.

The state says around \$345 million (\$203 million in 2014; \$77.4 million in 2015; and \$64.5 million in 2016) has been spent on the monthly payouts over the last three years alone.

The 2009 amnesty -- backed by former President Umaru Yar'Adua -- followed wanton destruction of infrastructure in the region by militants who said they were fighting for a fair share of oil revenue. At least 30,000 former militants bought into the amnesty, although there are indications more former fighters have been integrated.

Those against the new talks say such huge payments enrich only a few people from the troubled area while providing an incentive for others to embrace violence.

Dialogue

Another challenge, they contend, is the propensity for other violent groups emerging if those who sabotaged government properties are compensated in the end. "As things stand now, the best way to bring about peace in the region must include dialogue," Nnimmo Bassey, a senior pan-African environmentalist, told Anadolu Agency. He stressed the need to douse tension and then address the real issues in the region such as restoring livelihoods and bringing development to its people.

Bassey -- director of the Health of Mother Earth Foundation, an environmental think-tank and advocacy group -- added: "This would include oil companies effectively maintaining their facilities and the government strictly enforcing regulations. "We must show the citizens that human life and the health of the environment are of higher importance and value than crude oil and foreign exchange. "This posture is the best way to show that antisocial behaviors are undesirable and counterproductive.

"When we elevate crude oil and the U.S. dollar above the health of the environment and our people we simply show the points at which counter actions may be taken to catch the government's attention. That is what breeds militancy." Ryan Cummings, a security analyst with Signal Risk, said he favored the government "making better deals" directly with oil communities instead of dealing with militants. "I believe that compensatory mechanisms provided to militants in the absence of addressing the socio-economic grievances in the Niger Delta will incentivize, as opposed to de-incentivize, militancy in the region," Cummings told Anadolu Agency.

According to him, the post-2009 amnesty scheme was supposed to be a stop-gap measure to help the government end

rampant violence and implement much-needed reforms which would create a permanent peace. "Consequently, as long as the government continues to treat the symptoms and not the causes of the violence, either through compensation or military action, it's not going to bring a long-term peace to the Niger Delta," added Cummings.

'No alternative' to talks

However, Ledum Mitee, who chaired the government committee which pushed the 2009 amnesty, told Anadolu Agency there could be no "credible alternative" to the government sitting down with the militants: "The suggestion that dialogue would encourage violence stems from the wrong perception that dialogue is synonymous with or must necessarily end in appeasements." Mitee who was also a close colleague of the late non-violent environmental activist Ken Saro-Wiwa -- hung along with eight others in 1995 by former Nigerian strongman Sani Abacha - - believes talking to militants while ignoring the main issues that fuel their agitation is a non-starter. "It is wrong, in my view, to think that the problem of the Niger Delta was militancy," he insisted. "The problem was of development, environmental pollution and marginalization. Now, militancy was what I would call an extreme expression of people's reaction to that state of affairs," the activist added.

Although talks between both sides seem inevitable, analysts say the future of such engagement lies in how much sincerity both parties bring to the table. However, Abuja has yet to announce any start date or appoint a negotiating team.

Culled with permission from <http://m.yenisafak.com/en/world/fears-grow-over-rumored-nigerian-rebel-talks-2528932>

THE GROWING MENACE OF THE MONSANTO-INDUCED PRO-GMO LOBBY IN NIGERIA

PREMIUM TIMES is very concerned about the determined march by the US-based multinational, Monsanto, to impose Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) into agricultural production in Nigeria.

They have found willing accomplices in two government agencies – the National Biotechnology Development Agency and the National Biosafety Management Agency – that are taking the lead in opening doors to GMOs.

In mid August 2016, three Nigerian ministries held a meeting of biotechnology and biosafety experts at the Sheraton Hotel in the presence of the ministers of agriculture and rural development, environment and science and technology. Virtually all the scientists invited were prominent proponents of GMOs. Key scientists from the Institute of Agricultural Research in Ahmadu Bello University, who had been drawing the attention of Nigerians to the dangers of GMOs, were not invited.

Not surprisingly, the so-called experts' consultative meeting was turned into a tribune to sing the alleged benefits of GMOs. Rather than a real debate on the issue, the meeting resolved "to sensitise Nigerians on the benefit of genetically modified organisms (GMOs)".

One of the most despicable aspects of the

meeting was the unfounded claim "that GMOs started from the time of Adam and Eve in the Biblical Garden of Eden." This argument, popularised by Monsanto, sets out to deliberately confuse conventional breeding of crops with genetic engineering, which involves splicing genes and transferring genetic material from one species to another in a laboratory, a late 20th century invention.

Immediately after the meeting, the Open Forum Agricultural Biotechnology (OFAB), an NGO funded by the GMO lobby, organised a training workshop for 105 advocates who are to engage in propaganda to convince government agencies and the public that the only way Nigeria can feed its population is by accepting GMO technology.

Meanwhile, while the official position of government is that they are reviewing and reflecting on whether to accept GMOs, the Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF) has revealed the fact that GMOs have been approved to be grown in Nigeria and that the approval was surreptitious. There is an argument over whether the approval was for a two-year trial process or for permanent production, and whatever may be the case, Nigerians should rise to oppose it as it is.

The assertions made at the meeting that GMOs do not have serious health hazards are based on studies that are not independent i.e. they are typically carried out or funded by GMO companies themselves. The longest period over which tests in such studies have been carried out is 90 days – too short a period for the growth of cancers to become apparent or damage to organs such as the liver and kidneys to be detected.

Data from tests carried out by GMO companies and the corresponding results are kept secret – a 2010 article in the International Journal of Biological Science that reviewed the health risks of GMOs could only obtain the data by court order and lawyers. Independent scientists have shown evidence that Monsanto's GMO crops are genetically enhanced to tolerate the use of the herbicide [glyphosate which was declared a possible carcinogen by the World Health Organisation's International Agency for Research on Cancer \(IARC\)](#).

The current Monsanto project to grow glyphosate infused maize in Nigeria is a direct threat to our health as recent studies have linked glyphosate to health effects such as degeneration of the liver and kidney, and non-Hodgkin lymphoma.

