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## HUNGER AND CLIMATE

**THE SLOTH**  
AND THE BONFIRE

**AFRICA: A FOSSIL FUEL-**  
TROUBLED CONTINENT

**RETHINKING WORLD  
HUNGER:**  
CLIMATE CHANGE

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# Home Run



**NNIMMO BASSEY**

Director, Health of Mother  
Foundation

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*At a time like this,  
we should be  
focused on how to  
heal Mother Earth  
by putting a stop  
to the practices  
fanning the  
embers of climate  
change*

The world can feed itself without the corporate appropriation of its food processes and systems.

Giving in to a contrary stance will only lead to an implosion of the human race. In this edition we bring you revealing, compelling and educative features, poetry and book recommendations that we hope will pride you to question everything around you..

At a time like this, we should be focused on how to heal Mother Earth by putting a stop to the practices fanning the embers of climate change. Our seasoned writers present you stories that tackle the persistent fossil fuel-driven development in Africa, address the climate and anthropogenic causes of world hunger, amongst others.

The fight to put an end to extractivism in Africa has intensified and in this publication, we give you details on Stopping the Extractivist Addictions - a conference where activists from fifteen African countries gathered to examine the current extractivist mentality of African governments and to proffer practical developmental strides in tandem with nature.

As climate change bells toll, young people are beginning to champion dynamic and fresh climate actions. We share with you reports from the Youth

Climate Hub organised by Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Environment in partnership UNDP and facilitated by HOMEF to groom young people into taking positive actions to save Mother Earth.

As usual, we hope to challenge you to question the current ideology of development and instigate you into acting to save the environment and mankind.

Until Victory!

**Nnimmo Bassey**

# Africa: A Fossil Fuel -Troubled Continent



Photo by Sam Jotham Sutharson on Unsplash

As humans, we tend to overrate our capacity to overcome difficulties. That tendency has made many to ignore the dire signs that the planet is hurtling towards the precipice as climate chaos kicks in and intensifies.

One sign that we are willfully blind to the looming catastrophe is our insistence that the fossil fuel civilization is both the inevitable present and future for humankind. The notion that fossil fuels will remain the fuel of the future has been sold by speculators and by governments dependent on extractivist economies.

Thus, because of petrodollars, policy-makers are ready to ignore the scientific fact that the burning of fossil fuels is setting the planet on fire.

Fossil fuels have been the fuels of rabid capitalism, riding roughshod over people and the planet. As the petroleum age draws to a close, the fossil fuel companies insist on searching for more reserves and digging for more crude oil, coal and gas.

As long as reserve figures rise and shareholders are happy, it doesn't appear to matter who or what is

crushed on the way. We have seen wars, and diverse conflicts rising from the insatiable greed of the players in the messy petro-military complex.

It is at a time like this that more fossil fuel reserves have been found in Africa. Algeria, Angola, Cameroon, Chad, Republic of Congo, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Libya, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, South Sudan, Sudan, Tunisia and Mozambique are all endowed with crude oil and gas. Other countries are resolutely spudding for the resources.

The logic appears to be that African countries must get as much revenue they can from fossil fuel extraction while there is still a market for them. Another plank for the stiff-necked rush is that Africa reserves a right to access energy by any means necessary considering the deep energy deficit on the continent. It has been said that an estimated 57 percent of Africa's export earnings come from hydrocarbons, for example.

For a continent so wedded to foreign direct investment, having five of the top 30 oil-producing countries in the world, and nearly

\$2 trillion of investments expected by 2036 is quite a big deal. With approximately 30 percent of the earth's remaining mineral resources, Africa is firmly on the hairlines of the telescopic nozzles of speculators and gamblers.

Such intoxicating statistics cement lazy politicians to the apron strings of oil, gas and coal companies.

The lure of dollars has stopped policymakers from sparing a moment to consider the truth that cash cannot stop the floods, no matter how high the pile. Cash will not alter the trajectory of temperature rise that is being witnessed in the world today. Cash cannot buy life and secure wellbeing.

The continent is the beautiful bride of profit-driven entities. Up to 500 western oil companies are estimated to operate in the African upstream oil and gas industry. Added to that is the several local as well as Asian oil companies from China, India, Malaysia, South Korea and the Gulf states.

So, Africa is happy to be the bottom of the barrel that the world happily scrapes. China-the second largest oil importer in the world-happily grabs crude oil and 'donates' infrastructure in exchange, including celebrated warehouses passing for airport terminals in some countries including Nigeria.

And, we are saying this is wrong because fossil fuel extraction has had harrowing impacts on the continent. Some of these impacts have snuffed the life out of children and whole communities.

Research findings tell us the babies in Nigeria whose mothers live near an oil spill site before becoming pregnant are twice as likely to die in the first month of life. In our oilfield communities, mothers live with oil spills, get pregnant and deliver their babies in heavily degraded environments.

One study making a link between environmental pollution and infant mortality rates in the Niger Delta, shows mothers living within 10km of an oil spill incident have double the neonatal mortality rates and have the health of her surviving children severely compromised. While the babies have no chance of surviving or living a healthy life, oil barons dance to the bank celebrating their slippery loot.

We should worry because more of the fossil extraction is in our water bodies. With pollution and security cordons, our people are being denied potable water and fishing

grounds. The examples of extreme oil pollution in Nigeria and South Sudan should send warning signals to countries stepping into the business.

We have heard of massive land grabs on the continent. Now, we are increasingly being confronted with water grab and sky grab through water pollution and gas flaring. We can get out of this trap.

As citizens concerned about destructive extractivism, we have the task of not just resisting fossil fuel extraction, but of offering solutions. The solutions are right in our radar: going green.

We have renewable energy resources and with the right support, we can build biodiversity-based economies that are sensitive to the rights of Mother Earth and support the wellbeing of all beings.

The future beckons!

**Welcome Words by Nnimmo Bassey at Oilwatch Africa Conference Held at Habitat Hotel and Resorts, Port Harcourt, Nigeria 6-8 August 2019**

*Cash will not  
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# Rethinking World Hunger: Climate Change

By Sonali Narang



## Introduction

About 821 million people suffer from chronic hunger worldwide; out of which, 98 percent live in the developing world. Climate change is one of the leading causes of hunger, making it worse by increasing the intensity and frequency of disasters.

For some vulnerable family, even a small weather event can result in hunger and worsen poverty as they are forced to take drastic measures like selling their belongings or taking children out of the school to survive. For millions of people

across Africa, Asia and Latin America, climate change means more frequent and intense floods; droughts and storms, accounting each year for up to 90 percent of all natural disasters. Every day, many men and women across the globe struggle to feed their children with a nutritious meal.

In a world where we produce enough food to feed everyone, 821 million people, that is, one in every nine persons still go to bed on an empty stomach each night. Even more, one in three suffers from some form of malnutrition. Asia is the continent with the hungriest

people – two-thirds of the total.

The percentage in southern Asia has fallen in recent years but in western Asia, it has increased slightly. Southern Asia faces the greatest hunger burden, with about 281 million undernourished people. In sub-Saharan Africa, projections for the 2014-2016 periods indicate a rate of undernourishment of almost 23 per cent and 66 million primary school-age children attend classes hungry across the developing world, with 23 million in Africa alone.



## Goal 2 - Zero Hunger

Eradicating hunger and malnutrition is one of the great challenges of our time. Not only do the consequences of not enough or the wrong food cause suffering and poor health, they also slow progress in many other areas of development like education and employment. In 2015 the global community adopted the 17 Global Goals for Sustainable Development to improve people's lives by 2030 and Goal 2 -Zero Hunger- pledges to end hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture; a priority of the World Food Programme.

WFP and its partners work to bring us closer to a zero

hunger world. With their humanitarian food assistance, they provide nutritious food to those in urgent need.

Meanwhile, their complementary programmes address the root causes of hunger and build the resilience of communities, so they don't need to keep saving the same lives each year.

### Climate Change fueling global hunger

According to a report released by the UN's Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) in September 2018, Climate Change is among

the most important causes of rising global hunger. Overall, the number of hungry people grew for the third year in row in 2017, reaching a total of 821 million worldwide.

The report warns that this number will continue to rise if countries fail to tackle climate change and build resilience to its inescapable impacts.

