

eco~

INSTIGATOR

A PUBLICATION OF HEALTH OF MOTHER EARTH FOUNDATION



Decolonise,
Revive,
Transform

FishNet
Conversations

eco~INSTIGATOR

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

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Health of
Mother Earth
Foundation

IN THIS ISSUE

Home Run	2
Decolonise, Revive, Transform	3
FishNet Conversation	7
FishNet Community Dialogue at Okrika Water Front	12
FishNet Wisdom: Fish not Oil	14
Poetry	
Fish Not Oil- and Not in the Crude (a poem edicated to fisher folks)	17
Makoko Fish Not Oil Community Dialogue	18
Poetry	
When Oil Spills	20
Lofoten Fisher Folks Join the Call for Fish Not Oil	21
Catholic Doctors Cautions on GMOs	22
CSOs dissect the Petroleum Host Community Development Bill	25
Stop Crucifying Eco-Protectors	28
Books You Should Read	31
Book Review- The Book I read	
Gross Domestic Problem reviewed by Ukpono Bassey	32
Killing of India's Land and Eco-Defenders- three Times on the Rise	35
Book Review:	
The Food Wars reviewed by Joyce Ebebeinwe	37
Upcoming Events	41

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HOME RUN

It has been a very eventful year and we are happy to serve you a menu of key environmental reports. These events cover our work with communities of fisher folks as well as our connections to fishermen elsewhere. As an organisation that treasures knowledge generation and sharing, we keep on learning from our interactions with communities.

The struggle for safe food continues and in this edition we bring you resolutions from a scientific conference held on 6-8 July, 2017 in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, by the Association of Catholic Medical Practitioners of Nigeria. The doctors issued a clear warning about the dangers of genetic modification and urged Nigeria to beware. Just as we were going to bed, the National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA) advertised an application made by the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) based in Ibadan to conduct a Confined Field Trial of a genetically modified cassava variety. HOMEF working with 87 other Nigerian organisations issued a strong objection to the application. You can read our objection on our website, www.homef.org.

As usual, we notify you of some upcoming events. We shall be hosting Sustainability Academy at the end of September and another one at the end of October. These Sustainability Academy events will feature great instigators like Ikal Angelei from friends of Lake Turkana, Kenya and Odia Ofeimun – a prominent poet, writer and political thinker from Nigeria.

Lastly we bring you interesting poetry and a selection of books that you should read.

Want to know more about us and how you can be a volunteer? Drop us a mail.

Until Victory!
Nnimmo



Decolonise, Revive, Transform:

Meet Africa's First Earth Jurisprudence
Graduates

By Hannibal Rhoades

At [a colourful ceremony](#) blessed by elders from the Kikuyu, Maasai and Tharaka Tribes, Africa's first ever group of Earth Jurisprudence (EJ) practitioners graduated this July.

Comprised of lawyers, educators, former accountants and civil society leaders from Benin, Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, South Africa and Zimbabwe, the group have spent the last three years engaged in an immersive 'training for transformation' in EJ.

An eco-centric philosophy of law and governance, Earth Jurisprudence recognises that humans across the planet must govern themselves according to the ecological laws and limits of the Earth system, as indigenous peoples have done for millennia. As many courts and governments fail to regulate, let alone stop, the destruction of Earth, a growing global movement is emerging. From Rights of Nature advocates to indigenous peoples, this movement is calling for a radical, Earth-centred transformation of our current anthropocentric legal and governance systems; a transformation underpinned by EJ understandings.

As a contribution to this movement, developed and led by The Gaia Foundation, the course in Earth Jurisprudence has been commended by [the UN's Harmony with Nature Initiative](#). It supports participants to decolonise their minds, work to revive Earth-centred African knowledge systems and practices, and, ultimately, contribute to the transformation of African governance from a human-centred, to an Earth-centred paradigm.

Becoming an EJ practitioner

Blending wilderness experience and written assignments, African and western philosophical and legal traditions, advocacy strategies and practices for reviving indigenous knowledge systems, the three-year course in Earth Jurisprudence is the first of its kind. The course places particular emphasis on the importance of experiential learning. As well as spending time alone in wilderness to hone their powers of observation and connect with Nature-as-teacher, each of the new graduates has embarked upon a profound personal journey 'back to roots'.

Returning to their rural childhood homes, the practitioners have reconnected with their community lands, elders and bodies of traditional ecological knowledge. This process has enabled the practitioners to develop new ways of understanding their identity and some of Africa's strengths and struggles.

"The root causes of the crises facing Africa today, like land grabbing and ecosystem degradation, date back to colonialism and the human-centred thinking that sees us as superior and having rights that override those of other beings. This course reveals Earth-centred laws and ways in which our traditional cultures recognise the rights of other beings in Nature. Human beings are part and parcel of creation. When we recognise the rights of other beings in the web of life, to be, to enjoy their habitat and participate in evolutionary processes then we can begin to address these crises," says Dennis Tabaro, a former accountant turned EJ practitioner from Uganda.

EJ in practice at the grassroots

Putting new skills for reviving traditional knowledge and governance into the service of communities, during their three-years of training the practitioners have made great strides.

Method Gundidza, for example, has been accompanying his childhood community of Bikita, Zimbabwe, to revive traditional knowledge and practices for climate-changed times.

Through community dialogues, Method has helped bring together elders and youth, men and women, to discuss the problems they are facing and foster solutions rooted in their own cultures.



One thing the people of Bikita have done is revive resilient local varieties of seed, including millet, finding that some elders had kept 'lost' varieties alive.

"In the past people abandoned millet and the collective millet harvest as they were encouraged by companies and the government to use so-called improved seeds and chemical fertilizers.

This made the people vulnerable. Millet is a very reliable drought crop. If the rains don't come, then at least the millet will grow and people will have

food", says Method.

"But in this last growing season, after a series of dialogues, the millet was in the fields again. Even when it was very dry and the other fields were brown, the millet was green.

The people are also reviving their old millet seed storage system and the community harvest happened again for the first time in many years."

EJ in practice on the world stage

At pan-African and international levels, Africa's first Earth Jurisprudence practitioners are advocating for Earth-centred laws and policies that support communities' ecological governance systems. Earlier this year, the graduates successfully encouraged the African Commission to pass a radical new resolution calling on all African states to recognise and protect Sacred Natural Sites - places of critical ecological, cultural and spiritual importance for traditional African communities – and their related custodial governance systems.

The graduates were prominent participants in the UN Harmony with Nature Initiative's 2016 global dialogue on Earth Jurisprudence. Presented at the UN General Assembly last September, this initiative is raising the profile of EJ as a paradigm that must underpin the UN Sustainable Development Goals if they are to succeed.

According to **Dennis Tabaro**, another pressing task for the new practitioners is to play a leading role in growing and strengthening the African EJ movement.

"There is a big task ahead of this group. We are talking about nothing less than the transformation of our societies in terms of thinking and our worldview, and that means bringing many people with us", says Dennis.

The practitioners will now act as mentors to the next group of EJ students. Hailing from Zimbabwe, Benin, Senegal, South Africa, Ethiopia and Uganda, the new group will now begin their EJ journey as the graduates deepen their own work for transformation.

Meet the practitioners

At their graduation ceremony, each of the new Earth Jurisprudence practitioners shared a few thoughts on the course, traditional culture and

their own commitments.

Meet the practitioners here, in their own words:

Fassil Gebeyehu, Ethiopia. A member of the African Biodiversity Network Secretariat:

"We are all born barefoot lawyers for the Earth, but as we grow we become so consumed by the so-called modern world, by the city, that we easily forget. As Africans many of us are born in communities that are very much embedded in nature. This course has helped me to become myself again. Now I am a barefoot lawyer by birth and by training."

Method Gundidza, South Africa and Zimbabwe. A former accountant working with Earthlore Foundation:

"People face many challenges in practicing traditional cultures that help conserve nature and barefoot lawyers supporting the revival of these systems face the same challenges. People say this is witchcraft, they say this is not modern. This is a big challenge we face in talking about indigenous knowledge, spirituality and how the Earth system works. But when we see nature in the way these traditions teach us, this is what is going to bring us life for future generations."

Oussou Lio Appolinaire, Benin. Community leader and head of GRABE-Benin:

"I am now beginning a new life with a new philosophy that orientates me to come back to the Earth and work with communities who still know how to respect the laws of nature. Our task is now to work with the new generations, to work for future generations, and stop breaking these laws."

Mersha Yilma, Ethiopia. A student and long-time supporter of community knowledge revival with MELCA-Ethiopia:

"The course really teaches you to look at the world differently. To learn from Nature. And when you sit and observe Nature, you learn more and more about how this world works. This is the basis of our traditional knowledge..."

After this course, I am ready to defend the rights of communities in my own country and the rights of our Mother Earth now. We have created a foundation and the next step is to grow from here."

Simon Mitambo, Kenya. Educator and General Coordinator of the African Biodiversity Network:

"This course has been a great help in my work to accompany my community, who are bringing the indigenous knowledge and culture of the people back to life. We have learnt about and been able to experience the diverse cultures of Africa and to connect all of these experiences of revival together to build our movement."


Dennis Tabaro, Uganda. Former accountant and community dialogue facilitator with NAPE-Uganda:

"One of the most powerful things this training has helped achieve is to give elders a space to come together and make their knowledge visible to others, especially the younger generations. Cultural leaders, community leaders and even some people in government are embracing EJ."