PREMIUM TIMES is concerned that at no time has the Nigerian government taken a policy decision to approve GMOs and given the health dangers alone of this technology, it is irresponsible to allow this. Nonetheless, three Nigerian ministers would participate in a lobby workshop in which only Monsanto approved apologists would come to put pressure on government to sustain their approval to start production. We cannot allow the National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA) to sell our future for whatever temporary inducement it might have received from Monsanto. How can we as a nation allow Monsanto Agriculture Nigeria Ltd to register in the country and

start production without explicit approval from the Federal Executive Council and the National Assembly?

Burkina Faso, which took the lead on GMO production in Africa, decided this year to abandon its GMO cotton. The inferior lint quality of Monsanto products and the enslavement of buying expensive seeds and chemicals from Monsanto every year – for an income less than that generated before introducing the GMO cotton – were cited as reasons for this step.

It should be recalled that for a long time, Burkinabé cotton was renowned for its high quality following a highly successful non-GMO breeding programme founded by the French government and spanning 70 years. The main goal of the breeding programme was to create cultivars that were well adapted to the growing conditions in West Africa and had the desired quality characteristics, such as a high ginning ratio, which is the percentage of the desired cotton fibre per unit weight of cotton delivered to the factory and long staple length.

After the type of well-funded lobby similar to what is going on in Nigeria today, the Burkinabe Government foolishly decided to abandon the home-grown approach and follow the GMO route of Monsanto. After six years of commercial production, the country discovered that the quality and world market price of its cotton had plummeted. Cotton is the second-biggest source of revenue for the impoverished West African country, after gold. It is this same GMO cotton, which failed in Burkina Faso that is now being introduced to Nigeria.

PREMIUM TIMES calls on the Ministers of Agriculture, the Environment and Science and Technology to take the side of Nigerian interest and direct the National

Biosafety Management Agency to withdraw the present authorisation issued for the production of GMO crops.

Given our fragile ecosystems and stressed environment, we must take our biosafety seriously and avoid the path of introducing crops that are dangerous to the health of our people and our environment. Nineteen European countries that care about the health of their people have completely banned genetically modified crops. Even the Russian State Duma recently passed a bill banning all import and production of genetically modified organisms in the country. We must not allow Nigeria to be turned into a dumping ground for what

other countries have sensibly rejected.

Nigerian research centres such as the Institute of Agricultural Research in Ahmadu Bello University and the Institute of Tropical Agriculture in Ibadan have been developing very successful varieties of crops using conventional methods. These research centres should be supported. It is irresponsible to dump what our scientists are developing and opt for the products of a US-based multinational that wants to enslave us to their seeds and herbicides in addition to introducing health hazards.



We need to take a close look at the National Biosafety Management Act 2015, which is highly permissive and was couched for easy entrance of GMOs and related products into Nigeria. The Governing Board of the agency is composed largely of biotech promoters and Monsanto advocates. Neither farmers nor consumers are represented on the board. The present Act allows for the display and receipt of comments on GMO applications to be made within only 21 days. In the case of the approval for Monsanto's GMO cotton, the application was displayed only at Zaria and Abuja. There was no public hearing or consultation before the approval was given.

The Agency was acting as empowered by the clearly deficient Act. This must be rectified to ensure that sufficient time is given for submission of objections/comments and that there are public hearings before decisions are made.

PREMIUM TIMES is aware of the imperative of addressing the twin challenges confronting our agriculture today: an inability to meet domestic food requirements, and an inability to export at quality levels required for market success.

The former problem is a productivity challenge driven by an input system and farming model that is largely inefficient. As a result, we are faced with an aging population of farmers who do not have enough seeds, fertilisers, irrigation, crop protection and related support to be successful.

The latter challenge is driven by an equally inefficient system for setting and enforcing food quality standards, as well as poor knowledge of target markets. Insufficient food testing facilities, a weak

inspectorate system in the Ministry, and poor coordination among relevant federal agencies serve to compound early stage problems such as poor knowledge of permissible contaminant levels.

We must successfully address the challenges of food insecurity and the economic costs of importing \$3 to \$5 billion worth of food annually, especially wheat, rice, fish and sundry items, including fresh fruits. That challenge is best addressed by looking inward.

The best solution is investing in agricultural research in the country. Our governments should engage its research institutions and bodies at different locations in the country in conducting research for increased agricultural productivity and in making the research results available to farmers and other actors in the agricultural development of the states.

That is the way to go. Was it not just a couple of months ago that the Institute of Agricultural Research of Ahmadu Bello University found a cure for the terrible blight of the tomato Ebola disease that wiped out fresh stew from our homes recently?

Let's empower our research institutes for our own good.

C u l l e d f r o m
<http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/209477-editorial-the-growing-menace-of-the-monsanto-induced-pro-gmo-lobby-in-nigeria.html>

A CALL FOR CONSERVATION WITH A CONSCIENCE: NO PLACE FOR GENE DRIVES IN CONSERVATION

New technologies have played an important role in protecting life on earth, and we the undersigned support innovation and science in conservation. However, we believe that a powerful and potentially dangerous technology such as gene drives, which has not been tested for unintended consequences nor fully evaluated for its ethical and social impacts, should not be promoted as a conservation tool.

From the climate impact of the internal combustion engine to the synthetic chemicals that have poisoned the web of life, we have learned some lessons. We now understand the serious need for precaution when radical new technologies arise, especially with gene drives, which change the rules of genetics and inheritance and have consequences beyond our comprehension.

Gene drives have the potential to dramatically transform our natural world and even humanity's relationship to it. The invention of the CRISPR-CAS9 tool and its application to gene drives (also known as a "mutagenic chain reaction") gives technicians the ability to intervene in evolution, to engineer the fate of an entire species, to dramatically modify ecosystems, and to unleash large-scale environmental changes, in ways never thought possible before. The assumption of such power is a moral and ethical threshold that must not be crossed without great restraint.

We the undersigned leaders and practitioners in the fields of science, policy, environmental protection, conservation, and law are alarmed that some conservation organizations have accepted funding for and are promoting the release of engineered gene drive organisms into the wild. They propose to use extinction as a deliberate tool, in direct contradiction to the moral purpose of conservation organizations, which is to protect life on earth. We are also concerned about the potential use of gene drives by the military and in agriculture. We note that current regulatory schemes are not capable of evaluating and governing this new technology.

