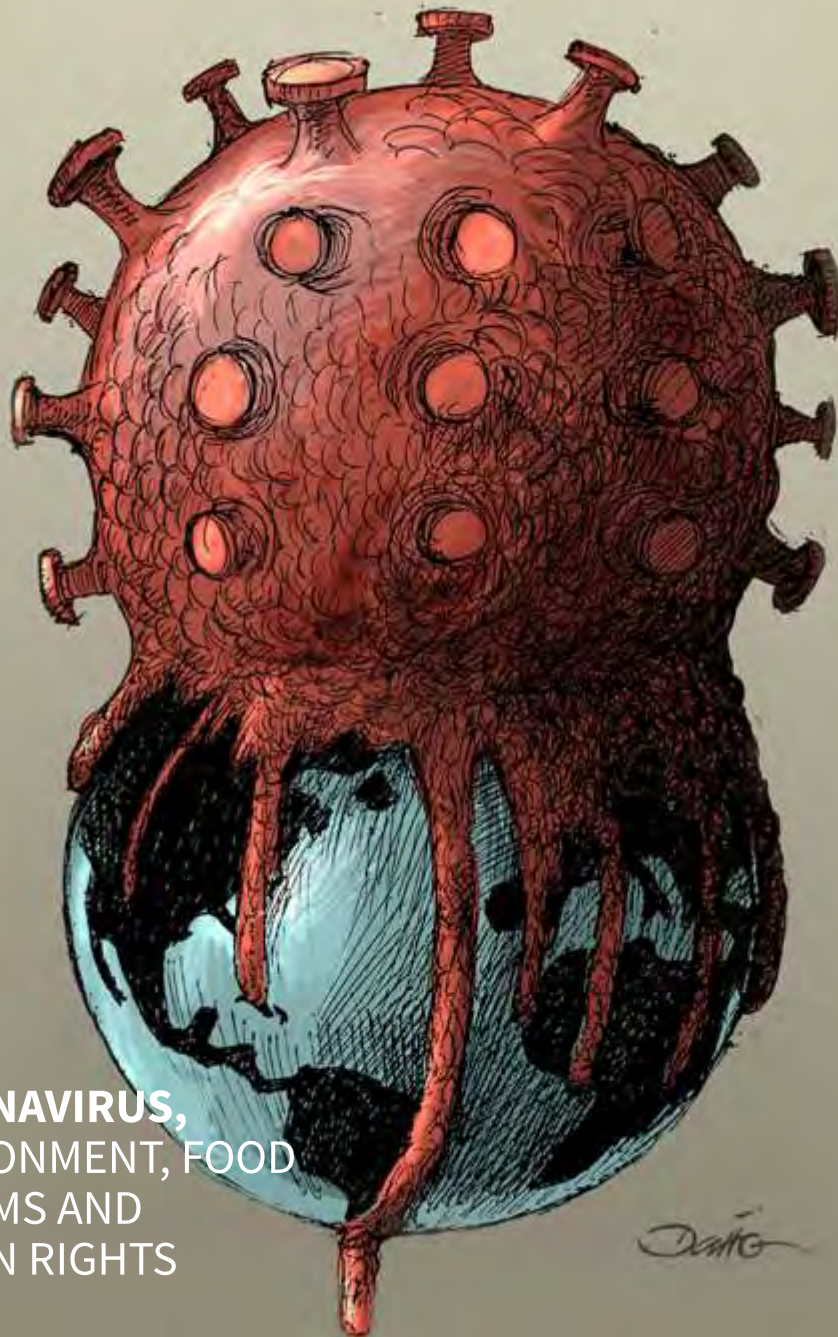


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CORONAVIRUS,
ENVIRONMENT, FOOD
SYSTEMS AND
HUMAN RIGHTS

THE IRONY
of Growth

HOW WORKING
from Home Works

AN OPEN LETTER
to the Government
of Ethiopia

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Elvis Omorogbe
Kelechi Okoede
Mabel Obaseki

LAYOUT / DESIGN

Babawale Obayanju (Owales)

CIRCULATION

Shehu Akowe

COVER IMAGE

www.cagle.com/dario-castillejos

PUBLISHED BY

Health of Mother Earth Foundation



Top Floor 214, Uselu Lagos Road,
Ugbowo, Benin City



P.O.Box 1057 Ugbowo, Benin City,
Nigeria

+2348173706095



www.homef.org

CONTACT INFO

All mails, inquiries and articles should be sent to
editor@homef.org

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HOMEF

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Home Run



NNIMMO BASSEY

Director, Health of Mother
Foundation

The pandemic has offered us the opportunity to strengthen the social webs of support that sustain humanity, and which must not be disrupted by contrived policy measures.