In the last decade, almost half of the World Food Programme (WFP)'s emergency and recovery operations have been in response to climate-related disasters, at a cost of US\$23 billion.

With the vast

economic growth and greater social protections in the developing world as extreme weather triggers more and more societal crises around the world. Some specific weather trends are setting off the worst climate shocks on food stores: higher temperatures and spikes in temperature anomalies can affect crop yields.

Severe droughts and floods linked to climate change have both seen an uptick in recent years most notably, flood-related disasters spiked 65% in the last quarter-century. Changes in seasonality, especially in the developing world, throw off rainfall patterns and growing seasons.

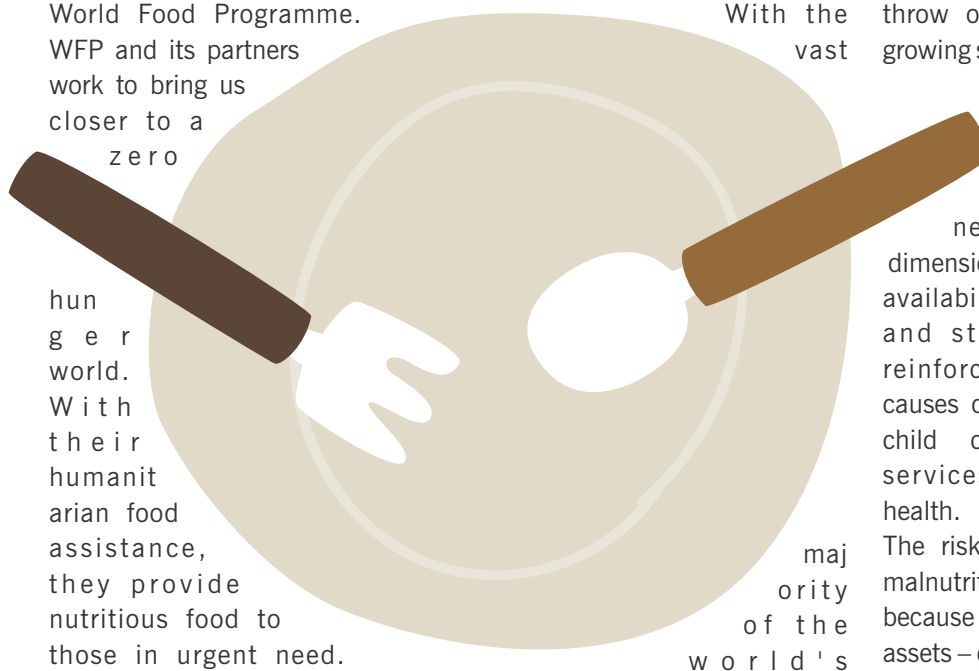
The changing nature of climate variability and extremes is negatively affecting all dimensions of food security (food availability, access, utilization and stability), as well as reinforcing other underlying causes of malnutrition related to child care and feeding, health services and environmental health.

The risk of food insecurity and malnutrition is greater nowadays because livelihoods and livelihood assets – especially of the poor – are more exposed and vulnerable to changing climate variability and extremes.

The annual State of Food Insecurity and Nutrition report, published in September 2018 by five United Nations agencies, found that while conflict and economic downturns exacerbated problems in some countries, climate-related food insecurity was taking place across the world.

majority of the world's hungry exposed to climate shocks, eradicating hunger requires bold efforts to improve people's ability to prepare, respond and recover. Failing this, it has been estimated that the risk of hunger and malnutrition could increase by 20 percent by 2050.

Climate change has the potential to grind down the gains made toward fighting global hunger over the past decade which were largely due to political stability,





As per the UN report, out of the 51 countries that faced food crises in 2017, 34 had climate shocks. The food security threat deepened in the 14 countries that

simultaneously faced conflict and regional instability in addition to climate shocks. Yemen, where 22 million out of 27 million citizens are in need of humanitarian assistance, perhaps best represents this horror.

Already one of the world's poorest countries, Yemen faces the combination of civil war and serious famine that led former United States Ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley to remark "no one should ever have to live the way the people of Yemen are living."

#### **Way forward**

Together with its partners, WFP encourages the integration of a variety of technologies, services and tools to better equip communities adapt to the impacts of climate change. This can include diversifying livelihoods; protecting assets, incomes and crops with insurance and access to financial services; improving access to markets; and rehabilitating land.

It also means working with governments to ensure these initiatives can be incorporated into national systems, including early warning, social protection and financial/insurance mechanisms. It seeks to further help the most food insecure people and countries to reduce the impact of climate change on food security and

nutrition, through initiatives such as the Food Security Climate Resilience Facility and R4 Rural Resilience.

The world has made great progress in reducing hunger: There are 216 million fewer hungry people than in 1990-92, despite a 1.9 billion increase in the world's population. But there is still a long way to go, and no one organisation can achieve Zero Hunger if it works

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self-reliance*

alone. If we want to see a world free of hunger by 2030, governments, citizens, civil society organisations and the private sector must collaborate to invest, innovate and create lasting solutions. The only way for people to move beyond chronic hunger and their vulnerability to ever-rising food

prices is to employ sustainable methods based on self-reliance and to empower rural communities in strengthening their self-reliance in Africa, South Asia and Latin America, where the highest concentrations of hungry people live.

Among other methods is to provide the tools and training to increase farm production at the local level; empower partners to create stock and manage their own food banks; and encourage clusters of rural villages to develop sustainable, self-reliant, hunger-free communities. A profound change of the global food and agriculture system is needed if we are to nourish the over 800 million hungry people today and the additional 2 billion people expected to be undernourished by 2050.

Investments in agriculture are crucial to increasing the capacity for agricultural productivity and sustainable food production systems are necessary to help alleviate the perils of hunger. It is time to rethink how we grow, share and consume our food. If done right, agriculture and forestry can provide nutritious food for all and generate decent incomes, while supporting people-centered rural development and protecting the environment.

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# The Sloth and the Bonfire

By Pablo Solon

Translation by Tom Kruse



**O**f all the ways to die, the most painful is by fire. Feeling your skin char, the flames invading even your bone marrow and screaming until your voice melts, you plead for cardiac arrest.

In the times of the inquisition witches and heretics were burned at the stake. Today human bonfires are prohibited. Since World War II and the Nazi Holocaust, the cremation of the living is considered a crime against humanity. No government would consider promoting policies of human incinerations, yet torching other living beings is on the rise in various countries on Earth.

Supporting itself on a branch with its three claws, a sloth smiles, without sensing what is coming. It just finished eating a few leaves and it readies itself for its never-ending nap to help along digestion. Sloths are the slowest mammals on Earth. Their lives of repose have allowed them to survive for 64 million years, much longer than humans and other more agile

animals.

The fire remains unseen but travels at the speed of the wind. The sloth sleeps.

"The fire was an accident," exclaim the politicians. In 2019, how can there be a fire that razes 957,000 hectares (3,700 square miles)? This is sixty times the area of Bolivia's capital of La Paz. It's almost the entirety of the Isiboro Sécure National Park and Indigenous Territory (TIPNIS). A fire of these dimensions is not the product of one or one hundred accidents; it is the product of thousands of fires all started in recent days. Every year there is *chaqueo* (slashing-and-burning) but this time it has been multiplied a thousand-fold by the government's call to expand the agricultural frontier. Ethanol and biodiesel require hundreds of thousands of hectares for inputs like sugar cane and soy. To this, add meat exports to China which require millions of hectares of pasture for cattle.

There are also the political land grants and illegal settlements in forest areas. What is happening is no accident. Five years ago, the Vice President Alvaro Garcia Linera challenged Bolivian agro-industrialists to expand the agricultural frontier by one million hectares (3,860 square miles, or two-thirds of Connecticut) per year. That target figure has been reached, but with lands devastated by fire, not productive agricultural lands.

The fire approaches. First a spark, then another. Ash falls on the fur that camouflages the sloth. It wakes, confused, without understanding what is happening. It feels burning pinpricks and lets out a painful moan as it slowly moves in search of refuge. This is Bolivia. The country where Mother Earth has rights. Where there is a law that says forests, rivers and sloths have the right to life and to “maintain the integrity of the life systems and natural processes which sustain them.”