Given the obvious dangers of irretrievably releasing genocidal genes into the natural world, and the moral implications of taking such action, we call for a halt to all proposals for the use of gene drive technologies, but especially in conservation.

For more information: www.synbiowatch.org/gene-drives

Join the growing list of those opposing gene drives in conservation. If you represent an organization that would like to sign this letter please email: genedrives@synbiowatch.org to add your organization's name.

Environment and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria: Empowering People, Taking Climate Action and Protecting the Environment

By Cadmus Atake

who was at the 10th National Council on Environment held at Ta al Conference Centre, Lafia, Nasarawa State 5th -19th August 2016

The NCE on Environment is the apex decision making body on the Environment concerns and related issues in Nigeria. It is a forum for brainstorming to initiate and articulate policies towards coordinating sustainable environmental management across the country.

This Council holds annually to review the state of the environment, exchange ideas, harmonize issues and adopt suitable policies that addresses environmental challenges, which includes climate change, drought and desertification, land management, flood and erosion, pollution, land degradation, sanitation and waste management.

Restoration of the Niger Delta

The program began with a presentation Dr. Otive Igbuzor.

He began the presentation titled - Restoration of the Niger Delta by highlighting the cause of the pollution in the land to multinational oil corporations operating in the region which has lead to loss of livelihood for the people and also has lead to various forms of diseases. And with these occurrences the youths resulted to violence and militancy which the government responded to with the use of military, dialogues and later the amnesty program which has not been too effective due to lack of transparency.

The presenter went further to appreciate the present administration for the effort in implementing the UNEP report on the cleanup of Ogoni land and also for inaugurating the board of trustees. In his conclusion he recommended that the whole region should be restored through cleaning up of whole area and genuine effort of government to resolve the issues of pollution from multinational oil companies operating in the region.

GMO Debate

Following the presentation from Otive Igbuzor, Mr. Rufus Edegba, Director General of National Biosafety Management Agency was invited to make his presentation on

Rufus Edegba began his presentation by giving the definition of what GMOs are and went further to explain that due to the issues of climate change the world is been faced with now with various issues of food shortages and this has given room for science and technology to be used to produced various food crops and plants through the use of biotechnology to produce climate and pest resistant varieties of crops which will help to curb hunger and food shortages in the world.

He added that we now lack enough cotton for the textile industries to produce fabrics and so cotton seeds have been selected and enhanced to produce high breed varieties that will meet the production needs and increase the cotton output for fabric production in the country.

GMOs are also used in the production of drugs although they have been various debates about GMOs going on but GMOs and Biotech are safe ways of producing varieties that will boost our systems.

He went further to explain with the use of diagram how crops are been Genetically modified highlighted the fact that the issues of toxicity and chemical compositions of GMOs have been fully taken care of and it has been proven by WHO and other international scientific organizations that GMO crops are safe for human consumption and as a matter of fact the Nigeria Biosafety Regulation Agency will always be available to test and ensure they are safe.

In conclusion, beside the provision of food and drugs GMOs production will also provide employment for the unemployed youths in the country as a matter of fact GMOs are safe.

Comment

Following the presentation the facilitator

gave room for few questions to be asked.

One of the participants, Priscilla Achakpa – Explained that GMOs are not good for Nigerians because we have enough productive lands and so we can produce our own food, secondly if US an advanced nation could call for the labeling of GMO products means something there is a problem with it, more so if it was rejected in Burkinafaso our close neighbours in Africa then it means it is not good for us, so we don't need GMOs in Nigeria she urged.

Another speaker however agreed to the introduction of GMOs in Nigeria but with a restriction to the fact that it can only be used to extend the shelf lives of our farm produce because in Nigeria we do not have good preservation system and so most of our crops get spoilt easily and wasted, she added that either we like it or not we already have these GMOs in our markets already.

While another participant intervined that GMOs are advanced produced crops which we can derive benefits from, so if the GMOs has negative impacts then the Biosafety can screen and regulates these impacts that's why we have the agency in Nigeria to take care of these issues, so let's leave the agency to regulate the GMO crops and product in Nigeria.

Gully Erosion in the Nigerian Environment

After the responses from Mr. Rufus Egbegba, the Project Coordinator Nigerian Erosion and Watershed Management Project (NEWMAP) Salisu Dahiru gave his presentation on Country Strategic Context on Addressing Gully Erosion in the Nigerian Environment.



He began his presentation by addressing the impacts of erosion in the Nigerian environment and went further to explain the activities of NEWMAP to ensuring that the issues of erosion in the nation does not cause further harm than what it has already done in some states of the nation.

He explained that NEWMAP projects cuts across some erosion impacted states in the Southern and Northern parts of Nigeria, using a slide display to show the impacted states and the extent of impacts and the interventions done by NEWMAP in these States.

The project initially was designed to accommodate 7 states but at present we are working in about 19 states.

Causes of Erosions- Erosion are usually caused by poor construction of roads and building sites, secondly weak land and environmental planning, and thirdly weak soil surface that can easily be eroded by runoff water.

He went further to explain that the activities of NEWMAP in these states have been supported by World Bank grants intervention of \$64million (Sixty-four million US Dollars), GEF \$4m and the Federal Government \$3.4million.

Although there have been some challenges he said, which are lack of contributions from the various impacted state government and also the federal government is unable to meet up with their promises and pledges so these leaves us with lack of enough funds to complete our projects he concluded.

Presentation by the Director Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) John Ogbe

He began by explaining that every projects carried in the nation is backed by EIA from the Ministry. Our project cuts across from the oil and gas sector, constructions and to river dredging from Escravous to Warri and other areas.

He added that EIA is a very important component of any project process in our environment and we are backed by the EIA Acts. So far any project to commence and be completed there must be an EIA which is to be prepared by the ministry domicile at the federal level.

In response to the brief NEWMAP and EIA presentation various questions were raised by participants.