The writer ,Hannibal Rhoades is a Communications and Advocacy officer with The Gaia Foundation

FishNet

Conversations



T rue change can come from below. Change can begin from below. True change must come from below. Just as it is the root system that makes a tree stand, so it is with changes that must last. We have ignored the roots of our problems long enough and today we are dissecting those roots so that we can clearly see where the proverbial rain began to beat us.

Along the 853km coastline of Nigeria are men and women floating in turbulent tides, seeking to draw out the swirling foods that are in turn seeking their own food. There are epic struggles on and in our waters: our fishing brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers struggle to catch the aquatic beings. The aquatic beings struggle not just to escape the nets and hooks, but also to catch a breath as they are suffocated by myriad pollutants and poisons. These realities extend along the coasts of our inland water bodies as well as the continental shorelines of Africa and around the world.

And, so, our stop today is for reflections on the health of our aquatic ecosystems and the challenge of offshore extractive activities and the economic situation of our peoples. Similar dialogues have commenced in South Africa where fisher folks are fighting for a right to fish on the piers of the Durban harbour without restrictions that blocks them away known fishing grounds. We have also had similar conversations at Kribi, Cameroun, where the entrance of the Chad-Cameroun pipeline has destroyed coral reefs and fisher folks have to go deeper into the seas in hope of having a meaningful catch.

As we gather today on this challenged Water Front in Port Harcourt, our FishNet Dialogue will examine the past and the present and draw up a picture of our preferred future. We are looking back at what the fishing situation was in the Niger Delta before the extraction of petroleum resources despoiled the marine environment. We are reflecting on what species were available and what ecological norms our ancestors applied to ensure a steady supply of nutritious foods and how they built the local economies. We are looking at what has happened since our territories became an industrial waste dump, where mangroves have been destroyed by many factors and where fishing grounds have been largely curtailed by military shields ringing oil and gas facilities. We will touch on the rising sea levels, eroding coastlines and the salinization of our fresh water systems. Importantly, we are reflecting on who are the culprits and what must be done and how.

Our hope is that, as we sit in this and other FishNet Dialogues, we will extend hands to other fishing communities along the entire coast of Africa (and beyond), share our stories and underscore the facts of our common humanity, our right to food and our right to live in dignity.



We look forward to the day when it will dawn on all that fish is more valuable than oil. We are looking forward to the day when our voices will echo Fish Not Oil on our simmering tides. We are looking forward to the day when change will truly come from below and climate action will finally have as a pivotal hook the reality that offshore fossil fuels must be left untapped and unburned.

Fisheries contribute substantially to local economies and are a vital source of protein for most of our peoples. It is estimated that fisheries contribute up to N126 billion to Nigeria's economy annually. Sadly, only about 30 percent of our fish needs are produced locally – and these come from artisanal, aquaculture and industrial fisheries. In the Niger Delta, it is a worrisome truth that many fisher folks have become fetchers of wood as the creeks and rivers have been so polluted that fishing has become largely unproductive. Fishing

communities have been forced to depend on imported fish by pollution and by reckless and illegal harvesting of fish by foreign trawlers along our continental shelf. Starkly, some analysts believe that the Nigeria is the highest importer of fish in Africa.

It is time to challenge our policy makers to interrogate the essence of development and determine what truly makes economic sense. The offshore extractive sector employs a handful of citizens, but throws millions out of work due to the taking over of fishing grounds and the pollution of the creeks, rivers and seas. Although GDP measures do not put food on dining table or is not an index of well-being, for a notion of the economic implication, we consider the case of Ghana.

As at 2011, the fishery industry accounted for nearly 5 percent of Ghana's GDP and jobs in the offshore oil industry for Ghanaians were estimated to be around 400 with an expectation that this may double by 2020. Meanwhile, fishing directly or indirectly supported up to 10 percent of the country's population. Think about that.

We must consider the grave impacts on the global climate by the world's continued dependence on fossil fuels – an addiction that permits extreme extraction and the poking around for deposits in the deep sea. We question the economic sense of investing huge sums of money to set up drilling platforms and Floating Production Storage and Offloading (FPSO) stations in stormy, dangerous

waters.

Offshore oil production involves environmental risks, the most notable one being oil spills from oil tankers or pipelines, and from leaks and accidents including facilities failure on the platform. The materials used in the process of drilling are also a source for worry. We cite the example of drilling muds used for the lubrication and cooling of the drill bits and pipes. The drilling muds release toxic chemicals that affect marine life. One drilling platform can drill several wells and discharge more than 90,000 metric tons of drilling fluids and metal cuttings into the ocean.





We also have to consider produced water, a fluid brought up with oil and gas and making up about 20 percent of the waste associated with offshore drilling. At exploratory stages, seismic activities send strong shock waves across the seabed that can decrease fish catch, damage the hearing capacity of various marine species and lead to marine mammal stranding. Many dead whales washed onshore in Ghana at the time seismic and oil drilling activities peaked in that country's offshore. We also had similar experiences during offshore accidents, such as the Chevron rig explosion off the coast of Bayelsa State in January 2012.

Offshore oil rigs also attract seabirds at night due to their lighting and flaring and because fish aggregate near them. The attractions of fish to the rigs deprive fisher folks of access due to the naval cordon around the facilities. The process of flaring involves the burning off of fossil fuels which produces black carbon (a current menace around Port Harcourt) and constitute a source of

greenhouse gases that compound the global warming crisis.

Fishery on the other hand has little or no negative externality on the people or environment. It is a source of food and food security as well. It is a source of job creation. And it does not harm the climate. Offshore extraction and its externalities point towards negative indicators and are prime sources of conflicts between nations. Our FishNet Dialogues aim to build local economies, fight global warming at the base and build a movement from below to ensure a liveable planet, support local economies and build peace.

Let the dialogue continue.

*Welcome words by Nnimmo Bassey, Director
 Health of Mother Earth Foundation, at the
 FishNet Dialogue held at Port Harcourt on 7 July
 2017*

photocredits: <https://port.pdnonline.com/2009/01/steve-bloom-004065resized.jpg>

FishNet

DIALOGUE

at Okrika Water Front,
Port Harcourt



On the 7th of July 2017 Health of Mother Earth Foundation HOMEF, held a Community Dialogue with the theme Fish Not Oil. The event was held in Okrika Waterfront, Port Harcourt, Rivers State with a total of 126 participants comprising fishermen/women and traders from various communities, CSOs/ NGOs and the media.

The FishNet dialogue began with Cadmus Atake-Enade of HOMEF, introducing the objectives and programme of the event.

The Director of Health of Mother Foundation, Nnimmo Bassey thanked all participants and further explained that the dialogue was an interactive discussion which creates the avenue for communities to identify the environmental challenges going on in the coastal communities and how best these issues can be tackled to ensure that proper and positive actions are taken to keep the costal environment clean and safe. He assured them that at the end of the exercise their voices and issues will be heard by the Government because all the issues documented will be published and sent to the appropriate authorities for actions to be taken.

Fubara Tokuibiyie, from the Okrika Waterfront community gave the opening words on behalf of the Council of Elders and Chiefs.

He expressed appreciation to HOMEF and admonished the participants to be attentive as these issues to be discussed are of vital importance and they would draw the attention of government to the problems faced by fishermen in the community as well as other environmental challenges they experience in the community.

The participants were thereafter divided into two groups with each group responding to the issues raised in the diagnostic dialogue training guide.

The facilitators of the two groups explained that many things that used to be found in their rivers are no longer in existence due to pollution from oil spills and Kpo fire or illegal refineries. He explained further that fish such as Abala, Kpopo, Ogangan- Marine traffic, Crocodile, monkeys and some coastal birds have all disappeared.

The people greed that poor sanitation leads to the emergence of various health challenges such as cholera, dysentery among other diseases which affects the community people.

The people distilled some issues that they would want government to act on:

- The community needs recycling companies to help them cleanup the waste in their community.
- The government should be petitioned to make provision for a proper dump sites for waste disposal.
- They also demanded that Federal Government should ensure that oil spills and the use of dynamites, and other chemical materials affecting their community should be stopped.
- The federal government must also put a stop to illegal refinery and military should stop the burning of illegal refineries and bunkering trucks because they also contribute to the pollution experienced in the coastal communities.
- Government should provide alternative sources of livelihood for unemployed youths and community members to discourage them from engaging in illegal refinery operations.
- Community people must be open and willing to learn and link up with other coastal communities in order to share common ideas and solutions.

The programme ended with the selection of four active community fishermen from four different communities who will act as Community Monitors for the coastal communities.



FishNet WISDOM: Fish not Oil

There must be a time when we sit back to reflect on the things we take for granted in order to avoid being taken by surprise when such things disappear. No one bothers to answer a question on what one would do if the water well runs dry. Probably, the answer would be to dig another well. If that one dries up too, you simply keep digging new ones.



The colour of the question changes when we ask what would happen if the ground water over an entire territory is polluted and you set about digging wells there.

The answer is that no matter how many wells one digs, one would end up with polluted water. Today up to 6.5 million Nigerians are engaged in fishing. Most of these fisher folks live on riverine communities along our 850km coastline - without public utilities, no schools, no health centres.

Is that situation different here in Makoko? Was it different at Otodo Gbame before the bulldozers set in April 2017 and set hopes and dreams on fire? Was it any different in Maroko before the fisher folks were forcibly displaced in July 1990 and exclusive neighbourhoods emerged from the swamps?

Oil has been found offshore Lagos. As is the case with every offshore location around our continent, security forces bar fisher folks from getting anywhere close to the oil platforms.