A country where schizophrenia is in power. Where the President gives speeches at international meetings in defense of Pachamama, the Mother Earth revered by the indigenous people of the Andes, while in Bolivia the rights of Mother Earth are violated. A country where in just 24 hours the parliament unanimously approves a law for the massive expansion biofuel production. Not a single parliamentarian speaks for the forests that, even then crackling at more than 300 degrees centigrade. The legislators all celebrated Bolivia's entry into the era of biofuels. The same happened with the export of meat to China. None demanded prior environmental impact studies.

The fires this year are the product of a reelection strategy for national elections to be held in October. From a prior position of opposition to biofuels, the government flipped 180 degrees – without even blushing – to promoting ethanol and biodiesel as “green energy” sources.

The idea is to grow agribusiness of Bolivia's eastern lowlands to win their support in the elections. The same with the cattle producers, and large refrigerated shipping companies. Following the example of Paraguay which devastated their forests to feed cattle, the Bolivian government cleared agribusiness a pathway to export meat to China.

The dry leaves start to catch fire. The sloth hangs, climbing in slow motion until it reaches another tree. Anguish is reflected in its face. Smoke filling its lungs,

it breathes with difficulty. Without hurrying or pausing it continues its climb. Occasionally wavering, it's sustained by claws and survival instinct.

The candidates, who have said little or nothing about deforestation, biofuels and meat exports, run to the disaster areas for photo opportunities. Among themselves they look for who to blame, but no one wants to point to the development model of agribusiness in the eastern lowland capital of Santa Cruz, which is responsible for most of Bolivia's deforestation.

In 2015, of the 240,000 hectares deforested in Bolivia, 204,000 hectares were in Santa Cruz. In 2012, when deforestation in Santa Cruz stood at 100,000 hectares, 91% was illegal. By 2017, with a stroke of the pen the government had declared legal one-third of that deforestation.

**Nature should not be burned at the stake, legally or illegally. Setting fire to a forest or other living beings, human or not, is a crime that degrades the human condition.**

The sloth reaches the top of the highest tree, an imposing mapajo (ceiba pentandra) 70 meters tall. The horizon is in flames. It is said the sloth lives slowly to not die fast. Now all depends on the fortitude of a 300-year-old tree. Hopefully the winds will help. No chance of rain. In the distance the President's helicopter flies over the inferno. He talks of evacuating people without uttering a word about the sloth or the other beings of Mother Earth.

**In a few days the candidates will return to campaigning, some to challenge totalitarianism and others to camouflage it, but none to denounce the anthropocentric totalitarianism we carry inside.**

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# Mother Earth or Corporate Social Responsibility:

Implications for Sustainability and Social Movements for Sustainability

**By Prince Eze**

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**T**he concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is both imperative and controversial as observed by scholars and organisations.

These controversies range from what is CSR? Why CSR? Who should benefit from CSR? What are the roles and responsibilities of corporations in the society? and more.

These discussions are not just limited to only those in the academic constituency. Politicians, managers, private individuals, Chief Executives Officers (CEOs), government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and inter-governmental organisations (IGOs) talk about them. This may be part of the reasons the concept has been subjected to various definitions,

depending on ideological background, orientation, environment and understanding of analysts.

The European Commission provided the most cited and referenced definition of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), in the literature. CSR, according to European Commission is defined as ***“a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interactions with their stakeholders on a voluntarily basis.”***

This definition of corporate behaviour of the firm, ended up keeping us in the dark on a number of issues, as many questions are left unanswered: Is CSR a necessity?



Does CSR give organisations competitive advantage? Does CSR increase organisational performance? Does lack of CSR create ethical or moral burden to corporations?

The continuous community resistance and hostility as well as advocacy by several groups and organisations perhaps influenced the development of several CSR initiatives and practices by International Oil Companies (IOCs) in the Niger Delta as compensation to the society for the environmental and social problems often created by them.

The most important questions that however, beg for answers are: Should the focus be on protecting the mother earth or giving back to society through CSR for damages done? What is the hope for the next generation if CSR continues to serve as compensation for damages done to our environment? Can these CSR compensations secure our future and that of the next generation?

These concerns which go beyond the conventional stakeholder and shareholder approaches of corporate engagement were the issues that I presented in the Civil Society and Sustainability Studies Conference at Lund University in Sweden as part of my PhD research findings on the important question: "How can academic or scientific knowledge of sustainability be useful to social movements for sustainability?"

Research investigations have shown that CSR contributes little or nothing to social and environmental sustainability. Corporations and the local elites have therefore continued to use CSR as a tool to advance personal and organisational interest at the expense of issues of sustainability

often raised by the masses and social movements.

Using the new CSR model of Chevron Nigeria Limited (CNL) and Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria (SPDC) Limited's Global Memorandum of Understanding (GMOU) as a reference point, studies show that, though it approximates a radical shift from the traditional models of engagement with host communities vis-à-vis Corporate Social Responsibility that Multinational Corporations had adopted, the GMOU has failed to promote or ameliorate sustainable development challenges in the host communities.

Essentially, oil multinationals developed the model to serve as mere strategy to make the host communities conducive for continuous oil and gas exploration and exploitation. This they are able to achieve, through the support of the local community bourgeois. Indeed, the introduction of this new CSR alerted local community bourgeois to the large sums of money available to board members of the GMOU. Most members of the boards as discovered are council of chief members – 'political, influential and rich elite men – mostly based in urban metropolitan of Port Harcourt, Yenagoa and Warri' who lobbied their way to become board members and use their position to advance personal interest and that of the multinationals.

The overall implications of this, is the increased sustainability crises in the region where these corporations operate in the Niger Delta.

This paper advocates for a

paradigm shift in thinking, orientation and approaches in dealing with these issues. We must fight for the reformation of CSR so that it will acknowledge and promote sustainability issues. We do not need only CSR compensations as advocated by these elites and corporations, we want issues of sustainability to be addressed as well. We want a secured environment and future for the next generation.

To this end, the masses and social movements for sustainability must not give in to the deceit by these corporations and the elites who use CSR as tool to advance personal and group interest. We must insist that social and environmental issues are addressed and not accept peanuts in exchange for our future and that of our children unborn. Furthermore, citizens and social movements for sustainability must hold the government accountable and request for practical ways to removing policy gaps and the enacting of/and implementation of more robust policies to address environmental challenges in the region. In this regard, community environmental group should also be formed.

These groups, among other things, should report promptly cases of environmental pollution to relevant groups and authorities and ensure that appropriate actions are taken. It is our right and collective responsibility to demand for a safe environment and a secured life for ourselves and the generation after us.

Let us do it to have a secured future. Let us do it for the sake of our children unborn. Let us do it for the sake of history.

# Some Questions about the Storm

POETRY

BY HILDA RAZ

What's the bird ratio overhead?  
Zero: zero. Maybe it's El Niño?

The storm, was it bad?  
Here the worst ever. Every tree hurt.

Do you love trees?  
Only the ginkgo, the fir, the birch.

Yours? Do you name your trees?  
Who owns the trees? Who's talking?

You presume a dialogue. Me and You.  
Yes. Your fingers tap. I'm listening.

Will you answer? Why mention trees?  
When the weather turned rain into ice, the leaves failed.

So what? Every year leaves fail.  
The cycle. Birth to death.  
In the night, the sound of cannon  
and death everywhere.

What did you see?  
Next morning, roots against the glass.

Who's talking now and in familiar language?  
Get real.  
What's real is the broken crown.  
The trunk shattered.

Was that storm worse than others?  
Yes and no.  
The wind's torque twisted open the tree's tibia.

Fool. You're talking about vegetables.  
Do you love the patio tomato?  
The Christmas cactus?  
Yes. And the magnolia on the roof, the felled crabapple, the  
topless spruce.





BY ANIKET AGA

# There Is No Evidence That Genetically Modified Brinjal Will Benefit Farmers

A month ago, Bt brinjal, the genetically modified (GM) crop created to resist the brinjal fruit and shoot borer (an insect) was found growing illegally in Haryana.

This was a different Bt brinjal from the one developed by the Indian company, Mahyco, in which Monsanto has a 26% stake. Mahyco's Bt brinjal has been under a moratorium since 2010. Even as the government clamped down on the illegal GM crop, some farmer groups have demanded the release of Mahyco's Bt brinjal and other GM crops in the regulatory pipeline.