One of the participants asked to know what NEWMAP is doing concerning the issues of tree planting and regeneration in watershed areas to curb the menace of erosions in the states, and secondly NEWMAP should state clearly their activities and progress reports all through inception.

Comments

A participant from Kwara state asked about the rationale behind some projects in his states that are ongoing without an EIA report, when they contractors were asked to produce the EIA report because the projects was already affecting the peoples livelihood, we were told it is still in process at the federal level, so why is the EIA process domicile at the federal level and why are the state and stakeholders not involved in the process?

While another participants asked about the decommissioning stages of the EIA process, and why is it not active after project completions?

• Responses from EIA Director

He responded to the questions by explaining that the EIA directorate is domicile at the federal level in other to create room for standardization and uniformity in the EIA process. He gave an example with the Ekuri forest and super highway project were the state government was ordered to stop the construction of the road, explaining that it is only the federal government that has

the power to stop any of such projects with an EIA that will harm the livelihood of the people, that's why it is domicile there.

Secondly in the case of the lower Niger drainage which cuts across about 21 local government areas and two states cannot be handled by the state but by the federal government alone.

He went further to look into the issue of decommissioning were he explained that decommissioning is part of the EIA process although some projects life span is about 25years and above but we should know that EIA process is not for profit generation but for a positive partnership he concluded.

ON REDD+

In his presentation he highlighted the importance and viability of REDD+ to profit the Nigerian economically and went further to explain what REDD+ stands for (Reducing Emissions through Deforestation and Degradation) and also the origin of REDD+ in COP13 and also added that presently REDD+ only operates in just three states in Nigeria with Cross River as the pilot state in 2012.

He concluded by urging everyone to key into the project as it will enable the reduction of emissions, deforestation and degradations and at the same time boosts the nation's economy.

Comments

After the presentation Priscilla Achakpa intervened by saying that the REDD+ project has not been made open as the people are not really aware of what the projects are all about and if it even exists, she however suggested that NGOs and CSOs should be informed and carried along on the activities of the projects as there must be room for sensitization both on the community and CSOs/NGOs basis.



Following her intervention the permanent secretary FMENV who moderated the sessions added that he has not heard of the REDD+ project until this presentation by the director on forestry.

After the interventions the Director responded by pledging to ensure that they will make provisions for proper sensitization of the various actors on the REDD+ projects in Nigeria as well as the general public so that everyone can benefit from the projects, he concluded.

The meeting came to a close after the response from the director with a vote of thanks and closing remarks from the permanent secretary FMENV –Kwara State, she thanked the participants and informed them that the various deliberations has added value and knowledge to her life and closed up the meeting for the day.

Day two

The program for the day began with the welcoming the Hon. Minister of Environment, Amina J. Mohammed and the Hon. Minister of State, Environment accompanied by other dignitaries and His Excellency, the Governor of Nasarawa State, Umaru Tanko Al-makura and His Royal Highness, Alhaji (Dr.) Isa Mustapha

Agwai I, CFR, the Emir of Lafia and Chairman, Nasarawa State Council of Chiefs.

Following their arrival a prayer was made for the nation and a welcome message from the commissioner of Environment Nasarawa State.

Following the welcome words from the commissioner various good will messages were delivered by various state representatives, NGOs and CSOs. The NGOs and CSOs goodwill message was presented by Priscilla Achakapa, she called for close collaboration between NGOs, CSOs and the Federal Ministry of Environment on the various environmental projects and issues in the nation and also urged the ministry to always include the NGOs and CSOs in their activities at all times, she thanked the ministry for organizing the program.

Presentation By Minister of State for Environment

Following the various goodwill messages the Minister of State for Environment Ibrahim Usman Jibri gave a presentation on the use of SDI (Spatial Data Images) for urban planning and Renewal.

He explained the use of SDI to identify and classify areas in the FCT that needs urban and rural renewals and also added that these areas need to be restructured both in health systems and other infrastructures in order to give the FCT a new face lift.

He gave an overview of overcrowded communities and areas in the FCT that needs to be reconstructed and restructured and urged the ministry to employ the use of this tool in restructuring and reconstructing the Nigerian Environment he concluded.

Address from the Minister of Environment

In her address she thanked the Governor of Nasarawa State for hosting the Ministry to the 10th NCE meeting in his State and assured everyone that the ministry will ensure that the issues presented are considered and attended to accordingly. She highlighted the various interventions and activities of the ministry since she assumed office as the Hon. Minister of Environment.

She explained that the ministry has helped in the suspension of the export of Semi processed wood in order to curb deforestation because presently Nigeria is losing 1.5million trees per year.

Also the ministry has intervened in the preventing deaths and retardation of over 300 children with the remediation of Shikira project in the Northern region of Nigeria.

She further explained that the ministry has also organized the first ever expert meeting on GMOs so as to enable us understand the safety issues surrounding the GMO consumption and production in Nigeria.

In addition, she notified the participants that the ministry is reposition the structure of NCE starting from 2017 by putting in place mechanism to accommodate the launch of the first ever green bond and debt for nature swap enable private sector participation.

There are no federal Nigeria but we are all from States and local government areas of Nigeria so we will continue to seek strong partnership with states and stakeholders on the cleanup of the Niger Delta and on every environmental issues in Nigeria and PPP will be the key to actualize this goals and objectives in the ministry.

She explained that this is the first time the federal government is taking on three

issues at the same time- Health, Security and Environment.

In conclusion she promised that the ministry will always be ready to partner with the women and youths in actualizing these goals and objectives.

Address by the Nasarawa State Governor, Umaru Tanko Al-makura

He thanked the organizers of NCE and explained that his state is highly affected by climate change as they experiences various environmental problems, ranging from erosions and flooding, although the state has abundance of natural resources they are not been harnessed. He used the medium in calling for investors to invest in the states natural resources.

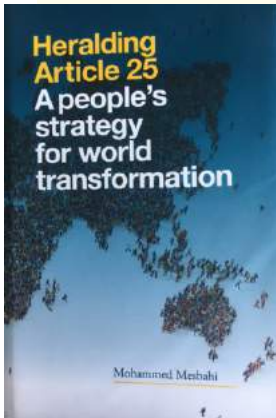
He after wards thanked director of NEWMAP for adding Nasarawa state to the NEWMAP intervention projects. He further explained that despite the much natural resources in the state they have not identify any emissions from their environment but regulators are currently going around to ensure that nothing of such is going on in the state he informed the participants.