By the time our 27th edition went to bed in February 2020, no one could have envisioned that the world would shortly thereafter go into a dreadful lockdown. It has been a season of fears, panic and doubts. Fear of getting caught in the web of the coronavirus. Panic that the lockdown would lead to famine in some places, that goods and supplies would dry up.

It was quite a scene seeing people stock up on toilet paper as though the World Health Organisation was declaring a pandemic of cholera. As we write doubts persist as to the origin of the coronavirus.

Most people agree that COVID-19 has zoonotic roots. Others speculate that it could have been fabricated by some evil genetic engineer.

In the early days of the pandemic I co-authored with Juan Lopez, an old-time friend and comrade, an open-ended chapbook titled *Who Benefits from Corona – A breakfast with Mr Gates*. In that book we hint at the business and political manipulations that are embedded in the responses to the pandemic, including the pursuit of vaccines and the prediction that millions of Africans would die from the disease.

The pandemic has offered us

the opportunity to strengthen the social webs of support that sustain humanity, and which must not be disrupted by contrived policy measures. We hope that African civil society will unite and closely monitor COVID-19 and policies related to it on our continent.

We are sure you will enjoy reading the articles and reports in this edition. There are articles related to the COVID-19 pandemic. There are reports of a massive anti-GMOs march we led in Lagos and a biosafety conference we hosted in Abuja just before the lockdown.

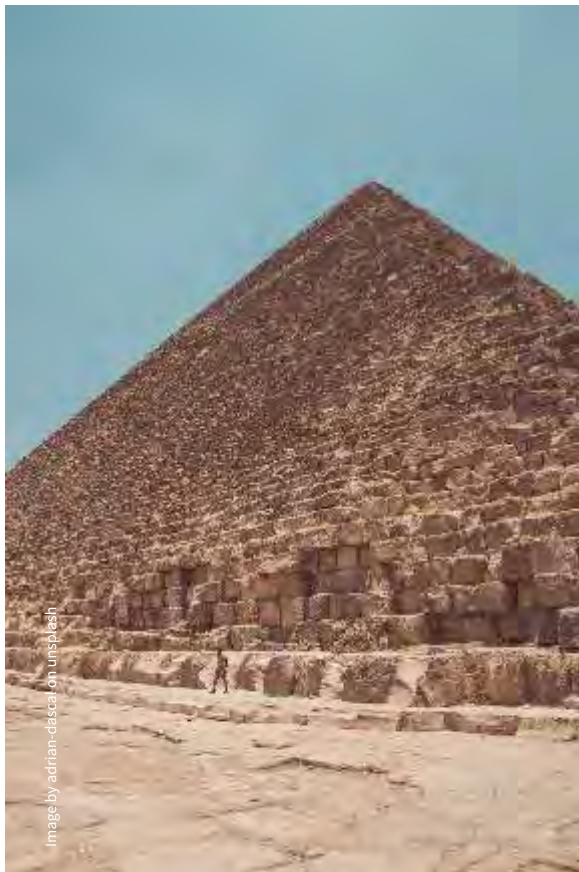
We also serve you a pointed letter to the Ethiopian Government written by one of Africa's foremost biosafety experts, Tewolde Berhan Gebre Egziabher. He warns the government not to toe the pathway of agricultural genetic engineering.

Expectedly, there is poetry and highlights of books that you should read. We also share some of the feedback that we have received from readers. Keep them coming!

Until Victory!
Nnimmo Bassey

END OF AN ILLUSORY CIVILISATION

By Nnimmo Bassey



The end of an Illusory Civilisation was bound to come. The illusion that the petroleum civilisation will last into the foreseeable future has always been a marker that our vision is rather limited. The civilisation has been preserved by our collective myopia or, perhaps preferably, our willful denial.