It is true that the moratorium was imposed by the then Minister of Environment, Jairam Ramesh, despite being cleared by the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC), the apex regulatory body for GM crops. But is Bt brinjal actually ready for release?

## The Impacts

Before imposing the moratorium, Mr. Ramesh had sought comments from a range of experts and concerned groups on environmental impacts and implications for consumers and farmers. Despite demands from activists and social scientists, the Ministry of Agriculture has not offered evidence that Bt brinjal will benefit farmers. Ironically, the National Institute of Agricultural Economics and Policy Research anticipates that if Bt brinjal performs as Mahyco proposes, brinjal output will increase and retail prices will fall, benefiting consumers far more than farmers. The report ignores the scenario that companies might charge premium prices for Bt brinjal seeds, in which case farmers may not benefit at all.

On biosafety issues, scientific opinion is divided down the middle. While some scientists such as Deepak Pental of Delhi University were in favour of releasing Bt brinjal, others such as the late Pushpa Bhargava, entomologist David Andow of the U.S., and the then Vice-Chancellors of the Acharya N.G. Ranga Agricultural University and the Dr. Y.S.R. Horticultural University highlighted crucial deficiencies in the characterization of Bt brinjal, and in the environmental impact assessment.

The ecologist, Madhav Gadgil, warned of contamination of India's diverse brinjal varieties. Biodiversity is critical for nutrition and sustainability, and the government's own task force on biotechnology (2004) had recommended that no GM crop be

allowed in biodiversity-rich areas. Further, a majority of the technical expert committee appointed by the Supreme Court (in the public interest litigations over GM crops) recommended a ban on genetically modifying those crops for which India is a centre of origin or diversity. Brinjal happens to be such a crop.

## Nutrition issues

In terms of nutrition, there seem to be some significant differences between Bt and ordinary brinjal. Many health researchers and professionals, and scientists such as immunologist David Schubert of the Salk Institute, U.S. and Suman Sahai of Gene Campaign have argued that Bt brinjal poses risks to human health. M.S. Swaminathan and V.M. Katoch, then the Director-General of the Indian Council of Medical Research, asked for long-term (chronic) toxicity studies, before taking any decision on Bt brinjal. Further, they asked that these be conducted independently, instead of relying exclusively on Mahyco for data.

Bt brinjal found no support from State governments. Kerala and Uttarakhand asked for a ban on GM crops. States with substantial brinjal cultivation, i.e. West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar opposed the release pending rigorous, extensive testing. So did states like Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, and undivided Andhra Pradesh.

These states were ruled by parties across the political spectrum.

In 2012 and 2017, respectively, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Agriculture and the

Committee on Science & Technology, Environment and Forests assessed the GM controversy.

Both committees expressed grave concerns about lapses in the regulatory system. In fact, the Committee on Agriculture was so alarmed by the irregularities in the assessment of Bt brinjal, that it recommended "a thorough probe by a team of eminent independent scientists and environmentalists", which never happened.

Further, both committees endorsed labelling GM foods to protect a consumer's right to know. However, since retailing is largely unorganised, enforcing truthful labelling is a logistical nightmare, and the Ministry of Agriculture believes it is impractical.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India has only recently begun putting labelling rules into place.

## No scientific consensus

In sum, there is a moratorium on Bt brinjal because there is no scientific consensus on its safety and efficacy, and because the States and Parliament have profound misgivings about the regulatory system. In recent years, pests have developed resistance to Bt cotton, forcing farmers to spray lethal pesticides. This led to over 50 deaths by pesticide-poisoning in Vidarbha in 2017. A GM-based strategy of pest control is unsustainable, all the more so since farmers, already pressed for land, ignore the government's recommendation to plant refuge crops.





We cannot wish all these concerns away simply because some farmers want to try Bt brinjal, or farmers in Bangladesh have been cultivating Bt brinjal since 2013.

Farmers do not and cannot assess long-term impacts on ecology and health, which needs more rigorous and sensitive studies than those conducted so far. Yet, in the nine years since the moratorium, there has hardly been any progress toward addressing these issues. If anything, the problem of sustainable, remunerative farming has become more acute and alternative strategies such as organic and zero budget natural farming, which do not allow GM seeds, are gaining ground.

At the very least, the government must detail the steps it has taken since 2010 to address the scientific lacunae, clarify precisely how Bt brinjal will benefit farmers, put the infrastructure to ensure labelling into place, and demonstrate how Bt brinjal fits in with sustainable farming and biodiversity

conservation.

As things stand, Bt brinjal runs counter to the framework for agricultural development and farmers' well-being devised by parliamentary panels and the government's own task forces and expert committees.

*Aniket Aga teaches environmental studies at Ashoka University and is writing a book on the science and politics of GM food crops in India.  
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# POLICY NOTE ON GMOS IN NIGERIA (Part 1)

By Daramfon Bassey and Yeside Dipo-Salami

This policy note has been broken down into two parts. Part 2 will be featured in the next edition of eco-Instigator; so watch out for the next publication.

## Background

**T**he World Bank projects that food demand will rise by at least 20 percent globally over the next 15 years, most especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and East Asia.

A number of means have been advocated by scientists, corporations and donor agencies to ensure food security globally; one of the most prominent recommendations is the need for the increased and widespread cultivation and production of genetically modified organisms (GMO) crops. A Genetically Modified Organism (GMO) is an organism that has had its deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) altered or modified in some way through genetic engineering. In first generation genetic engineering, scientists remove one or more genes from the DNA of an organism, such as bacterium, virus, animal or plant and “recombine” them into the DNA of another organism.

For instance, genetic scientists have transferred genes from a bacterium known as *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) into the DNA of crops. The Bt genes express a protein that kills insects and transferring the genes, allows the corn to produce its own pesticide. Genetically modified foods have been on the United States (US) market since the 1990s, with the introduction of the failed “Flavr Savr” tomatoes that was engineered to ripen more slowly.

This technology has been met with controversy. Most European countries such as Northern Ireland, Switzerland, Bulgaria, France, Germany etc. have stringent laws that regulate the importation and development of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) crops. As at 2015, over 30 countries globally had banned genetically modified (GM) crop cultivation.

Presently, Canada, Spain, Portugal, Brazil, and the United States of America are among the countries with lax GMO rules and are big markets for the production and supply of genetically modified crops. Countries such as Switzerland, Germany, France and Italy specifically ban the cultivation of GM crops but have no restrictions on importation.

## **2. International Assessment on GMO Use:**

In the United States, at least 90 percent of the soy, cotton, canola, corn and sugar beets sold have been genetically modified. In 2016, over 70 million hectares of GMO crops was cultivated in the US making the country the largest market for GMO globally. Brazil was the second largest market for GMO globally with over 45 million hectares of GMO grown in the country, followed by Argentina (over 23 million hectares), Canada (over 11 million hectares) and India (over 10 million hectares) completing the top 5 GMOs markets globally .

In Europe, European Union legislation requires GMO products to be labeled, unless the GMO presence is less than 0.9% of the product, if it is accidental or technically inevitable. GMO corn is being cultivated in 5 European member states namely: Spain, Portugal, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Romania.

In 2015, majority of the countries in the European Union, including Germany, France, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales taking advantage of the European Union rule permitting member states to opt out of growing genetically modified crops have banned their farmers from cultivating GMO.

Germany has a strong stance and active citizenry involvement in the fight against GMO in the country, from street protests to campaigns by farmers.

In January 2019, 35,000 protesters marched through the streets of Berlin to call for a transformation in the industrial agricultural sector and support of small scale farmers. France has completely banned the cultivation of GMO crops but recently, German and French farmers discovered traces of GMOs in dug fields of rapeseeds. In South America, Argentina was one of the first countries in the world to accept GMO food.

The Secretary of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food; the Biotechnology Directorate (BD); the National Service on Agricultural Food and Health and Quality and the Agriculture Market Directorate (AMD) are in charge of carrying out GMO risk assessment in the country. In Brazil, the National Biosafety Technical Commission is tasked with assessing environmental and food safety and preparing guidelines for the transport, importation and field experiments involving GM products. Besides from Argentina and Brazil, countries such as Honduras, Costa Rica, Colombia, Paraguay, Chile and Uruguay allow the cultivation of GMO crops while Venezuela, Ecuador and Peru have banned GMOs.