More so the state is not left out of the negative impacts of climate change as the state was among the states affected in 2012 flooding, but presently with the timely warnings we are taking all necessary precautions and awareness campaigns are been carried out to initiate early warning to communities prone to flooding. Another issue bothering us now in our state is that our resources are been over stretched as a result of pollution explosion due to our closeness to the FCT.

However we are grateful to the ministry for the building of waste process sites in the state we have surveyed the dump sites and in few days time we will be handed the facility, in his concluding words he thanked the minister for the cleanup of Ogoniland

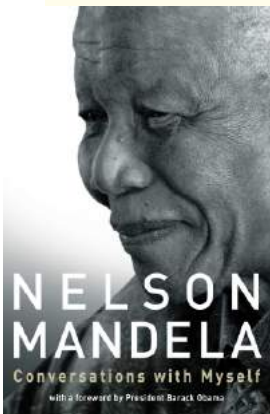
BOOKS

YOU SHOULD READ



HERALDING ARTICEL 25 A people's strategy for World transformation by Mohammed Mesbahi

After so many years of political inaction only the massed goodwill of ordinary people can bring about an end to poverty in a world of plenty through enormous and continual protests across all countries. So let's take the path of least resistance and jointly herald the long-agreed human rights of Article 25—for adequate food, housing, healthcare and social security for all—knowing that this is the surest route for impelling our governments to redistribute resources and restructure the global economy, writes Mohammed Mesbahi.



Conversations With Myself gives readers access to the private man behind the public figure: from letters written in the darkest hours of Mandela's twenty-seven years of imprisonment to the draft of an unfinished sequel to Long Walk to Freedom. Here he is making notes and even doodling during meetings, or recording troubled dreams on the desk calendar of his cell on Robben Island; writing journals while on the run during the anti-apartheid struggles in the early 1960s, or conversing with friends in almost seventy hours of recorded conversations. In these pages he is neither an icon nor a saint; here he is like you and me.



Natural resources like oil and minerals are the heart of many conflicts around the world. Living in fear explores the general relation between wars, conflicts and natural resources, focusing in particular on two African countries; Democratic Republic of Congo(DRC) and South Sudan. Both Countries have gone through some forms of bloodiest wars and conflicts in recent decades in the world such that peace efforts have been made at the UN level to try to minimize the conflict situations. This book aims to provide a succinct but comprehensive overview of both conflicts and show their relation with natural resources

WHAT DO THESE anti-GMO ACTIVISTS WANT?

By **PATRICK GBADEBO RHODES-VIVOUR**

On Monday, August 15, I was privileged to be a panelist at the 'experts meeting on bio-safety & bio-technology-GMOs' organised by the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture. In attendance were the ministers of Science & Technology, Agriculture and Environment.

In their opening remarks, they made it clear that they look to these conversations to give them guidance in respect to policy direction of GMO's in agriculture. The event though apparently organised by the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment, was dominated mainly by Pro-GMO voices such as NABDA and OFAB, as well as several Pro-GMO scientists and bio-safety administrators.

All the keynote speeches and papers presented were by Pro-GMO DGs and scientists. In a meeting apparently put together to shed light on this GMO controversy, it was unfortunate that these presentations were half-truths, belittling

health concerns as well as contrary scientific opinions that have been on the rise.

Several presenters pointed out to the fact that this technology is not new, it has existed for over 20 years and has been used in America and Canada. None of them were interested or curious to explain, if a technology has been used for over 20 years, shouldn't it be normalised by now? If indeed there was no cause for concern, should it not be controversy free by now? Why is it that Japan a science and technology powerhouse and the third largest economy in the world have tight restrictions on GMO commercialisation and consumption?

Why is it that six out of the G8 countries (the most powerful in relation to their economy and development), have strong restrictions on the cultivation and consumption of GMO? Apart from USA and Canada who are the main originators and producers of this technology.

In June 2015, the EU banned the importation of Nigeria's dried beans because the produce contained extra ordinarily high levels of pesticides which are dangerous to human health. The rejected beans were found to contain between 0.03mg per kilogramme to 4.6mg/kg of dichlorvos pesticide, when the acceptable maximum residue limit is 0.01mg/kg.

The embargo is a reflection of our inability to adhere to global standards. Despite efforts by the Federal Government and its relevant agencies to lift the ban this year, the ban has been further extended for another three years. According to the EU officials, the ban was extended because: "due to the continued presence of dichlorvos (pesticide) in dried beans imported from Nigeria and maximum residue levels of pesticides shows that compliance with food law requirement as regards pesticide residual cannot be achieved in the short term."

There are four key points to take from this:

- The EU does not compromise the health of its citizens.
- The Nigerian regulatory system does not have the capacity to look out for the wellbeing and health of Nigerian citizens. After all, we are still eating these toxic beans.
- No one told us that the beans we have been consuming is toxic and this won't have been an issue if the EU did not raise the alarm.
- Contamination of our food occurs because our farmers are not getting the extension services they should be getting. Most of them are illiterates and can barely read the instructions, Extension services

are important to help farmers learn best practices.

From this example, it is clear that Nigeria does not have the robust infrastructure required to regulate and monitor basic agricultural practice. How then do these agencies imagine they can monitor and regulate GMOs.

None of the presenters spoke about contamination of natural varieties caused by wind drift of pollen, neither did any of them speak about the fact that these Monsanto, Sygenta, Bayer and Dupont GMO products do not self-proliferate.

Every year our government would have to buy these seeds from these foreign multinationals at prices significantly higher than those of natural seeds adding further pressure on our currency. It is for this reason that India is considering kicking Monsanto out of India and reverting to its indigenous cotton. They have also put price controls and restrictions on Monsanto's cotton seeds.

Not one of the presenters spoke about weed and pest resistance that has emerged in America, India, Brazil and everywhere GMO's are planted, leaving farmers to resort to older more toxic pesticides and herbicides.