The offshore locations in the Niger Delta are very active – with productive oil fields and rampant oil spills. As we speak, fishing communities at Ibeno, Akwa Ibom State are lamenting the impact of yet another oil spill. They complain of fishing grounds being damaged and their fishing equipment being destroyed by the spill.

The combination of security cordon and oil spills places our fisher folks at a very disadvantaged position. The only option for many fisher folks is to go into the high seas before they can hope to have a good catch. The question is, how many fisher folks can afford the boats and equipment needed for fishing in the high seas? How many can tango with the toxic combination of sea pirates and illegal international fishing gangs out there?

Today we are examining the state of our environment and the gifts of Nature around us. We are looking back at what living and fishing here was like some decades ago. We are also looking at the situation today, noting the changes that have taken place, identifying those factors that brought about or are bringing about the changes. Finally, we will prepare an action plan by which we hope to recover our ecological heritage and preserve same for future generations.

There must be a time when we realise that we cannot win all battles fighting alone. We must come to the point when we organise and connect to others in similar situations like us. That way, we get to share ideas, pains, hopes and strategies.



Today is such a day. Fisher folks recently came together at Okrika Waterfront in Port Harcourt while others came together in kribi (Cameroon) and Durban (South Africa).

The circle gets wider. Our FishNet Dialogues are opportunities to forge strong ecological collectives and to show the world that we have the adaptive solutions to the ravages of climate change. Our floating homes are pointers to the future of Lagos as the seas reclaim the land that land speculators stole from the sea. We are the people. We are the solution, not the threat.

The threat is our dependence on crude oil – the very resource that is firing global warming. Today we present a simple wisdom: it is time to keep offshore oil untapped. Today we present this

simple incontrovertible wisdom: our wellbeing and that of the planet will best be preserved when we unit and say: Fish, not Oil.

“There must be a time when we sit back to reflect on the things we take for granted in order to avoid being taken by surprise when such things disappear.”

These were the opening words from the welcome remarks by Nnimmo Bassey, Director, Health of Mother Earth Foundation, at the FishNet community dialogue at Makoko, Lagos State.

Fish Not Oil- and not in the Crude

By Oduware Stephen

(Poem dedicated to all the fisher folks)

Yester years fishes swarm in water
and not in crude
straight to the net, though it was a trap
but for the adventure of the strap
Fisher folks clapped with thumbs up high
to the village square and some to the market
square
and not in the crude

What a great catch fisher hunter
what a slippery deceit
I'm in the catcher adventurous fish
is this not crab, crayfish, croaker, shawa?
how much is sheke, adagba, woi, manati?
but for that one, I will pay for plethoric diversity
with my currency
and not in the crude

2^{1/2} minutes past midnight
walked through the street, from coast to coast
fisher folks on the edge
looking straight without a gaze
nets empty with a catch of dirt
what has happened sighs on high

washed my face, luster of crude sheen running
down my cheek
and not in the crude

The water was here, it's like a dream
covered with crude, like a cream
where is my fish?
Down there as it floats pale without a wave
trains are empty even in the squares
the big man says we can fish here
and not in the crude

Let's go the other way
but the river is ground
sand heap at the behest of the big man
where is my river, streams, creeks and flow?
where is my fish Mr. big man
where is my water in the coast
and not in the crude

I will beat the big man
but I have to be civil, political muscle is global
fist without punch
to rise and march to his gate
to demand my Fish not Oil

2^{4th} July, 2017 is a day Makoko community will remember as they hosted Health of Mother Earth Foundation's FishNet Community Dialogue with the theme: Fish Not Oil there. The ecological diagnostic exercise for coastal and non-coastal communities helps to identify their natural assets, peculiar environmental challenges and concerns and to chart a course for remediation, restoration and protection of their environment and ecosystems that may have been degraded and despoiled by "corporate" actors in the extractive and other sectors.

Makoko, an informal settlement/town, is divided into Makoko on water (AkoAgbon, Adogbo, Migbewhe and Yanshiwhe) and Makoko on land (Sogunro and Appolo) is very rich in culture and biodiversity but these cultures and biodiversity are threatened by oil spills, dredging and land reclamation activities. They also have a displacement threat by government and speculators intent on grabbing their strategic waterfront location.

The participants were community fisher men and women, civil society organizations and the media

The Dialogue

The dialogue was an interactive session with participants working in three groups. Participants reviewed what the state of their coastal community environment was before the pollution, reclamation and dredging activities started and how badly and despoiled their environment has turned out to be.

Mr. Akinruntan Oluwagbenga stated that as a fisherman who depends on fishing for livelihood, things were okay until the water got contaminated by oil spills and other industrial pollutants. He recalled how a 1998 oil spills from Mobil's offshore platform in Akwa Ibom State spread to Lagos and killed aquatic resources and destroyed his fishing equipment. The oil from the January 12, 1998 spill traveled all the way from Akwa Ibom state to Lagos State. A sheen of oil was seen on the coastal areas of Cross river state, Akwa Ibom state, Rivers state, Bayelsa state, Delta state, Ondo state and Lagos state. .

The Makoko Dialogue

By Oduware Stephen

Photo credit: <https://oshookman.files.wordpress.com/2014/01/craft-trading-at-miwu.jpg>

"In the past we caught croaker, titus, catfish, sinus, crabs, lobsters and crayfish," recalled Mr. Oluwagbenga. "Today there is scarcity of these species and this has affected our source of income and ability to cover the welfare needs of our families."

Mrs. Beatrice Ageh while speaking said that she moved from Ikoyi to Makoko, stating that in the past before the dredging started, fish was readily available. She stressed that as a fisher woman, all she knows to do is to fish and the companies causing the pollution that is ravaging their coastal environment and their livelihood need to stop.

Mr. Ebenezer Julius, vice chairman of the fisher men and women in the area, lamented, "we used to have great catch even without going deep into the sea." He explained that the National Inland Waterways authority (NIWA) saddled with the primary responsibility of improving and developing Nigeria's inland waterways has failed as sand mining and dredging of their fishing areas is what the government focuses on. "NIWA no longer cleans up dirt and trash from our rivers as they used to do in time past. Our fishing grounds have been destroyed by chemicals. Add to this the tragic push by the government to destroy their community and render us refugees in our land."

Another fisher woman, Mrs. Femi Oladunjoye, reiterated that crayfish, akpoagbo and owele which used to be abundant in the community is now scarce and they now have to buy fresh fish from other markets to meet local demand.

Mr. Damilohun Asowonrevealed that there were up to 20 dredging companies operating in the area and that they were the big culprits disrupting their fishing. He regretted that the companies do not care about the impacts on the communities.

According to Mr. Mohammed Zanna, "Fishing is our asset but now we are thrown out of business by the actions of the dredging companies, oil companies and chemical companies. To catch a fish now you need to travel deep into sea with an expensive outboard engine fishing boats and net unlike the olden days when we only had to paddle in dug outs to catch fish."

Dialogue Resolutions

At the end of group discussions, reports were made to the assembly and the following action points and resolutions were agreed upon:

1. We cannot drink oil but we can eat fish. We want fish, not oil
2. Oil spills must stop and our polluted water must be cleaned up now starting from the Niger Delta where they come from.
3. We demand compensation from the government and the oil companies for these atrocities.
4. We demand an immediate stop to the dredging activities in our communities.
5. Health care center should be provided for the community.
6. Government should stop the displacement of our community people and the reclamation of land from our rivers.
7. We deserve to enjoy social amenities like the other parts of Lagos State.
8. Government should invest in our fishing by providing boats, strong fishing nets and grants because we have the capacity to meet the demand for fresh fish in Nigeria and stop importation of frozen fish.
9. Fisheries employ millions of Nigerians whereas oil companies and the dredging companies only employ a handful of people. Our services and contributions to Lagos State economy should be recognized and supported.
10. We endorse and join The FishNet alliance and support similar networks sustained and maintained in solidarity for the poor fisher folks at the risk of extinction because of corporate and government aggression.

The media was also charged to join in the fight for a better environment and to report accurate environmental challenges to the world.

An explosion
a rupture
....oil spills

Like the Rivers of Hades
the black sludge spreads forth
consuming all in its path.

Our marine animal friends
are smothered and die,
even birds
can't lift their oil-clogged
wings
and fly away.

Our once golden beaches
become black murky bogs
reeking of death and destruction
inaccessible to everyone.

Fishermen have had to
hang up their nets
and hope and pray
the waters will become
clear again
and they can
push out their boats
and fish again.

And when oil spills
who do we have to blame?
The company that drills
the earth
to suck out the oil?
Or,
ourselves
for our insatiable
greed and consumption
of natural resources
that can't be replenished.

When Oil Spills

By Tony Ogunlowo

photocredit: <https://i.pinimg.com/originals>



Lofoten joins in the call for Fish Not Oil- Oil free Lofoten

It was a great day in Norway as fisher folks came out in large numbers on August 5th, 2017 to declare what is more valuable to them and calling for a total stop to offshore drilling activities and any other proposed future exploration in the island.

The Director, Health of Mother earth Foundation (HOMEF) delivered a rally speech in solidarity with the fisher folks in the Lofoten Islands. In his words "Your struggle is felt in the whole world and fisher men are beginning to come together. Fisher men in the Niger Delta, fisher men in Cameroon, fisher men in South Africa, in Malawi, in Uganda, in Brazil and all over the world are coming to say **"We want Fish not Oil."**

Emphasizing on the need to ensure that rivers, seas and creeks are free from pollution to save fish and other aquatic species, he went on to say "we can't afford to allow big oil to mess up our environment and mess up our lives. In many parts of the world the source of protein that the ordinary citizens have is fish, so when you destroy that source, you are destroying not just the fish- you are destroying human lives." He went on to say, "Polluting corporations must not be left

unpunished for the crimes against humanity and the environment. We are holding oil companies guilty of destroying lives, of genocide and we are declaring that we can't wait any longer, it is time to make them pay for their crimes. They are not just to pay for the crimes of the past, we have to stop them from committing more crimes, from future crimes. That means there should be no offshore oil drilling in Lofoten."