In Asia, India, Pakistan and China are the largest producers of GMO products on the continent. India has restricted GM technology to non-edible crops like cotton, attempts to introduce GM aubergine and mustard has been blocked by public litigation and provincial governments. Japan only allows the cultivation of GM flowers. Kyrgyzstan, Bhutan and Saudi Arabia have banned the cultivation of GMO crops.

## **3. Regional Assessment on GMO Use**

In Africa, genetically modified crops are currently only grown commercially in South Africa, Egypt and Sudan. The cultivation of GMO in South Africa is regulated by the Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) Act of 1997 (Act No. 15 OF 1997) administered in the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. Before a decision on the use of GMOs is made, a multidisciplinary risk assessment process is done by a Scientific Advisory Committee and the Executive Council.



Photo by Brooke Lark on unsplash

Most of the countries such as Ghana remain skeptical about transgenic foods. The Tanzania government recently ordered the Tanzania Agriculture Research Institute (TARI) to discontinue the unauthorised usage of drought tolerant maize crops. Zambia recently lifted its bans on the importation of GMOs products, with the Health Minister stating that the ban was previously in place due to the country's lack of technical capacity to handle GMOs and its use in the country. In 2017, while some communities in Zimbabwe were experiencing food crisis, the federal government stuck to its no-GMO policy; with the Zimbabwe Smallholder Organic Farmers arguing that the country could achieve food security without adopting GMOs foods. Burkina Faso has banned Monsanto Bt. Cotton because farmers in the country were unhappy with the short length of the fiber produced by the GMO variety.

#### 4. GMO Use in Nigeria

In Nigeria, the adoption of GMO crops has been championed by Monsanto Agriculture Nigeria Limited, National Biotechnology Development Agency (NABDA), and the Open Forum for Agricultural Biotechnology (OFAB) amongst others. In 2015, Nigeria approved the cultivation of

genetically modified crop, Bt cotton and in early 2019, the National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA) approved the commercializing of GM cowpea said to have been developed by the Institute for Agricultural Research (IAR) in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Kaduna State.

#### 5. Dangers Associated with GMO crops

Even though, proponents of genetically modified organisms (GMO) crops such as Monsanto and the National Biotechnology Development Agency (NABDA) claim that these crops can solve climate change challenges, and are more resistant to pests etc., the cons of these technology appear to outweigh the benefits. In fact, the American Academy of Environmental Medicine (AAEM) has warned that GMO foods are unsafe and have asked all doctors to advise their patients to avoid these foods.

Additionally, GMO crops have been linked to dangers such as:

- Increased use of pesticides: In less than two decades, since the introduction of glyphosate resistant plant (GMO) globally, these plants have become a major problem for farmers around the world and has necessitated the increased use of stronger herbicides.



- Lesser Yields: Despite the false promise by the technology advocates of GM crops producing higher yields for farmers, it has been found that in most cases they do not yield more than natural seeds.

- Extreme Cost: An independent study conducted in India found that Bt cotton crops were costing farmers 10 percent more than non-Bt variants with 40 percent lesser profit. Also since 1995, over 300,000 Indian farmers have committed suicide as a result of huge debts linked to the costs and failures of GM crops cultivation.
- Contamination: There have been almost 400 cases of GMO contamination from 1997-2013 in over 60 countries, and this is because many plants are pollinated by insects, birds or wind, allowing pollen from a GMO plant to move to neighboring fields or into the wild. These contaminations are extremely difficult to contain and inadequate regulation also fails to hold seed companies accountable for resulting damages and negatively affecting farmers who have been the victims of this contamination.

- Super pests and Super weeds: GMO cultivation has also led to super weeds and super pests that are very difficult for farmers to manage. Farmers affected by resistant pests must revert to older and more toxic chemicals, more labour or more intensive tillage. An example is the overuse of glyphosate – a broad spectrum herbicide commercially found in Monsanto's Roundup, used with seeds engineered to withstand its application. Between 1996 and 2011, US herbicide use grew by 527 million pounds, mostly from glyphosate. There are now at least 14 species of glyphosate-resistant weeds throughout the country, and almost double that number globally.

- Threat to Biodiversity: The prevalence of GMOs in major field crops threatens the genetic diversity of our food supply. Genetic diversity helps individual species adjust to new conditions, diseases and pests, and can aid ecosystems in adapting to a changing environment or severe conditions like drought or floods. Traits such as

drought tolerance are complex, driven by several genes. Genetic engineering mainly targets one gene at a time.

- Patent: Additionally, farmers who buy GMO seeds must pay licensing fees and sign contracts that dictate how they can grow the crop – and even allow seed companies to inspect their farms. GMO seeds are expensive and farmers must buy them each year or else be liable for patent infringement. And in cases of contaminations, farmers have been sued for “seed piracy” when unauthorised GMO crops show up in their fields. Patents also make independent research on GMOs difficult. Farmers must sign agreements that prohibit them from giving seeds to researchers or carrying out their research.

- Health Risks: Genetically Modified crops have been linked to a number of health risks. In 1998, Scottish scientists found internal organ damage to rats that were fed with GM potatoes. In a 2006 experiment, female rats fed with GM soybeans gave birth to severely stunted mice, with half of them dying after three weeks.

The survivors were sterile. Indian news agencies in the same year reported that thousands of sheep allowed to graze on Bt cotton crop residues died suddenly. Glyphosphate, a substance greatly used in herbicides that most GM crops are engineered to withstand has been declared by an agency of the World Health Organisation (WHO) as “probable carcinogen” and has been linked to illnesses like Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's, autism, breast and prostate cancer.

*\*Daramfon Bassey and \*Yeside Dapo-Salami are with Clean Tech Hub Nigeria.*

# GMOs don't increase crop yield



By Joyce Ebebeinwe

**C**laims that genetically modified organisms (GMOs) will be the main way to feed the world is mere propaganda. This was the submission by Nnimmo Bassey, Director of the Health of Mother Health Foundation (HOMEF), during a forum on July 25, 2019 in Benin City, Edo State.

At a Dialogue on Food and Farming System in Nigeria that brought together officials of civil society organisations (CSOs).

Bassey said in a welcome address that besides the reality that GMOs do not necessarily increase yield

or solve the problems of pests and diseases, researches show that, at present, enough food to feed almost double of the current population is already being produced but most of it is used for industrial purposes, for animal feed or is simply wasted due to poor storage and processing facilities and lack of access to markets.

He underscored the right to question the attempt to overturn the food systems, promote monocropping and project toxic chemicals as safe.

“We must consistently defend our food sovereignty which ensures our right and access to safe, nutritious, healthy and culturally appropriate food at all times,” Bassey stated.

Speaking at the Dialogue, Daniel Olorunfemi, Professor of Genetic Toxicology in the University of Benin, explained the process of genetic modification and how it affects human and environmental health.

He listed the health impacts of GMOs to include immune disorders, cancers, reproductive defects and infant mortality, adding that, on the environment, GMOs present risks of horizontal gene transfer and unintended harm to non-target organisms.

“We do not need GMOs.

We have the landmass, rich soils and good climate conditions that can ensure food productivity,” Olorunfemi added.

Speaking on the cultural, political and economic perspective of GMOs, Bassey pointed out that GMOs erode local knowledge and destroy the resilience of natural ecosystems which is based on biodiversity.

“Real solutions exist. The United Nations-World Bank-sponsored International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) research carried out by 400 development experts for a period of three years recommended that nations must urgently revitalise public sector agricultural research, invest in smallholder farmer-oriented, low-input agroecology farming system and reform unfair trade-related rules,” he said.

Discussions on the viable alternative to GMOs which was led by HOMEf's Biosafety Project Officer, Joyce Ebebeinwe revealed that Agroecology presents a holistic approach to the challenges of agricultural productivity and in addition, climate change.

According to her, it is a knowledge intensive system which manages ecosystems by replacing external inputs with natural processes, ensures quantity and quality production, and also preserves the soil for future generations. Some of the innovations of agroecology highlighted include biological pest control, the push and pull method, participatory

plant breeding, and agroforestry.

The Dialogue closed with group discussions on the way forward for Nigeria and the following resolutions were reached by all the participants.