Despite everyone agreeing that GMO foods should be labelled, not one presenter explained how labelling would be achieved in a country where 95 per cent of food consumed are purchased unpackaged in their raw state from market stalls as opposed to grocery stores.

Do they plan to revolutionise the food processing and packaging industry overnight?

How would the woman selling roasted corn on the side of the road label her roasted corn? With Monsanto as a major sponsor and partner of NABDA and OFAB, why don't these institutions take Monsanto and Sygenta to task as to why they repeatedly fight labelling laws in America, consistently denying the consumers the right to know if their food is GMO? Are they not proud of their products? What do they have to hide? For a technology that is not new, how is it that in its birthplace, it is still riddled with controversy, so much so these companies would rather hide rather than proudly label their products?

One would hope that a regulatory agency whose mandate is to secure the lives as relates to GMOs, would at least investigate all the scientific claims linking cancers to GMO consumption, endocrine disruption, colorectal cancers as well as the effects of these pesticides and herbicides associated with GMOs on human health. Yet not a single mention of these considerations was made.

So what do these anti-GMO activists want? We want truth, we want an honest conversation that looks into all these considerations and puts the health and well-being of Nigerian citizens first. We the people must remind the government

that they work for us, it is us that would determine what is good for us to eat. Not half-truth telling scientist that choose to ignore not only scientific data but precedents set by some of the most scientifically advanced countries in the world.

Our research institutions need to be strengthened, so that our scientist would not be susceptible to the manipulations of foreign interest. Food security is a major aspect of national security and solely Nigerian scientist with the interest of Nigeria at heart should be giving clearance to operate in these high impact programmes.

The government needs to start investigating and researching the natural and organic agricultural practices of nations like Russia, Japan and France. It needs to investigate agro-economic agriculture and integrated pest management as well as technologies that use nature to fight nature e.g. new technology that uses air propulsion to remove weeds as well as low tech roller weed cutters.

<http://m.guardian.ng/opinion/what-do-these-anti-gmo-activists-want/>

ECOLOGICAL DEFENDERS RESOLVE TO MONITOR OGONI CLEAN UP

Report and Resolutions of Ecological Defenders Consultative Meeting and Training held at Aluebo Town Hall, Ogale, Nchia-Elеме on the 26th of July 2016

On Wednesday the 26th of July 2016, the Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF) held a training and consultative meeting for community environmental monitors, with specific emphasis on the planned clean-up of polluted sites in Ogoni. The meeting held at the Aluebo Town Hall, Ogale, Nchia-Elеме, Ogoni.

Attendance was mostly from environmental monitors who had previously been identified and trained from the four Ogoni local government areas in Rivers state, as well as civil society activists, community activists and the media.

After presentations and deliberations in

plenary and workgroups, the consultative meeting/training noted that the soil, air and water pollution which the people of the Ogoni area have been exposed to have adversely affected crop yield for farmers, fish yield for fisher folks and generally reduced the people's ability to generate income and provide for their wellbeing. This fact has in turn exposed the community to unprecedented levels of poverty, destitution and deprivation.

The meeting also noted that air, soil and water pollution in Ogoniland has manifested in serious health problems which the people have had to deal with for many years. Some of these challenges ranging from various form of respiratory disorders, heart deficiencies, lung related illnesses, problems with the outer epidermis, reproductive disorders including stillbirths, foetal malformation etc., have not been appropriately studied or documented in any detailed manner.

On the implementation of the clean-up, the consultative meeting noted that the Federal Government has demonstrated significant commitment in commencing the clean-up of Ogoniland in response to the recommendations of the UNEP Report. The meeting was, however, worried that there were many cases of ongoing pollution in Ogoniland thus making the proposed clean-up rather complicated.

The consultative meeting also noted that while the government has held several meetings with various interest groups on the clean-up process, the process of consultation still requires further work. It noted that the multifarious expectations from the clean-up process is evidence that many people expect that process to become something it isn't, and this could lead to a problem of unrealized expectations, which could seriously undermine the process. Similarly, the meeting noted that structures have not been instituted which makes the people part of the process as monitors of milestones and standards as well as actual agents of the clean-up. The meeting expressed fear that if this is not done, the type of community 'buy-in' and 'ownership' which is required for a smooth implementation process may be lost.

Resolutions

Based on the above, the consultative meeting reached the following resolutions and presents them as recommendations thus:

1. Residents of pollution impacted sites in Ogoniland should immediately be provided with alternative source of drinking water in line with the emergency measures recommended by UNEP. The people have continued using and drinking water from contaminated sources since 2011 after the UNEP Report was made public.

2. All ongoing sources of pollution in Ogoniland should immediately be brought to an end. These include active bunkering activities which continues unabated in the Ogoni area; as well as the practice by the Military Joint Task Force of setting tankers impounded with stolen petroleum products on fire. The latter is an emerging major source of air and soil pollution with immediate devastating health impacts.

3. Given the fact that pollution has continued 5 years after UNEP released its report, it is recommended that the report be updated to reflect current realities. It is believed that the levels of pollution recorded between 2011 and 2016 may have changed the original findings significantly, necessitating a review of the report to establish new and more realistic baselines.

4. A comprehensive health impact assessment which should detail the health impacts of pollution on people who reside in pollution impacted sites should be carried out. This process will be a first step towards documenting the known and unknown health impacts of hydrocarbon pollution and planning remedial actions.

5. The process of consultation and sensitization should be intensified and carried on throughout the stages of the clean-up implementation process. This is to ensure that communities understand what each stage entails and what is expected in order to avoid possible confusion and misunderstanding which could result in conflict.

6. In all stages of the lead-up and actual implementation of the clean-up, care must be taken to ensure that the different components of the stages reflect the inclusion of all segments of the society, including consideration for women, youths and people living with disabilities.

7. In planning the clean-up, clear and verifiable milestones should be established and done so in such a way that all stakeholders are able to understand each stage of the milestones and when they have been met. This will ensure an active and healthy feedback cycle with all stakeholders.

8. In establishing milestones, the training of community members to act in different capacities in the clean-up, must be instituted as a critical means of community inclusion. The already established and trained group of Ecological Defenders drawn from the various Ogoni communities should be considered a component of this milestone.