He lamented over the unwholesome practices of multinational oil firms like Shell, Statoil and the host of others. He said that although the companies were moving offshore, their oil spills and pollution comes back to the shores. He called on the oil companies to halt their polluting activities. "You messed up the land," he said, "don't mess up the offshore. Not in Norway, not in Africa, not in Asia, not in South America, not in North America, not anywhere in the world."

In the concluding part, he declared, "We can't keep on pushing the very thing which is destroying the planet. It is time for all of us, starting from here, to say we want **Fish not Oil.**" The crowd took up the chant and Bassey ended his speech by saying, "I hope the politicians here have heard that"



Catholic Doctors Caution on GMOs

The Association of Catholic Medical Practitioners of Nigeria (ACMPN) through their 12th scientific conference and annual meeting organized in Port Harcourt from 6th to 8th July, 2017 with the theme: Genetically-Modified Organisms - How Harmful, Harmless or Beneficial? issued a communiqué urging that Nigeria should observe precautionary principles in the introduction of GMOs to Nigeria.

COMMUNIQUE

PREAMBLE

The Association of Catholic Medical Practitioners of Nigeria (ACMPN) held its 12th scientific conference and annual general meeting with the theme Genetically-Modified Organisms: How Harmful, Harmless or Beneficial? It took place at the Catholic Institute of West Africa (CIWA), Port Harcourt from 6th to 8th July, 2017. A total of 77 participants from 16 states and the Federal Capital Territory as well as 14 dioceses attended the

events.

The conference addressed the issues of genetically-modified organisms (foods) and their introduction in Nigeria from various perspectives. The keynote address (Let Us Exercise Caution in Trying to be Masters of the Earth) was presented by the Bishop of the Catholic diocese of Port Harcourt, His Lordship, Most Rev. Dr. Camillus Etokudoh, represented by Very Rev. Monsignor Dr. Pius Kii.

Other dignitaries that addressed our conference were:

- Dr. Rose Gidado (Nigeria chapter coordinator of Open Forum on Agricultural Biotechnology) – Family and national food security ramifications of GMOs;
- Dr. Bassey Nnimmo - GMOs and biosafety;
- Dr. Rufus Ebegba (Director-General, National Biotechnology Development Agency) (represented) – Biosafety and the



regulation of GMOs in developing countries;

- Prof. Best Ordinioha – The medical and health implications of GMOs;
- Prof. Victor Wakwe - Ethical perspectives on the introduction of GMOs in developing countries;
- Dr Kinsley Douglas – Retooling the community-based strategies to improve family health in Nigeria;
- Dr. A. Fajola – How best to involve medical doctors in health insurance to achieve universal health coverage; and
- Dr. Emmanuel Okechuwu – Bioethical approach to infertility management and introduction to NaProTechnology (Natural Procreative Technology).

A society is measured by how well it cares for its vulnerable members particularly women, children, disabled and the aged. The deaths and destructions currently being endured by Nigerians in different parts of the country are unacceptable, and we urged the government

to step up efforts in order to reassure citizens of its capacity to protect lives and properties. Because when a farmer is killed or people are kidnapped or murdered or maimed, or school children are molested, families and the nation suffer irreparably.

Observations

The following salient points featured in the various presentations, discussions and interventions.

1. Food and adequate nutrition are among the basic needs of people; and so the case for improved methods of food production and distribution is legitimate and noble. However, the application of a technology without adequate assurance of safety is immoral.

2. Specifically, strict control is necessary in the introduction and deployment of new technologies in such area as the manipulation of genetic materials across species, the effects of which we may not predict or mitigate. For example, it took the global community about two centuries to recognize the grave harm which the on-going industrial/technological developments have brought to the environment and human health (depletion of ozone layer, global warming, flooding, skin cancers, etc.).
3. We commended the efforts by the government in establishing the GMO regulatory and development agencies. However, it would appear that both funding and technical capacity render them ill-equipped to effectively and efficiently carry out their essentially patriotic roles. In the current scenario, the processes of regulating GMOs are skewed in favour of the international promoters and merchants of GMOs who wield strong financial influences. Thus, without substantially exploiting the existing safe and natural technologies neither of agricultural advancements nor of our vast land and water resources (including the new pro-biotic microbial technology), dabbling into the controversial GMO technology is overtly precarious.
4. We endorsed the position of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria expressed at the sensitization workshop on faith-based perspectives on GMOs which was co-hosted by the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria on February 7, 2017 in Abuja, to the effect that in order to protect the health of Nigerians and the integrity of our agricultural landscape as well as national food security, the Precautionary Principle should be applied; and
5. Further, we aligned with the position of eminent Nigerian Christian and Muslim scholars convoked by the Nigerian Inter-

Religious Committee (NIREC) which in 2016 evaluated some 250 documented evidences and interacted with the Nigerian GMO regulatory and development agencies on the issues of GMO safety. The committee concluded that there are illegal GMOs already circulating in the country as foods, which are unknown to, and unregulated by the designated agencies. Also, other illegal and unverified GMO crops are in dissemination within the country's agricultural map. This situation is highly deplored as it portends grave dangers to family health and national food security

Recommendations

1. The conference called on the government to re-commit to working for all Nigerians; and to truly develop a national consciousness on shared values. To lead Nigerians to possess, take ownership and protect this nation morally, socially, politically, and economically in a truly independent and progressive manner. The protection of lives of everyone, including the unborn Nigerians is a sacred duty for all, especially those in authority.
2. The government to adequately train personnel, equip and fund the national agencies mandated to protect the health and lives of citizens, the environment and our natural resources. In this way, these agencies will not become mere facilitators and local proxy organizations for global businesses and so-called development partners whose underlying targets may be inimical to the strategic interests of Nigeria and her peoples.
3. We advocated for government to legislate and strictly regulate and monitor the introduction of GMOs in the country including express labeling of the products.

4. There should be adequate funding for research and development by the GMO regulatory agencies so that Nigeria can derive any benefits from the GMO technology. But more importantly, to protect our people and environment from the many possible dangers thereto: decreasing food productivity, food gene extermination, corruption of soil ecology, food insecurity and biological imperialism as well as various health hazards on human beings, the environment, animals and plants.
5. The conference called on Catholic doctors to engage in health insurance and especially community-based health insurance to help citizens access health care, and for Nigeria to achieve universal health coverage and, so improve its currently unacceptably low indices. It also called on all doctors of goodwill to adopt healthier, ethically and culturally adequate approaches in their maternal, child and family health care, rather than the values of the "culture of death".
6. The Association of Catholic Medical Practitioners of Nigeria re-committed itself to promote the sanctity of human life, marriage between a man and a woman, natural family planning and NaProTechnology in pursuit of family health and national development.

Conclusion

We thanked God for a successful scientific conference and annual general meeting.

Signed:

Dr. Emmanuel Okechukwu Dr. Margaret Mezie-Okoye
President Chairman, LOC

CSOs Dissect The Petroleum Host Community Development Bill

On the 16th of August 2017 Spaces for Change and Kebetkache in Collaboration with Social Action and HOMEf organized a one day round table meeting which was aimed at analyzing and reviewing the **Petroleum Host Community Bill** which has passed its second reading in the National Assembly.

Presentation on The Proposed Bill by Victoria Ibezim Ohaeri

The Petroleum Host Community Bill (PHCB) aims to foster community participation for benefit sharing from resources extracted from the region as well as the developments of the region. The current bill is sponsored by Hon. Victor O. Nwakolo from Delta State and the bill has passed its second reading and anytime soon there will be a publication for public hearing so we need to act fast.



Following the brief historical background she went further to review each item addressed in the current Petroleum Host Community bill. She explained that the bill has highly been modified to the extent that the basic request and interest of the communities contained in the 2012 Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB) that was denied passage is no longer contained in this current bill.

Section 198 and 199 of the 2012 PIB stated that;
Sect. 198:

1. In the course of upstream petroleum operations, no person shall injure or destroy any tree or object which is:
 - a. Of commercial Value
 - b. The object of veneration to the people resident within the petroleum prospecting licence or petroleum mining lease area, as the case may be.
2. A licensee or lessee who causes damage or injury to a tree or object of commercial value or which is the object of veneration shall pay fair and adequate compensation to the persons or communities directly

affected by the damage or inquiry.

Sect. 199:

1. The amount of compensation payment under section 198 shall be determined by the inspectorate in consultation with designated persons and representatives of the person whose protected objects have been damaged and the licensee or lessee, in accordance with regulation made by the Minister on the advice of the inspectorate.
2. Where a licensee or lessee fails to pay compensation, the licensee, or lease may be suspended until the amount awarded is paid.
3. Where the licensee or lessee fails to make payment within thirty days after the suspension of the said licence or lease in accordance with subsection (2) of this section, the minister may revoke the licence or lease."

The items addressed by the new bill stressed the fact that a trust fund will be set up within the Local Government but its affairs will be directed and controlled by a constituted board of directors.