**Participants agreed that the government of Nigeria should:**

- ban GMOs now and begin to invest in agroecological farming systems. State and Local Governments should urgently declare their states and local government areas GMO-free as a way of encouraging the Federal Government to take similar steps.
- critically review the National Biosafety Management Agency Act, 2015 to close loopholes that allow for the unchecked infiltration of GMOs and ensure that regulators consider environmental and human health on a case-by-case basis as they entertain applications.
- increase support for farmers in terms of infrastructure, extension services, access to land and loans, and access to markets.
- include agroecology in her National Climate Change Adaptation Plan and increase funding for research in its principles and practice.
- create a database to reach and sustain contact with real farmers and avoid working with “ghost or absentee farmers”.
- establish seed banks to preserve indigenous seed varieties and promote seed fairs to facilitate learning/exchanges among farmers.

**Civil Society Organisations should:**

- carry out more awareness to drive the message of the impacts of GMOs to the farmers/grassroots.
- engage more with the media especially by using social media for a wider coverage.

Farmers should:

- question and reject seedlings suspected to be genetically modified.
- form clusters to advocate against GMOs and synergise with CSOs to engage the government.

Consumers should:

- insist on their right to safe and nutritious foods.
- reject GMOs and carefully scrutinise labels before making purchases.

# FG, HOMEF Prepare Youths to Tackle Effects of Climate Change



**I**n a bid to tackle the menace of climate change, an environmental think-tank organisation, Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF), in partnership with the Federal Ministry of Environment and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), over the weekend in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, embarked on intensive two day training of about 70 youths from the South-South region of Nigeria.

The regional summit titled “Youth Climate

Incubation Hub for South-South zone” was in furtherance to strengthening Nigeria's position as a member country of the United Nations' Youth Engagement and Public Mobilization track at the Climate Action Summit in September 2019.

The youths who exhibited their ideas on how to ensure a better environment and proffer solutions to the issue of climate change were drawn from Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo and Rivers State.



In his remark, Rev Nnimmo Bassey, an Environmental Justice Advocate and Director of HOMEF highlighted the importance of the Youth summit on Climate Action, which he said is to unlock youth innovativeness in Nigeria's climate action. He emphasised that young people have the brightest ideas for solving problems of climate change in Nigeria. He said at the end of the roundtable, best ideas would be selected to national and global level as an intervention to the climate issue.

In an interview with The Nigerian Xpress at the programme, Nnimmo Bassey noted that from interaction with the youths at the summit, it shows that the Nigerian youths are well prepared to tackle the environmental issue, urging that the federal government should endeavor to implement the good ideas from the youths on the climate change. He said: "The climate hub for the South-South youths went excellently well because we were worried about how open the youths are with the ideas to fight climate change and how they will be able to express themselves in the midst of their colleagues. But as it is, they all came well prepared; they came with their ideas and were quite opened to new ideas.

"At the end of the day, we are able to harmonise the ideas and pick up the best collection of ideas that we can take to the national level and from there to the global level.

"If I were to address the global climate change leaders, I will say, 'Watch out! Nigerian youths are coming.' They are ready for climate action, they won't accept inaction anymore, they want our leaders to be proactive and they want our leaders to listen to the young people as the future is theirs and they have the solution. So, it is better to look towards the youths." To the Nigerian government, this workshop and the series of hub that will come up in the country are being held by the invitation of the Ministry of Environments, so clearly the federal ministry of environment knows that good ideas would come from the youths and so, they are facilitating the holding of this hub.



"It's one thing to hold the hub and another thing to take the solutions into practice so I urge the Nigerian government that the youths are consciously getting together to bring up these ideas, building solidarity amongst themselves, learning from one another; when the ideas gets to your desk, please put them into practice, implement them and do not put them into the shelf."

Also speaking on waste management, he said "The issue of waste management which is a very basic environmental problem is still not being handled adequately. There is a lot room for improvement and not surprisingly, many of the recommendations from the youths from the South-South had to do with waste management- especially about how to recycle waste into useful products - and also how to turn organic and vegetative waste into energy producing feast talk. "The issue of plastic waste management featured prominently and we saw the connection being drawn between flooding and waste disposal, flooding and continuous use of single use plastics, flooding polluting and water pollution. The solution also recommended how this can be handled. I think this was very useful in terms of bringing new ideas as well as reiterating old existing ideas".

Earlier, in a welcome address at the event, the Federal Ministry of Environment through its Department of Climate Change charged the participants on the imperativeness of the summit, noting that climate change has become an issue of global concern particularly in Third World countries like Nigeria.

Sa'adatu Gambo, a Senior Scientific Officer at the Department of Climate Change who represented the Federal Ministry of Environment, stated that the Department of Climate Change is the country's focal point for the United Nation Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and are always eager and ready to welcome creative ideas from young people on how to solve problems of climate change which she noted has become a serious global threat to humanity.

Some of the recommendations at the end of the hub include the need for Climate Change Desk Officers at both Federal and State ministries in Nigeria to ensure that participants of this Youth Climate Hub are further engaged on climate change issues; increased effort to be made on recycling as regards plastic bottle collection and reuse and also waste segregation and separation; establishing environmental clubs and advocacy for target groups; creating social documentaries in local dialects on climate change and generating biogas from household biodegradable waste and biodigester.

Additional suggestions were that mobile applications should be developed and made available to map vulnerable and non-vulnerable areas to climate change impact while solar panels should be more affordable for the people; Mangrove reclamation and tree planting activities especially indigenous and economic crops should commence.

It was also stated that there should be massive advocacy campaigns on the impact of climate change.

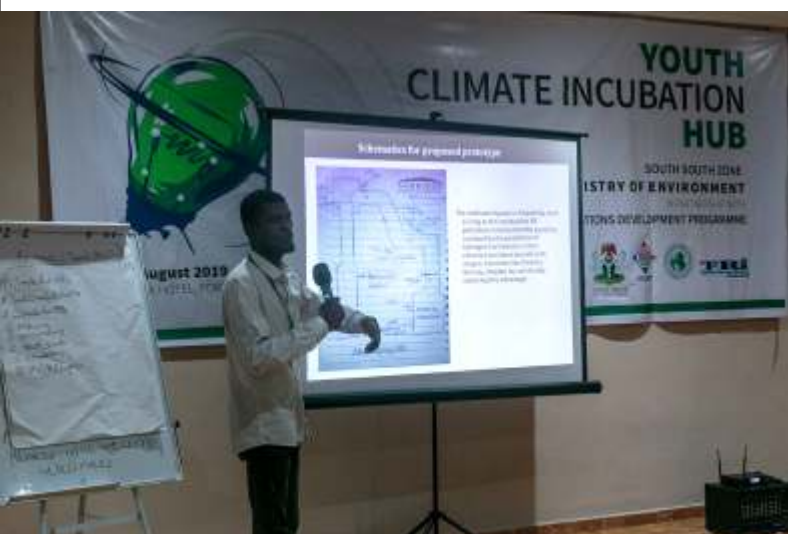
replacement for fossil fuel. Another is to see how we can create awareness about the issue. We can integrate climate change into the school curriculum so that it becomes a course or subject that is taken in the school thereby from primary, secondary and tertiary institution; the subject will be studied for people to know the daily causes as well as the effect it has on individuals and the society at large.

“Also, I hope to expose more people to the use of solar panel system which generates power from the sunlight making it environmentally friendly and cost effective.”

Fubara Gift Evans from Rivers said: “I came here to interact with young minds concerning the issue of climate change and to proffer good solution to the issue of climate change.

“Firstly, we think of energy transition, moving away from dependency on fossil fuel into using organic materials to generate energy, for example; we can use our waste to generate biogas that can be used for cooking processes. We can take advantage of the climate change condition, like extreme temperature to tap solar power to use for our gadgets instead of investing into using generator to provide power.

In Rivers State, we have an issue of pollution; oil spills everywhere and most ways of remediation of the polluted sites involves tilling of the polluted land and is a rigorous process. So, I am researching the use of earthworm and mushroom though I am doing a comparative analysis, as an alternative method for the remediation of the environment.”



Participants that spoke with our correspondent expressed satisfaction for the arrangement by the facilitators and made assurances to contribute to the development of the environment as it affects climate change.