9. In order to ensure that the clean-up activities enjoy the support of all current and future government establishments, an executive Bill proposing the establishing legal frameworks for the structures and funding of the clean-up process should be immediately sent to the National Assembly for consideration.

10. Communities should do everything possible and necessary to create the enabling environment- devoid of rancour and conflict - for the smooth implementation of the recommendation of UNEP.

Signed:

Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF)

Ogoni Solidarity Forum

Social Action

Kabekache Women Development and Resource Centre

Lokiakia Centre

Oilwatch Nigeria



FISH NOT OIL: OILWATCH AFRICA GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2016 RESOLUTIONS

Entebbe Declaration of Oilwatch Africa on impacts of fossil fuels over land and Food Sovereignty in Africa

Oilwatch Africa network Members and the Albertine Oil rift community representatives met in Entebbe, Uganda, between 4-6th of September, 2016 and considered the negative impacts of fossil fuels on climate, land, food sovereignty, water, sea and well-being in Africa.

The Participants at the conference shared experiences on impacts of oil, gas, coal extraction and other forms of mining on their countries and communities. The conference examined the environmental and social impacts of oil, gas, coal and other forms of mining. The impacts on food production, water pollution and deforestation were discussed as well as the growing trend of land grabbing on the continent.

Oilwatch Africa frowned at the trend where corporate interests aimed at profit are elevated above the interest of our peoples and environment on that altar of dubious investment and uninterrogated development

The conference noted that dependence on fossil fuels brings more corruption, engenders conflicts and distorts the value base of our communities. Oilwatch Africa members regretted that the governments of African countries are silent before the suffering of the communities affected by oil extraction and mining.

The conference noted the serious impact on agriculture by the pollution of our lands, contamination of fresh waters and the destruction of fisheries as inimical to our economy and overall wellbeing.

The participants frowned at that the increasing restrictions of Civil Societies and activists to access information and to carry out legitimate activities in communities where fossil fuels and other minerals are being exploited.

The meeting also noted that this Africa is still trapped in neo-colonial state that condemns that continent to remain merely as a source of raw materials with cash-strapped colonial and neo-colonial governments on the treadmill of cash cropping and mineral extraction for export.

Oilwatch Africa noted that "leaving the fossils in the soil" and use of "Renewable Energy" is possible and is the inescapable path to protecting our nations, tackling global warming and securing a future for our children.

With a resolve that urgent actions must be taken to save the African continent from being wholly degraded, grabbed and destroyed, Oilwatch Africa declares and demands as follows:

1 . Global distortions brought about by excessive consumption of fossil fuels and the externalisation of costs to parts of the world that consume less energy and fossil fuels lock in unacceptable injustices and must be urgently and openly addressed.

2 . Africa is one of the most exposed regions of the world to climate change impacts, with average temperature rise of at least 50% above global averages. Global action to tackle this cannot be based on voluntary nationally determined contributions (NDCs) being pursued at the Conference of Parties (COP) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

3 . African governments must reject false solutions to global warming including those pushed through REDD, geoengineering and other strategies that are threatening to elevate the currently intolerable levels of land grabbing to that of a whole continent grab.

4 . Floods, droughts and expanding desertification on the continent are all fed by the world's continual addiction to fossil fuels.

5 . Obnoxious activities such as pollution and gas flaring which alarmingly continue in the oil fields of Nigeria, Angola, Algeria and elsewhere must be stopped and energy needs be met with abundant renewable alternatives. In particular, Oilwatch Africa encourages the government in Nigeria to continue the clean-up process of Ogoni land and the entire Niger Delta.

6 . Oilwatch Africa declares that with uncontaminated lands and adequate support for local agricultural production Africa can feed Africans and levels of nutrition can be maintained without resort to commercially and politically driven genetic engineering of our staple crops for so-called enhanced vitamin levels. We insist that nutrition cannot be manufactured in laboratories and that our food systems must not be colonised.

7 . We demand access to land and security of land tenure for women

8 . Oilwatch Africa calls for stoppage of fossil exploration and other expansion activities on the continent, demands an audit of already accumulated impacts and full restitution for harm suffered.

9 . Oilwatch Africa resolved to support the fight for justice by communities impacted by mining and other extractive activities in Uganda and elsewhere in Africa.

10 In line with the United Nation's declaration of 2016 as the Year of the Family Farming, Oilwatch Africa affirms that family farmers feed the world even when they go hungry. This unjust situation must be addressed with governments providing necessary supports to our farmers, pastoralists and fisher folks.

Oilwatch members and communities at the conference declared that Africans must stand together in the global struggle for food sovereignty, stand with the movements that say Yes to Life and No to destructive Mining and pledge to remain active in the movement for gender balance, climate and food justice all aimed at building a well-being economy inspired by the African spirit of solidarity economy and Ubuntu.

Finally, Oilwatch Africa called to memory the many martyrs of environmental justice struggles in Africa and around the world. Calling to mind that this year marks the 21th anniversary of the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa, Ogoni leader and activist and Africa's foremost environmental justice campaigner, Oilwatch Africa resolved that their struggles will not be in vain and calls for immediate release of the bus (made in the memory of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni martyrs) which has been detained by Nigerian customs for a year now.

Signed by

Community and civil society members present and Oilwatch Africa representatives from Benin Republic, Cameroon, Chad, Cote D'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo and Uganda.

Entebbe-Uganda, 06 September 2016

UPCOMING EVENTS

Workshops & Roundtables on GMOs

– Abuja/Lagos/Benin City –
November/December 2016

Fish not Oil – With Kabetkache Women Development centre

– Ibeno, 29 September 2016

Rift Valley Blues – Sustainability Academy with Frank Muramuzi, National Association of Professional Environmentalists, Uganda

– Port Harcourt/Benin City-
December 2016

By Hannibal Rhoades

BEING HUMAN: DEATH, DEVELOPMENT AND EARTH'S DEFENDERS

By Hannibal Rhoades

**"Nothing is ever lost, only forgotten."-
Robert Holdstock**

Berta Caceres and Nelson Garcia of Honduras; Tendency Salamat, Nestor Lubas and Teresita Navacilla of the Philippines; Sikosiphi 'Bazooka' Radebe of South Africa; Walter Méndez Barrios of Guatemala...