During her explanation Mrs. Patience Briggs contributed that they would have made use of the existing community clusters platform that have been existing before the development of the bill thereby avoiding the creation of new community groups and clusters that will handle the trust funds.

Another participant, comrade Elias Courson added that communities are not really interested in the money sharing formula contained in the bill - all they are particular about is that they want to be stakeholders in operations of the industries in their communities. Adding that the bill came into existence as a result of agitations from the Niger Delta region and so they must be included in the affairs of these companies' operations. He also added that the Niger Delta problem is not oil, the conflict in the region is more complex than what we see it to be. "This bill" he said, "is like a gun powder waiting to explode with the slightest spark of fire."

Back to the presentation, Victoria Ibezim added that as regarding tax deduction contained in the bill since the companies operating in this region don't pay taxes in the past, in this current bill it has been made mandatory by the Government that they will be paying taxes directly to the government and such tax will be channeled to the trust fund and as for the clusters the existing ones will not work because it will have some elements of internal politics and may not be transparent in its operations.

On the issue of Representation:

The issues deliberated upon include:

1. There should be at least five representatives from each the host communities.
2. The bill should have decommissioning and compensation provisions.
3. Gas flaring issues and restoration funds should be included in the bill.

4. The 2012 bill under section 198 and 199, explains that licensed oil operators are directed to refrain from damaging or destroying the environment and commercial trees,
5. The 2012 also allowed for payment of compensations if damage occurred with regard to images, or objects venerated by those who reside in areas where petroleum prospecting or mining take place. The bill also allowed for the payment of compensation where damages occur as a result of negligence.
6. The bill focussed too much on how monies accruing in the trust fund would be shared
7. The funds should be removed from Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) and should be domicile with the federal ministry of Environment.

Comments and Contributions from Participants

A participant asked if the accounts that was to be created will be a new account or an existing one used by each communities and which bank will the account be opened.

Ibezim narrated that for the funds to be well managed there should be checks and balances from the minister of Petroleum Resources because without that, the funds provided will be channeled to unidentified sources and the funds will be deposited in the Local Government Account but will be supervised by the board.

In conclusion Elias Courson added that the bill should be resisted by communities because it is a watering of Resource Control agitations and the communities are not involved in it.

The event ended with assurances that all comments were noted and will be included in the recommendations and communiqué, following that was vote of thanks from Fynface D Fynface.



Bolivian Government Comes Under International Pressure

To Drop False Charges Against Pablo Solón and Rafael Archondo, and Stop The El Bala and Chepete Dams

More than 70 organisations and 700 people from over 50 countries have called on the Bolivian government to drop its false charges against its former UN representatives, Pablo Solón and Rafael Archondo and to stop the proposed hydroelectric power projects, El Bala and Chepete.

The signatories include prominent public intellectuals, such as Noam Chomsky, Walden Bello and Susan George; Naomi Klein, author of *The Shock Doctrine*; US environmental leader Bill McKibben; Nigerian award-winning environmentalist, Nnimmo Bassey; renowned author Amitav Ghosh; Hollywood actress and indigenous rights activist Qorianka Kilcher; as well as a number of European parliamentary representatives, such as Philippe Lamberts, Helmut Scholz and Soren Sondergaard.

The statement has also been supported by leading international human rights, peace and justice organisations such as Focus on the Global South, Transnational Institute, Global Justice Now, ATTAC, Grassroots Global Justice Alliance, International Peace Bureau, CETRI, Migrant Forum Asia and FIAN International.

Many of the signatories have supported the

Bolivian government since the election of Evo Morales in 2005, backing the country for its leadership on international issues, such as the Right to Water, the Rights of Mother Earth and Buen Vivir.

The statement expresses their “profound disappointment” that the government is now persecuting its prominent former statesmen for daring to speak out against the environmentally-destructive hydroelectric power project and the El Bala and Chepete dams. The statement also expresses concern at other attempts to silence dissent to extractive projects. The statement concludes “Bolivia will have no credibility on climate change and the rights of Mother Earth if it invests in mega-dams and persecutes its principal environmental defenders.”

Shalmali Guttal of Focus on the Global South and one of the initiators of the sign-on statement said: “This is a clear case of criminalization of resistance to extractivist, destructive development. We are shocked to see this happening in Bolivia to advocates of climate justice and indigenous peoples' rights by a government we had so much hope in.”



Walden Bello said: "Pablo Solón should be given an award for fighting for Bolivia's environment instead of being persecuted. The Bolivian government should drop all charges against him and Rafael Archondo immediately."

Brid Brennan of Transnational Institute said: "We hope the Bolivian government can live up to its rhetoric of 'Buen Vivir', by protecting its environmental defenders and advancing a new energy future – based not on mega-dams and fossil fuels – but on democratically-controlled public wind and solar energy."

Dorothy Guerrero of Global Justice Now said: "We applauded Bolivia for enshrining the Law of Mother Earth in your constitution, making it the world's first laws granting all nature equal rights to humans. We also supported Bolivia's strong Southern voice in demanding for big countries like the US and Britain to do steep carbon emission cuts in the UNFCCC. Pablo Solon and Rafael Orchondo are speaking for all of us and for nature with their opposition against El Bala and Chepete mega dams."

It has just come to light that the criminal complaints against Solon and Archondo have expired and the charges against them hold no legal validity, so any pursuance of this case would be an even clearer case of political persecution.

Pablo Solon, said: "Even if they put me in jail, the mega dams of El Bala and Chepete will be a disaster for nature, indigenous peoples and Bolivia's economy."

The statement sent to the Bolivian government and full list of endorsements is pasted below and can be found here <https://focusweb.org/content/drop-false-charges-against-solon-and-archondo-stop-el-bala-chepete-mega-dams>

STATEMENT

Drop False Charges Against Solon and Archondo; Stop the El Bala – Chepete Mega Dams!

We the undersigned have been inspired by Bolivia's social movements that have shown that another world is possible. From the Water War in Cochabamba to the approval of a new constitution and a plurinational state in 2009, Bolivia has shown that it possible to challenge and present alternatives to post-colonialist states, neoliberalism, multinational power and US imperialism.

The election of Bolivia's first indigenous president, Evo Morales and the MAS government, heralded great hope for advancing not just a more socially just country, but a new international vision for a just society and a harmonious relationship with Nature rooted in the profound indigenous concept of 'Buen Vivir'. Bolivia rightly became recognised on the international stage for its advocacy of Mother Earth rights and for its prophetic voice at UN climate summits, and particularly for its hosting of the historic World Peoples Summit on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth in 2010 in Cochabamba.

It is with profound disappointment, then, that we hear that one of the key organisers of the historic Cochabamba climate summit, Pablo Solón, along with Rafael Archondo, is being threatened by the Bolivian government with criminal charges and potential jail sentences of up to four years. The accusations six years on that allege Solón “illegally appointed” Archondo and that Archondo committed the crime of “prolonging functions in the Permanent Mission of Bolivia to the UN” can only be seen as attempts to silence Solón for his vocal criticism of the government and the construction of two giant hydroelectric projects, El Bala and El Chepete in the Amazonian region.

These mega-dams, if built, also run completely against any vision of 'Buen Vivir'. According to the government's own commissioned studies, done by the Italian firm Geodata, they would inundate an area five times larger than Bolivia's city of La Paz, displace more than 5000 indigenous peoples, and deforest more than 100,000 hectares. The evidence is also that they are not even economically viable given the current prices of electricity in Brazil.

We also note that the accusations against Solón and Archondo are not isolated cases, but are part of a series of threatened and implemented legal actions against individuals as well as attempts to close organisations in Bolivia that have a proud record of advancing social and environmental justice. This attempt to silence dissent goes against the principles of Bolivia's new constitution and is deeply troubling for the potential long-term success of Bolivia's revolution. Participatory

democracy depends on a rigorous and robust debate, while environmental justice can only happen if communities at the frontlines of extraction are supported and empowered rather than silenced and criminalised.

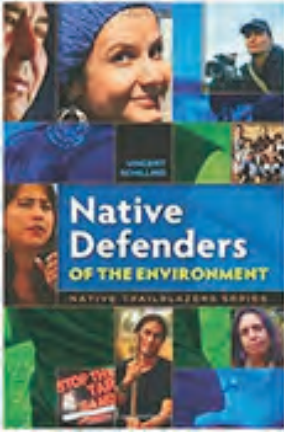
We therefore urge you to drop the false charges against Pablo Solón and Rafael Archondo and stop the hugely destructive El Bala and El Chepete mega-dam projects. Bolivia will have no credibility on climate change and the rights of Mother Earth if it invests in mega-dams and persecutes its principal environmental defenders. We urge the Bolivian government to show that its international rhetoric on 'Buen Vivir' and the defense of Mother Earth is not empty rhetoric, but is reflected in its policies and practices at home.