Oviruo Ogheneruemu, a participant from Delta state said: “My adaptive strategy is to see how to ameliorate the climate change issue in Delta State in particular, to encourage the use of Ethanol as a

**Culled from:**  
<https://www.thexpressng.com/2019/08/19/fg-homef-prepare-youth-to-tackle-effects-of-climate-change/>



# STOPPING THE EXTRACTIVIST ADDICTION

By Stephen Oduware and Cadmus Atake-Enade

Niger Delta Declaration of Oilwatch Africa:  
People not Oil, Food not Oil  
and Fish not Oil

**N**etwork members, allies and community representatives of Oilwatch Africa met in the Niger Delta city of Port Harcourt, Nigeria from 6th to 8th of August, 2019 to assess and discuss the impacts of fossil fuel extraction on the environment, principally on water, soil and air.

The conference deliberated on impacts of fossil fuel extraction on people's rights, including those related to fisheries, farming, health, and social wellbeing. It strategized on building common platforms, networks and resistance to the expansion of fossil fuels exploration in Africa.

Participants from 15 countries including Nigeria, discussed extensively and shared experiences from their various contexts; highlighting key concerns, impacts and people's struggles with fossil fuel extraction. They examined the alarming model of reckless extractivism facing the continent today, the way corporate capitalist interests have turned the continent inside out, probing every nook and cranny to extract natural resources.

They decried the actions of the corporations who pay little or no concern to the welfare of local communities that depend on the environment for their wellbeing. This is seen in the shocking levels of water pollution/crisis, food shortages, health hazards, land grab, militarization, growing inequality, poverty and conflict in these communities as a result of fossil fuel extraction activities.

The conference of Oilwatch Africa also examined the critical connection between fossil fuel extraction and the climate crisis of which Africa is already suffering: from expanding droughts to floods in the coastal plains. It equally criticised how fossil fuel extraction has fuelled corruption and led to state capture thereby stifling the prospect of development in Africa, subverting our economies, recolonizing our continent and subjugating our people.

The importance of the Climate Chance Summit as a unique space to harvest the contribution of non-state actors in Africa and to address the challenges of climate change impact was acknowledged. The second Climate Chance Summit in the continent will hold in October 2019 in Ghana and will provide the unique opportunity to demand an end to fossil energy dependency.

The participants expressed regret that governments of African countries have remained silent while this dangerous exploitation and expropriation continues. Resolving that urgent actions are needed to wean Africa from fossil dependence and stop the continent from being wholly degraded and destroyed, they stated that there is an immediate need for African countries to divest from fossil fuels and invest in an energy system that is clean, just and renewable. The Oilwatch Africa members, allies and community representatives declared as follows:

1. The uncontrolled appetite for fossil fuel dollars by African leaders has blinded them to overwhelming empirical facts that reinforce the reality that extraction of fossil fuel is fast setting mother earth ablaze.. Governments have failed to live up to the responsibility of protecting the environment and safeguarding the livelihood of the people, erroneously believing that monetary benefits from fossil extraction are a fixation to climate change. Yet, the African continent will be worse affected by climate change as evidenced by the hurricanes that struck Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Malawi and South Africa in March and April 2019.

2. Impact on women and children arising from agricultural lands pollution, contamination of fresh waters and the destruction of fishery ecosystems is criminal and requires immediate action.

3. Noting that fossil energy civilization is the bane for the current climate crisis is a compelling rationale to prohibit all forms of fossil exploration in fresh waters, oceans, forests, and national parks across the continent and elsewhere.

In line with the above, the Network demands the following:

1. No new fossil fuel reserves should be opened on the continent.
2. There should be immediate commencement of remediation activities at all fossil fuel extraction sites on the continent.
3. An immediate social and environmental health audit in fossil fuel extraction locations on the continent.
4. The clean-up process in Ogoni land should be hastened and completed on schedule.
5. Every policy for the privatization of water on the continent must be revoked. Water must be seen as an essential part of people's wellbeing and as a fundamental human right.
6. African governments should improve governance standards to end unbridled conflicts and related land grabbing inspired by fossil energy extraction interests.
7. Africans must stand together in the global struggle for climate justice; stand in solidarity with people of the Niger Delta and movement against coal in Africa.

Oilwatch Africa members, allies and community representatives in solidarity with the Niger Delta peoples remind the world of the martyrs of the environmental justice struggles in Africa and around the world. This year marks the 24th anniversary of the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa, the Ogoni leader, activist and Africa's foremost environmental justice campaigner. Oilwatch Africa resolved that their struggles will not be in vain and those responsible for their murders must be brought to book.

*Signed by:*

*Community representatives, Oilwatch Africa allies and representatives from Cameroon, Chad, Congo DR, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Swaziland, Togo and Uganda.*



# Okrika Waterfront Declaration of the FishNet Alliance: Fish Not Oil

By Stephen Oduware



**F**ishNet Alliance members and allies from different African countries met at Okrika waterfront, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria for her first General Assembly on 8th August, 2019.

The meeting started with a field trip to Oil impacted site at B-Dere, Ogoniland- one of the most polluted places on Earth. The participants made the first stop at the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) Office in Port Harcourt. They

were welcomed by the project coordination officer for cleanup and remediation.

The platform of the general assembly was also used to link the FishNet Alliance to Oilwatch Africa (a Network of CSOs fighting to end fossil fuels dependency in Africa) with the aim of working together to protect marine ecosystems and to formalise the organisational structure of the Alliance in Africa.



The fishers agreed that there is an urgent need to save the marine ecosystem from corporate capture and to restore the livelihood and dignity of fishers.

In addition, the Alliance members stressed that the impact of the extractive industries in one location has direct or indirect impacts on fishing communities in other locations as pollution knows no geographical boundaries.

The Assembly elected an interim International Steering Committee with one member from Cote D'Ivoire, Ghana, Senegal, South Africa, Nigeria, Togo and DRC respectively. Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF) serves as the International Secretariat.

Standing on its principle of what affects one – affects all, FishNet Alliance, allies and community

representatives at the assembly resolved and demanded as follows:

1. Extraction of fossil fuel/minerals of any kind offshore and onshore must stop and no new fields should be opened.
2. There should be increased participation in policy spaces of fishers with regard to the marine environment.
3. There should be promotion of traditional knowledge of fishing practices, including those that would help mitigate climate change impacts.
4. All Indiscriminate displacement of fishing settlements and sand-filling of fishing creeks and rivers should be stopped.
5. The use of chemicals and explosives to enhance fishing in our waters should be discouraged in our coastal communities.
6. We strongly campaign for the rights of the fishers to earn a living

from the fishing and contribute to the economy of their countries without hindrance. We hereby press for justice and/or compensation in cases where these rights have been abridged by corporations and governments.<sup>7</sup> We condemn industrial fishing on local grounds.

8. FishNet Alliance in every country should have a one day of action which may be linked up with the World Ocean Day or the International Day for Artisanal Fishers.

9. Corporations who have polluted the marine environment should clean-up immediately.

These resolutions were agreed on by the general assembly participants from Cote D'Ivoire, Ghana, Senegal, South Africa, Nigeria, Togo and DRC.



# University of York, United Kingdom Honours Renowned Environmental Activist: Nnimmo Bassey with a doctorate degree

**T**he Director, Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF) Nnimmo Bassey was honoured with a doctorate degree along with 14 other global leaders in various fields.

Part of the statement reads: “His recognition for us is well-deserved and commendable. The honorary degree adds to a list of other recognitions that Bassey has received in the last decade. In 2009, he was named “Hero of the Environment” by Time Magazine for his advocacy that made inhabitants of the Niger Delta know their rights, the infringements of the oil companies and the Nigerian authorities and why they should be held responsible. In 2010, he was conferred the Rights Livelihood Award “for revealing the full and ecological human horrors of oil production”.

He was honored alongside Game of Thrones star, Mark Addy; Photojournalist, Lynsey Addario; Video game designer, Charles Cecil; Paediatrician, Professor Diana Gibb; Historian, Professor Catherine Hall; and Biologist and Nobel Prize winner, Richard Henderson among others, at the institution's Central Hall.



# Na him be this!

A poem for Nnimmo Bassey

By: Stephen Oduware

He is an architect cum comrade  
Comrade for the people of the world  
Comrade against neocolonial forces- causing despoliations in the world  
Comrade against corporate capture of our collective existence  
Comrade who constantly reminds us where the rain beats us  
Na him be this!