Each one of these brave individuals stood opposed to powerful, extractive economic and political forces seeking to exploit their lands and waters by digging mines, building dams and razing forests to plant palm oil.

Each of them was also murdered this year, forming part of a global pattern of violence in which the individuals and communities standing on the front lines of the struggle to protect our planet are cut down.

According to advocacy group Global

Witness, on average three Earth Defenders were killed every week in 2015. And between 2002-2013 the perpetrators of similar killings were brought to justice in less than 1% of cases.

The shocking rate of these murders-committed by state and non-state actors-and the impunity with which they

continue to happen, indicates that they have their roots in complex webs of vested interests.

These interests include the mining, oil palm or dam building companies who employ divide and conquer tactics to split communities; the local elites and governments that turn a blind eye to or actively participate in oppression in return for a cut of the profits and (geo)political gains; the banks and aid agencies who give or invest money into destructive projects and more.

As players in a system that maintains itself through ecological violence, economic growth and military might, these groups often benefit, directly and indirectly, from the murder of activists who stand in the way of financial or political ambitions that hinge on access to land, water, minerals, metals and fossil fuels.

These same groups also play a diffuse and often invisible role in shielding the perpetrators of activist killings, because, by the logic of this system, an activist is an obstacle to be overcome, by hook or by crook. This system of violence that lies tangled behind activist killings goes by many names. Neoliberal capitalism and the military industrial complex are two of the better known ones, each suggesting their own critiques. But perhaps the most troubling term applied to this system, its products and its trajectory by those seeking to justify it is 'development'.

Destruction Dressed as Development

"They told us we are poor and said that they would bring jobs, money and development to our community."

This statement will be familiar to anyone who belongs to or has walked alongside communities who have encountered large destructive projects, such as opencast mining.

This is because the extractive industries and their supporters today frame their activities as developmental projects. They claim that bringing their activities to a region will 'add value' to local communities, as well as boosting GDP and delivering nationwide development benefits for all.

There is ample evidence that such projects rarely deliver anything like the supposedly sustainable benefits they

promise, especially if all the damage they cause is accounted for. They are the archetypal wolf in sheep's clothing.

But despite the facts, the majority of the world's governments have bought into an extractive vision of development. This allows them to spin a status quo of ecological destruction, displacement and often growing inequality as part of some beneficial social quest, pulling the wool over their own eyes in the process.

With this development spin in place, it is all too easy for Governments to frame those communities and individuals who oppose destructive projects as 'anti-development' extremists and turn public opinion against them. But far from being 'anti-development' these communities and individuals are keeping the door open to a more socially just, ecologically sane future.

Overshoot

Our dominant system of development, whether or not you put the word sustainable in front of it, is predicated on the achievement of linear material and economic growth through extractivism—the intensive destruction and appropriation of nature and its sale on global markets to create economic growth and feed industrialisation.

Though it may be capable of sustaining economic growth for a time, extractivism is incapable of delivering sustainable, equitable, culturally and ecologically sensitive development.

In fact, our current extractivist developmental pathway is doomed to failure because it operates according to inherently anthropocentric un-truths that refuse to abide by ecological limits.

We live on a planet of finite resources, so the idea of basing our present and future development on resource extraction and increased consumption for all- the current trend- is inherently unsustainable.

As the economist E.F. Schumacher astutely observed several decades ago:
"Anyone who believes in infinite growth on a finite planet is either mad or an economist."

We are in deep denial about this truism. Global North nations continue to neo-colonially exploit other nations in the South and consume far more than their fair share of resources at vastly unsustainable rates. Meanwhile, Global South nations and so-called emerging economies are putting in place grand development plans based on extraction and industrialisation, continuing to benchmark against 'the West'. The African Mining Vision and the huge industrial development corridors in development worldwide are just a few examples.

The reality is that our planet simply cannot sustain this kind of development. If everyone consumed the same amount as the average American citizen, we would need 3-5 planet Earth's to sustain us. Every year we overshoot the limits of what Earth can sustain earlier than the last.

Our current development model sacrifices the tomorrows of countless future generations for our todays. What benefits it does deliver are largely captured by existing elites.

A Radical Realignment

At a deep level, our current dominant system of development and progress is based on a belief that humanity can transcend earthly limits through science and technology; that we are destined to

become boundless.

This diseased belief, rooted in Western Judaeo-Christian salvation myths onto which later scientific paradigms have been transposed, tacitly justifies the ecological exploitation and deep social injustices that characterise development today as regrettable but inevitable costs on the path to humanity's emancipation.

Too many of the self-proclaimed agents of 'development', divorced from the reality of life at the sharp edge of environmental and social upheaval and blinded by privilege, remain committed to the belief that, one day- through our extraction, our industrialisation, our technological and material advancement- we will attain a utopia in which everyone can live well and satisfy all their wants and desires.

When we understand this it becomes clear that struggles between communities, states and the extractive industries are about more than land and water- they are battles between two different notions of what it means to be human.

Using both their bodies and their voices, the brave individuals standing up to destructive development are mounting a radical critique of the world's dominant developmental cosmology.

Their alternatives- Buen Vivir, Sumak Kawsay, Ubuntu- call on us to accept our place on Earth and live well within her limits rather than straining against them for an impossible release. To recognise that human wellbeing- surely the end of any so-called development- can only be achieved by supporting the wellbeing of and achieving justice for the whole Earth community.




Stopping the killings of Earth's defenders and diverting our path away from multi-dimensional disaster requires nothing less than systemic change to equitably realign our societies and dreams of development with ecological realities.

This change gains power and momentum when we sit with, listen to, learn from and stand in solidarity with those individuals and communities who have not forgotten how to live in balance with their places; the same individuals and communities too-often silenced by

the weapons of 'progress'.

Hannibal Rhoades is Communications and Advocacy Officer at The Gaia Foundation which is working with communities resisting unwanted mining operations around the world. He is also a coordinator with the Yes to Life, No to Mining solidarity network and a regular contributor to Intercontinental Cry.



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