Organisations/Organizaciones

Focus on the Global South, Transnational Institute, Global Justice Now, CIDSE, Indian Social Action Forum – INSAF, KRuHA, people's coalition for the right to water, Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF), Bangladesh Krishok Federation, Coalition Against Trafficking in Women – Asia Pacific, CIDSE, Indigenous Perspectives, All India Forum of Forest Movements (AIFFM), WomanHealth PhilippinesAksi! for gender, social and ecological justice, All India Forum of Forest Movements, Europe solidaire sans frontières (ESSF), Mrinal Gore Interactive Centre for Social Justice and Peace in South Asia, TransformDanmark, Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino (Workers Solidarity Philippines), National Rural Women Coalition, Transform Italia, Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum, Poets for the Peace, Green World Center, Asian Peoples Movement on Debt and Development, Migrant Forum in Asia, Indonesia for Global Justice, Migrant Forum in Asia, Philippine Movement for Climate Justice (PMCI), National Hawker Federation, Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino (BMP Workers Solidarity Philippines), Socialist Party of Malaysia (PSM), FIAN International, Ekologistak Martxan, Zastavimo TTIP, Campaign for Climate Justice, Nepal, Moroccan forum for alternatives, FTDES, Alyansa Tigil Mina (Alliance Against Mining), Fastenopfer, Swiss Catholic Lenten Fund, CETRI – Centre tricontinental, Justica Ambiental/FOEMozambique, Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC)–Philippines, Broederlijk Delen, Radical Socialist, Norwegian Social Forum, CGIL, CNCD-11.11.11, Re:Common, Member of the European Parliament, GUE/NGL group, Council of Canadians, Mtl chapter, CIDSE, Ecologistas en Acción, Terra Mater / Pachamama Alliance, Salva la Selva, Herramienta revista de crítica y debate, FASE Brasil, Centro de estudios y apoyo al desarrollo local, Council of Canadians, Pinches Gringos, Colectivo Viento Sur, Colectivo de Género acción política, Observatorio de la Deuda en la Globalización (ODG), soldepaz.pachakuti, GAMASO, Colectivo Árbol, AKISI, Comisión Justicia y Paz, Fundación Chile Sustentable, Independiente, Ecologistas en Acción Suroeste de Madrid, PAPDA, Corporate Europe Observatory, Climate Justice Alliance, Ecologistas en Acción de Valladolid, Groupe de recherche sur les espaces publics et les innovations politiques

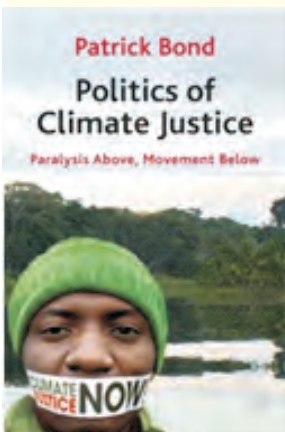
BOOKS

YOU
SHOULD
READ



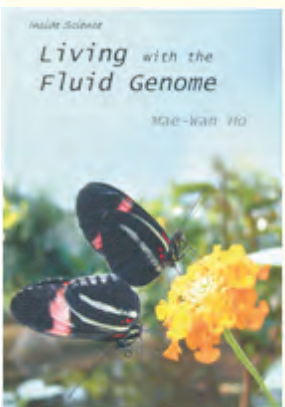
Native defenders by: Vincent Schilling

Native defenders contains stories of courage, determination and resistance to multinational corporations and disastrous government policies that are harming the planet. Readers will learn about Grace Thorpe, who worked to keep Native reservations from becoming nuclear waste dumps; Tom Goldtooth, the director of the Indigenous Environmental Network; and Winona LaDuke, who works on a national level to raise public support and create funding for Native environmental groups. Read about the next generation of Native environmentalists, including Ben Powless, a founding organizer of the Canadian Youth Climate Coalition; Melina Laboucan-Massimo, tar sands campaigner for Greenpeace Canada; and Teague Allston, an intern with the National Wildlife Federation tribal and public lands program.



Politics of climate Justice: Paralysis Above, Movement Below by Patrick Bond

Anyone who seeks to understand world leaders' responses to climate change through the United Nations' Conference of the Parties (COP). Politics of Climate Justice provides the vital background and theoretical context to what happened at the COPS in Kyoto, Copenhagen, Cancun, and Durban. It explores the favored strategies of key elites from the crisis ridden global and national power blocs, including South Africa, and finds them incapable of reconciling the threat to the planet with their economies' addiction to fossil fuels. Finally, the book reveals sites of climate justice and interrogates the new movement's approach.



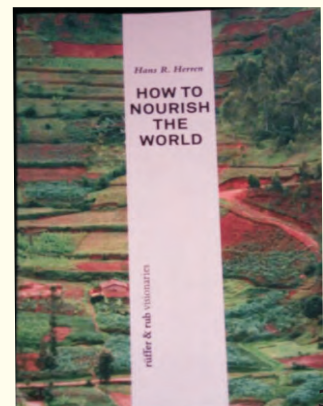
Living with the Fluid Genome by: Mae-Wan Ho

Find out why the whole biotech enterprise, from GM crops and gene drugs to human cloning, is a phenomenal waste of public finance and scientific imagination, and, most importantly, what it means to be living with the fluid genome.

From the author of the international bestseller, Genetic Engineering Dream or Nightmare? Turning the Tide on the Brave New World of Bad Science and Big Business, 1998, 1999.

HOW TO NOURISH THE WORLD by Hans R. Herren

"A world with enough food for all, produced by healthy people in a healthy environment." That is the vision of Hans R. Herren and his foundation Biovision. The foundation is active in the development, dissemination and application of ecological methods in Africa, with a focus on preparing information. Through practical expertise and exchanging knowledge.



Book Review

As an environmental/ecological think tank and advocacy organization, we pride ourselves in continuous learning and research.

Gross Domestic Problem

By Lorenzo Fioramonti

Book Review by Ukpono Bassey

The book, *Gross Domestic Problem*, by Lorenzo Fioramonti, aims at revealing the politics behind Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the urgency for the world to come up with better and sustainable measures of economic growth and development. Lorenzo Fioramonti noted that the idea for the book came when he was invited by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) to participate in a meeting on alternative measures to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

The book focused on the history of GDP at the beginning and pointed out that the first attempt at measuring national income dates back to the seventeenth century (1600s). This happened when a physician of the British army, William Petty, was asked to conduct a systematic survey of the country's wealth in order to aid in the redistribution of land among the English military and political leader's (Oliver Cromwell) troops. As made clear in the book, it was noticed that Petty tried to place market value on both land and labour, in order to help make them subject to taxation. It was also noticed later on, that this survey helped Petty to increase his financial assets significantly. He acquired land in lieu of salary and thanks to the cheap purchase of land (that was declared 'unprofitable') from soldiers, the worth of his total assets increased significantly between 1652 and 1685.

During the great depression that happened between 1929 and 1941, the government who had decided not to intervene at first due to the belief that the market forces will work and gradually make the economy stable again, they ended up finding ways to improve the economy due to the fact that things were not getting better.

Kuznets started to work on the conceptualization and measurement of national income in 1932 and was given the opportunity to put his theories to the test. Kuznets's idea was to condense all economic production by individuals, companies and the government into a single number. This method developed by Kuznets finally came together during the Second World War (1939-1945),

GNP was used as the main scorecard for the design and implementation of national economic policy. The GNP accounts turned to be a powerful instrument used to estimate militarization costs and to calculate the speed at which the economy needed to grow in order to 'pay for war'. They aimed at increasing consumption within the country in order to be able to pay for the ammunitions used in war.

This same method which was used to help the country in the time of war was still being used, and is still being used till date. This figure has been manipulated by political authorities overtime. In page 65 of the book, there is a graph that shows differences between the official GDP and the corrected GDP. The official GDP of course was noticed to be higher than the corrected GDP, which should force us to doubt the creditability of the official GDP. The book makes it obvious that GDP figure is manipulated from time to time by political authorities in order to suit their political interests.

The book also focuses on the fact that

GDP, though accepted and worshiped by many, is not as beautiful and majestic as it seems and it is indeed a problem for all. It has caused people to engage in activities that would make the environment and ecology as a whole to be the opportunity cost of their activities (an example is the exploration and extraction of fossil fuels). It has also caused the neglect of the well-being of individuals and things that make living worthwhile. Lorenzo Fioramonti likens it to the book; Frankenstein written by Mary Shelley. He calls it the Frankenstein syndrome.

The book also talked about emerging forces coming up to dethrone GDP. The book identified the fact that progressive economists, intellectuals, think tanks, NGOs, foundations, governmental agencies and various types of civil society groups are trying to come up with better numbers and means of measuring economic growth and development.

This can be noticed with the emergence of other indexes such as Measure of economic Welfare (MEW), Total Income System of Accounts (TISA), Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare, Physical quality of Life Index (PQLI), Human Suffering Index (HSI), Ecological Footprint, Gross National Happiness (GNH), Human Development Index (HDI). GNH for example is practiced in the Kingdom of Bhutan and when formulated, it was based on four pillars namely; good governance, sustainable socio- economic development, cultural preservation and environmental conservation.

This country although regarded as poor (using GDP to judge), happens to be one of the most satisfied people in the world, as they rank number eight in this respect.



The use of a 'dashboard' as a metaphor to represent a system where most of these indicators are used to determine the health of an economy and also serve as a guide for setting policies, is probably one of the most appealing approaches for getting a better barometer of economic growth and development.

This approach takes an indicator such as GDP as a single dial that could represent 'how fast you are going' in a car setting, and points out that any reasonable driver (Policymaker or political authority) would also want to know how much fuel is left, distance covered and any other vital information.

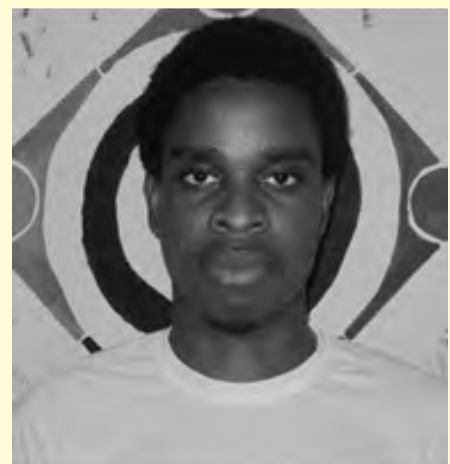
In a nutshell, this approach suggests that other important indicators (such as people's lives, well-being, education and environment) should also be noticed and

taken into serious consideration.