A think-tank and environmentalist  
Seeking justice for the environment, climate and the grassroots  
He woke up to see corporations exchanging nature for currencies  
'Stop it! This is a means to an end,' he shouts like a voice in the wilderness  
Our planet is bleeding, Mother Earth is on emergency bed  
We must retrace our steps and work with Nature.  
Natural cycles we must respect- he admonishes  
Na him be this!

A poet and a writer  
A friend of the Earth, who abhors crime and abuse  
Mother Earth is continuously raped  
And the rapists are dancing in the square with trillions from her blood- receiving awards  
Grovel on your knees, repent- he cries  
Soon there will be nowhere to run  
A messenger, a mentor, an activist-Mr. Environment  
Na him be this!

An advocate and a mobilizer, pushing for a better world  
We must report to the UN- he thought  
Oh these double-faced rogues are here too- even you?  
We must mobilize and re-strategize- he clamors  
Re-Source Democracy, Sustain-Ability, Fish-Not-Oil,  
No to GMOs, No REDD, FishNet,  
Leadership from below, Life After Oil, School of Ecology,  
are progenies from his loins Working to Decolonise minds  
Until Victory!  
Na him be this!

# Advocacy Visit to NIMASA

By Cadmus Atake-Enade

**A**dvocacy is one tool to put your ideas out to ensure policies are made to benefit the “common man.” Health of Mother Earth Foundation -the ecological think tank- made an advocacy visit to Nigeria Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), Apapa, Lagos State. The meeting was aimed at:

1. Collaborating and partnering with NIMASA to get detailed statistical data and information on the Nigerian Coastal and Marine environment.
2. To know if their work is going to have positive impacts on our Fish Not Oil and our FishNet Alliance projects.
3. To discuss the impacts of the extraction industries on coastal communities and environment and to know how the agency can be of support to our project in preventing the negative impacts of the industries on the lives of the community people.

Those present at the meeting were Dr. Anslem Nwanze, Director - Medical and Health Services, NIMASA; Hazatudden Umal .A., Assistant Director - Medical and Health services, NIMASA; Mrs. Okonkwo Caroline, Director - Marine Management and Resources; Cadmus Atake- Enade, HOMEF and Esuku Idowu, Volunteer, HOMEF Lagos State. Cadmus Atake-Enade, a project officer with HOMEF introduced the organisation to the NIMASA team, explaining the various thematic



areas with focus on the Fish Not oil project.

He explained that the Fish Not Oil project is a project aimed at halting the activities of the extractive industries in coastal communities which affects the health and livelihood of those living in coastal communities most especially the fisher folks; women and children.

Fish are more important than oil as it employs more people than the oil industries which destroys the environment and impacts the health and livelihood of people living in the coastal environment.

HOMEF has been able to organise Fish Not Oil Community Dialogues across some coastal communities in Nigeria and outside Nigeria. Locations such as Okrika in Rivers State, Mbo and Ibeno in Akwa Ibom State, Makoko in Lagos State, Twins Island in Cross Rivers State as well as in South Durban, South Africa, Lamu County in Kenya and Keta in Ghana.

He then explained that from these dialogues, HOMEF has been able to establish the FishNet Alliance which is a network of fishers focused on halting the activities of the extractive and mining industries from polluting and destroying the coastal environment across Nigeria and Africa at large.

Adding that from these dialogues, it was discovered that the challenges faced by the communities are the same:

- Oil pollutions from the extractive industries killing their fish and making them go deep into the high seas to fish.
- Excessive fishing from big fishing industries which uses fishing trawlers to catch both matured and immature fishes and also destroys their fishing nets and traps.
- Apart from that it was also discovered that some fishermen uses poison to fish which also pollutes the river.

He went further to notify the Director General's representative that the advocacy visit was made to seek possible ways of partnering and collaborating with the agency on our Fish Not Oil project and FishNet Alliance and also to seek the support and assistance of the agency in the provision of statistical data about the coastal environment in Nigeria and other vital information that will help foster HOMEF's advocacy work with coastal communities.

A partnership and collaboration with NIMASA, he said will bring about more involvements with other coastal communities that have not been reached.

Following the presentation, Dr Anslem the representative of the Director General appreciated HOMEF for the visit. He explained that from the presentation made, HOMEF is doing great work as an organisation.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### •School of Ecology on Emerging Technologies : Implications for Africa



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### •FishNet Dialogue in Senegal

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According to him, NIMASA is willing to collaborate with HOMEF in sustaining the health of the coastal environment. In his words, he said that “we believe there is an interaction between humans and the coastal environment and as civil servants, we cannot make decisions alone and so we are suggesting that a concise proposal be made regarding your project and made available to the DG for further supports and partnership”.

He however stressed that it will be very vital if HOMEF will take into accounts more of the impacts of the extractive industries on the health and lives of the community people because humans cannot be isolated from the coastal environment.

The Director of Marine Management and Resources explained that the agency is already working in-line with HOMEF's project to ensure that the coastal environment is preserved and protected and explained that they will always look into the issues explained during the presentation and see how best they can be of more support.



# Books You should Read



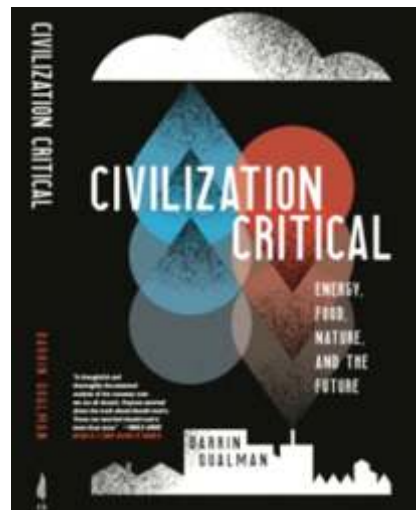
## Rethinking Development –

Edited by Ndongo Samba Sylla

From the single party model to "representative democracy", from structural adjustment policies to reforms on enhancing "competitiveness" and improving the "business environment", almost all fashionable political and economic models have been experimented on the African continent. Yet, they all clearly failed, as attested by the majority of socio-economic indicators in the areas of nutrition, health, education, employment, etc.

According to UN forecasts, Africa will account for a quarter of the world's population by 2050. If Africa is still unable to adequately address the problems faced by its billion inhabitants, how will it do it when its population doubles? Beyond the critique of neo-liberalism, there is therefore a pressing need to reflect on alternatives that will help Africa back out of this dead-end and find its own path.

This is the perspective adopted by this book edited by Ndongo Samba Sylla, which compiles contributions of experts on Africa's development issues. Can democracy help to achieve the changes that Africans aspire to? If yes, under what conditions? Otherwise, what is the alternative? How can Africa break away from neo-colonial practices that prevent its political, economic and cultural emancipation? What role is there for women in these processes? In view of the paralysis and treason of elites, can social movements be harbingers of the much-awaited radical shifts? What contribution could the private media bring in implementing people-centred alternatives? Rethinking Development attempts to provide answers to these essential questions.



## Civilization Critical -

by Darrin Qualman

Energy, Food, Nature and the Future. The book charts the past, present and possible futures of our global petro-industrial consumerist civilization. It looks at how we produce our food and how we fuel and provision the incredibly powerful systems of industry. The book includes chapters on energy, the Industrial Revolution, transport, farming, efficiency and progress.

Most important, Civilization Critical provides a wholly new analysis of our problems and their potential solutions; new ideas about material and energy flows; and the structure of global civilization. The book argues that a nineteenth- and twentieth-century transition to linear systems and away from the circular patterns of nature (and of all previous civilizations) is the foundational error—the underlying problem, the root cause of climate change, resource depletion, oceans full of plastics and a host of mega-problems now intensifying and merging, with potentially civilization-cracking results.

So? Are we doomed? No. Doom is a choice. One we're currently making, but there are other options. The book concludes that we face a momentous decision. On the one hand, we possess a profusion of technologies and options that can deliver us from our predicament: solar panels, wind turbines, electric transport, low-emission agriculture, aggressive recycling, increased economic equality and security, and improved systems of governance. On the other hand, we remain committed to increasing consumption and economic growth such that current plans—two to three percent economic growth per year—will cause the global economy to grow eight times larger in the coming century. We possess powerful means of destruction, but also of deliverance.

# VOLUNTEERS NEEDED



## LOOKING TO HELP?

If you would like to join our team of volunteers, send an email to



[volunteers@homef.org](mailto:volunteers@homef.org)