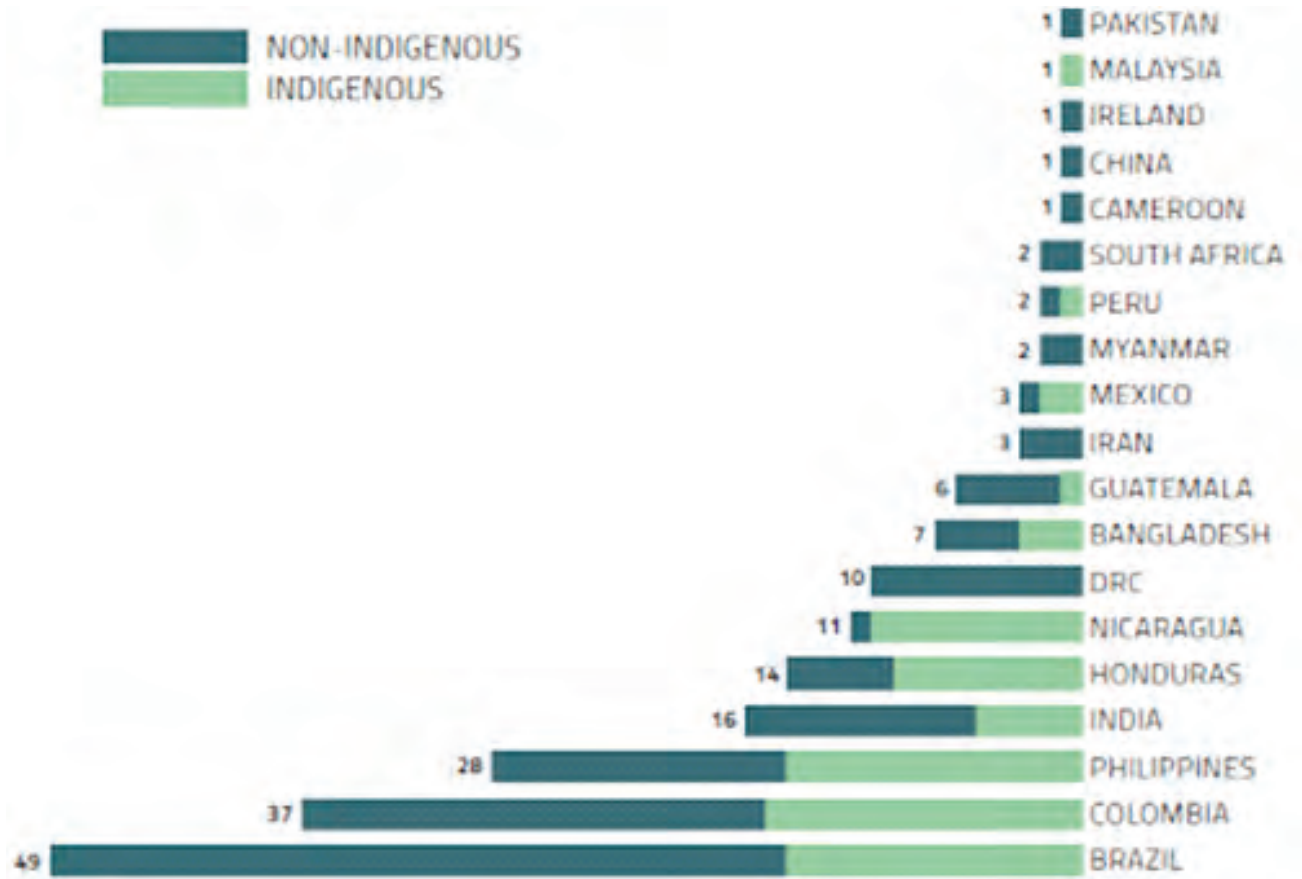
It was also made known that the change would have to start from below. It would have to start from society, communities, villages, etc.

Different models are being introduced such as; the sandwich model, degrowth society, transition initiatives and others. The latter (transition initiative) aims at drastically reducing human dependence on fossil fuels in an effort to reduce environmental degradation and curb climate change and points out that GDP development model is humanly and ecologically not sustainable, and are also experimenting new forms of democracy. It promotes self-governance as well.

In his words, Lorenzo Fioramonti ended by saying, "GDP was designed as a war device. That war did not end in 1945, but has continued ever since. It turned into an endless war against social equilibria, natural environments and non-renewable resources, in which consumers become the new foot soldiers; ultimately, a war against our own future on this planet". He also said in his book that "By reasserting the creativity of life over the fallacy of growth, we fight for the survival of humankind".



Ukpono Bassey



Killing of India's Land and Eco-Defenders- Three Times on the Rise

This report as compiled by Earth First Newswire has revealed that the number of people killed while fighting for land rights and environmental protection in India has continued to increase as it has tripled in India, from just 6 in 2015 to 16 in 2016, blaming it on "a disturbing trend" of increasing police brutality in India, wherein the Modi administration shows its determination "to stifle opposition to 'development' policies by any means necessary."

Pointing out that nearly half of those who were killed became victim "heavy-handed" repression by the police when they were engaged in "public protests and demonstrations" during "civil

activism", the 60-page report, prepared by advocacy group Global Witness, which has offices in UK and US, says, "Police were the suspected perpetrators in 10 cases, while logging and mining were the main industries linked to murders."

In all, 200 people died in violence across the globe, says the report titled "Defenders of the Earth: Global killing of land and environmental defenders 2016", adding, only three countries witnessed a higher number of persons murdered while fighting for land and environment—

Brazil (49), Columbia (37), and the Philippines (16).



Calling 2016 as “the worst year on record” with 16 killed in India, the report notes, among the neighbours, the killings soared in “Bangladesh, where seven activists were murdered compared to none in 2015”, though in Pakistan and China just one person was killed each in 2016.

Insisting that the “spike” in the killings in India should be seen against the backdrop of “criminalised civic action and heavy-handed policing”, the report says, in India, “State repression is on the rise with civil society and human rights defenders subjected to increased criminalization.”

Providing the example of “state repression” against Odisha's Dongria Kondh tribesmen, fighting to defend their forest against MNC seeking to mine the region, and of the “Save Chhattisgarh” movement against a top industrial house seeking to acquire land and displace tribals, the report says, “National legislation giving communities the right to be consulted is often ignored.”

Criticizing the Modi government for seeking to manipulate the law “to clamp down on NGOs that support indigenous tribes in defending their rights in the context of large-scale mining and dams”, the report refers to how in April 2015, the

government “revoked Greenpeace India's registration under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), preventing it from receiving overseas financial backing in an effort to halt its operations.”

This was followed in November 2016, when “a further 25 NGOs, most of them human rights organisations, also had their licenses revoked under the Act”, the report says, adding, “Media reports quoted unnamed officials from the Ministry of Home Affairs as saying that the NGOs were denied licenses because their activities were ‘not conducive to the national interest’.”

The report emphasizes, “The Modi administration's shrinking of civil society space is particularly disturbing when viewed in parallel to the government's aggressive pursuing of foreign investment for large-scale infrastructure, power and mining projects, and apparent disregard of local, particularly indigenous, voices”, even as noting, “Under Indian law, these communities must be consulted before any development project takes place. In practice, these rights are often cast aside.”

From https://www.globalwitness.org/documents/19122/Defenders_of_the_earth_report.pdf



BOOK: THE FOOD WARS

By Walden Bello

REVIEW BY: Joyce Ebebeinwe

The book, **Food Wars**, which was authored by Walden Bello centers on analysis of food crises, the spread of capitalist industrial agriculture and the plight and resistance of the peasantry.

The opening of the book highlighted the food shortages which became a reality between year 2006 and 2008 with prices of basic commodities rising beyond the reach of a majority of people. Food shortage was so severe that the World Food Program warned that it's rapidly diminishing food stocks might not be able to deal with the emergency. Countries like China and Argentina resorted to quotas on their rice and wheat exports while Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Egypt and Vietnam simply put a ban on rice exports.

Global protests

There were violent actions across countries to protest the uncontrolled rise in the prices of imported staple goods. Among countries that experienced violent protests were Senegal, Mexico, Haiti, Somalia, Burkina Faso and Cameroon. The most dramatic events however were seen in Haiti where 80% of the population was subsisting on less than 2dollars in a day. The price of rice had doubled in the first 4months of 2008. Hunger in Haiti was described as "Clorox hunger" because it was so torturous that the people felt like their stomach walls were being eating away by battery acid. Rioting spread through the country like wild fire and ended only when the senate fired the Prime Minister.

Traces to the cause of food prices

The book presented several reports by analysts and scholars who tried to explain the cause of the food crisis.

The international press and academics traced the causes to a variety of factors: the diversion of corn and sugarcane from food production to the production of agrofuels; speculation in commodities futures; dietary changes in China and India; conversion of farmlands into real estate and failure of poorer countries to develop their agricultural sectors.

According to the United Nations, **speculation in the commodities futures**, one in the confluence of factors responsible for the crises as speculators bought and stored commodities, betting on price increases.

An economist, Paul Collier argued that supplies were lagging because governments had failed to promote commercial farming, especially in Africa; the European Union banned genetically modified organisms (GMOs); and the United States diversion of about a third of its grain to the production of ethanol instead of food.

The Author did not quite agree with Collier. He says though the diversion of corn to agrofuel production was certainly an incontrovertible cause, the other two factors are questionable.

"Fears about genetic engineering are grounded empirically and proponents of GMOs have not been able to alleviate worries that transgenic foods may have unexpected reactions in humans." Their makers have failed to prove that non-target populations will not be negatively affected by genetic modification aimed at specific pests as in the case of Bt corn which was genetically modified to resist the soil bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis* but in addition killed the larvae of the monarch butterfly.

He says further that they have taken no steps to mitigate the very real threat to biodiversity posed by GMOs.

The author also addressed the claim by Collier that peasant agriculture is part of the problem of food shortage. "The globalised system of agriculture suggested by Collier has created severe strains on the environment, marginalized large numbers of

people from the market and contributed to greater income disparities within countries and globally."

The agrofuel fuel factor

The author mentioned a secret report made by a World Bank economist. This report which came out in the Guardian on July 3, 2008 claimed that U.S. and EU agrofuel policies were responsible for three quarters of the 140 percent increase in food prices between 2002 and February 2008.

[T]he most important factor [in the food price increases] was the large increase in biofuels production in the U.S. and the E.U. Without these increases, global wheat and maize stocks would not have declined appreciably, oilseed prices would not have tripled, and price increases due to other factors, such as droughts, would have been more moderate. Recent export bans and speculative activities would probably not have occurred because they were largely responses to rising prices.

The agrofuel factor affected mainly U.S. farming, where much of corn production was shifted from food to agrofuel feedstock but it had future impact in developing countries. Huge land lease deals were said to have taken place with land-rich countries like the Philippines, Cambodia, and Madagascar. There were widespread reports in international media of private firms and governments from countries that lacked arable land striking lease agreements. Land became the desired commodity, to the detriment of local populations who depend on the land for their own food consumption.

As stated by the author, "If there is anything that has become clear to large numbers of people, it is that agrofuels are not a benign alternatives to fossil fuels."

Structural Adjustment

The author pointed out that while speculation on commodity futures and the expansion of agrofuel production have been important factors contributing to the food price crisis, long-term processes of a structural kind were perhaps even more central.

The Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) reported that “even before the recent surge in food prices worrisome long term trends towards increasing hunger were already apparent,” with 848 million people suffering from chronic hunger in 2003-2005. Demand for basic grains far exceeded production

He says a vital, if not the central force behind the crisis of 2006-2008 was the massive agricultural policy reorientation known as “Structural adjustment”. This program, which was imposed by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund on over ninety developing and transitional economies over a twenty-year period beginning in the early 1980s, was most likely the *conditio sine qua non* for the global food price crisis.

Structural Adjustment and the Mexican Countryside.

In the countryside, structural adjustment meant the destruction of the various reformist government programs and institutions that had been built by the Partido Revolucionario Institucionalizado (Party of the Institutional Revolution) from the 1940s to the 1970s to service the agrarian sector and cater to the peasantry that had served as the base of the Mexican Revolution. The sharp reduction or elimination of the services they provided, such as credit, extension, and infrastructure support, had a negative effect on agricultural production and productivity. Mexico where corn was first domesticated became dependent on imports of U.S. corn.

After twenty-five years from the beginning of structural adjustment in the early eighties, Mexico was seen in a state of acute food insecurity, permanent economic crisis, political instability, and uncontrolled criminal activity.

Compounding the negative impact of structural adjustment in Mexico were the NAFTA-imposed trade liberalization and the halting of the five-decade-long agrarian reform process.

Structural Adjustment in the Philippines

Structural adjustment in the Philippines sought to channel the country's financial resources to the payment of the foreign debt. The program involved a massive reduction of funding for rural

programs that were set up during the Marcos dictatorship.

Like Mexico in the case of corn, the Philippines hit the headlines early in 2008 for its massive deficit in rice.

From a net food exporter, the country became a net food importer in the mid-1990s, and the essential reason was the same as in Mexico—the subjugation of the country to a structural adjustment program that was one of the first in the developing world.

Contributing to the decline of agricultural productivity in Philippine was the grinding to a halt of the agrarian reform program and the entry of the country into the World Trade Organization in the mid-1990s, which required that it end the quotas on all agricultural imports, except for rice. In one commodity after another, Filipino producers were displaced by imports.

Structural Adjustment and African Agriculture

According to the author, structural adjustment has also brought about unexpected negative impact in Africa.

The program with its gutting of government budgets—especially its drastic reduction or elimination of fertilizer subsidies—was key factor that turned relatively underpopulated Africa from a net food exporter in the 1960s to the chronic net food importer it is today.

As in Mexico and the Philippines, the aim of adjustment in Africa was to make the continent's economies “more efficient” while at the same time pushing them to export-oriented agricultural production to acquire the foreign exchange necessary to service their burgeoning foreign debts.

This dogmatic solution, which was applied with the World Bank and the IMF micromanaging the process, created instead more poverty and more inequality and led to significant erosion of the continent's agricultural and industrial productive capacity.

The World Bank now admits that by pushing for the defunding of government programs, its policies helped erode the productive capacity of the agriculture

Walden Bello cited the 2008 World Development Report:

Structural adjustment in the 1980s dismantled the elaborate system of public agencies that provided farmers with access to land, credit, insurance inputs, and cooperative organization. The expectation was that removing the state would free the market for private actors to take over these functions—reducing their costs, improving their quality, and eliminating their regressive bias. Too often, that didn't happen. In some places, the state's withdrawal was tentative at best, limiting private entry. Elsewhere, the private sector emerged only slowly and partially—mainly serving commercial farmers but leaving smallholders exposed to extensive market failures, high transaction costs and risks, and service gaps. Incomplete markets and institutional gaps impose huge costs in forgone growth and welfare losses for smallholders, threatening their competitiveness and, in many cases, their survival.

Solution to the world food crisis (Capitalism versus peasantry)

The author laments that as a solution to Africa's food production problems, the World Bank is promoting corporate industrial agriculture after the devastation of structural adjustment. This, he says is a strong indication that, whether the designers of structural adjustment were conscious of it or not, the program's main function was to serve as the cutting edge of a broader and longer-term process: the thoroughgoing capitalist transformation of the countryside.

The Oxford economist, Paul Collier presents as a solution the "Brazilian model" of commercial farming in Africa and criticizes peasant agriculture, painting it as the setback in agricultural transformation.

Collier is joined by other scholars, Henry Bernstein and Eric Hobsbawm who proclaim that the peasant way "largely ignores issues of feeding the world's population" and sees capitalist industrialist agriculture as the most viable way out of the production crisis in an increasing population.

However, according to Bello, "even as capitalism seemed poised to fully subjugate agriculture, its dysfunctional character was being fully revealed. For it not only condemned millions to marginalization but also severely destabilized the environment in this time of global warming, especially in the form of severe dependency on fossil fuel at all stages of its production process,



from the manufacture of fertilizers to the running of agricultural machinery to the transportation of its products. Even before the food prices and the larger global economic crisis of which it was a part, the legitimacy of capitalist industrial agriculture was indeed eroding and resistance to it was rising, not only from the peasants it was displacing but from consumers, environmentalists, health professionals and many others who were disconcerted by the mixture of corporate greed, social insensitivity, and reckless science that increasingly marked its advance."

On the other hand, the peasant principle, with its focus on the construction of an autonomous and self governed resource base, clearly specifies the way forward.

Peasant resistance and Food sovereignty

The author establishes that the global food crisis which is essentially that of production is as a result of centuries-long process of displacement of peasant agriculture by capitalist agriculture. But over the years, the peasants have stood their ground against this displacement.

They have refused to go into oblivion. Via Campesina (translated "the peasant" way), an international movement was formed in 1993

which mounts opposition to the World Trade Organisation. Via Campesina and its allies assert that peasants and small farmers continue to be the backbone of global food production, constituting over a third of the world's population and two-thirds of the world's food producers. He showed that from research, small farms are much more productive than large farms if total output is considered rather than yield from a single crop. The author points out that the peasant movement is not opposed to technological advances as many assume but advocates for a symbiotic relationship between advanced science and smallscale farming that builds on the latter instead of destroying it.

Partisans of the peasantry have not only defended the peasant or smallholder agriculture. Via Campesina and its allies have actually formulated an alternative to industrial capitalist agriculture.

The paradigm of food sovereignty challenges at every point the pillars of capitalist industrial agriculture and emphasizes among other principles, food self-sufficiency, the right of the people to determine their patterns of agricultural production, farming that is not based on chemical intensive agriculture or biotechnology, but encourages equality in land distribution and agricultural production and distribution resting mainly on small farms and cooperative enterprises.

UPCOMING EVENTS

1. Sustainable Academy (Resource Democracy- ownership issues) – 28th September, 2017 in Abuja, Nigeria. Focus will be on pastoralism and land ownership issues. Main Speaker: Ikal Angelei from Friends of Lake Turkana, Kenya.
2. Sustainability Academy on Climate, Pastoralism and Conflicts will be held in collaboration with CORET on 18th October 2017 in Abuja.

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- We need storage and processing facilities
- We support agro-ecology
- We are not guinea pigs

**WHAT WE EAT
MUST NOT EAT US**

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Keep GMOS out of Nigeria

Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs)

- Are not safe
- Are not healthy
- Are not natural
- Destroy our biodiversity and agriculture
- Impoverish small scale farmers
- Promote land grab for large monocultures
- Are failed and risky technology

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Take over our FOOD
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