It has been easy to ignore the

cases of gross ecological harm imposed by petroleum extraction and exploitation on communities and territories simply because the power structures could drown out the voices of the people. Power structures hosted in shiny skyscrapers and expansive statehouses could feign ignorance of the gross damage and the rage of inequalities on the streets.

When cyclones, hurricanes, droughts and other extreme weather events wreaked havoc on communities and nations, it was seen as opportunities to eliminate vulnerable communities living in locations preferred as vacation spots by the well-heeled.

Calls for economic diversification away from dependence on the fossil fuels sector are often seen as insane because the pockets were deemed to be bottomless. People even said that some economies would simply not survive a post-petroleum era. They painted pictures of starving, helpless populations

who could only be pulled out of misery by revenues accruing from the fossil fuel sector. They saw the sector as the major provider of jobs and the good life.

It was just so we don't have to imagine the possibility of enjoying the good life without energy and power provided by fossil fuels. How would intercontinental travels and highspeed movement on superhighways be undertaken without fossil fuels? How could foods be harvested in one end of the world and eaten the next day at a distant spot on the planet? And how about the flowers harvested in Latin America or Africa which are destined for the visual and nasal pleasures of lovers somewhere in Europe or North America? The idea that high-input industrial monoculture agriculture was destroying habitats and biodiversity, harming the planet, promoting wastes and even affecting human health was seen as unavoidable trade-offs in the pursuit of meat, uniform food products and profit.

Then came the special variant of coronavirus and the attendant COVID-19 pandemic. Humans became locked up in their homes or neighbourhoods. Gatherings of more than 20 persons became classified as large gatherings. Sporting activities, including famed soccer, cricket, baseball and basketball leagues, shuttered. No big weddings or funerals. The world descended into a season of the unthinkable.

It has never been in doubt that fossil fuels are not renewable resources and that the stocks were finite. Besides the fact that they are wasting resources, it has also been known that burning them was harmful to the climate. The fossil fuel sector has invested heavily in sponsoring climate denial as well as blocking real climate actions at both national and global levels. If the monies invested in image laundering and climate change denial had been channelled into clean energy development, the world would have been at a better standing than it is today.

Standing on the edge of the climate change precipice, and restrained by a pandemic,

humans have been literally quarantined and forced to accept the lifestyles that were hitherto unthinkable in their highly sophisticated societies.

This would have been a time for neighbours to get to know one another, for communities to forge closer ties, but we have seen highly divisive tendencies. It is a point we see communities refusing to allow ship berth at their port for fear of transmission of the virus. Is it not strange that people could tell their compatriots to float away and perish wherever as long as they did not bring a threat of the virus onshore?

Besides the fact that humans are caged by the pandemic, the greater challenge may be that of an economic collapse. The economic turmoil, and especially the collapse of crude oil prices, poses a serious challenge to politicians and their corporate sponsors. If the collapse persists, politicians will be forced to change their perception matrix and know that they are, after all, elected by the people, not by corporations and that the well-being of the people is more important than the profit margins of corporations.

This oil price slump is a clear warning that even if the prices rebound, the days of the civilisation driven by this sector are truly numbered. It is simple wisdom that to be forewarned is to be forearmed. Moving on bullishly as if nothing is at stake is to blindly drive on to catastrophe. The pandemic has given the world a moment for reflection. Remaining stubborn and unreasonable is not an option.

“This oil price slump is a clear warning that even if the prices rebound, the days of the civilisation driven by this sector are truly numbered.”



CLIMATE CHANGE. EXPLOITATION AND POVERTY IN NIGERIA

By: Daniel Onyedikachi Ugwu

Amidst the huge exploitation of earth's enormous resources is a world where approximately 736 million people live in extreme poverty. Ironically, Africa with its vast natural resources remains home to more than half of the extreme poor globally, while my country Nigeria has some of the most extreme poor people (about 90 million people) in the world, representing roughly half of the country's population, according to debatable projections. A great percentage of these people are women and children who are deprived access to adequate food/nutrition, water, sanitation, education, assets, and who die from preventable diseases and childbirth because of lack of basic healthcare.

It needs no saying that climate change exacerbates the poverty conditions in Nigeria and Africa. It is not surprising why the region,

which, according to the IPCC, is most the vulnerable to climate change impacts, is home to more than half of the extreme poor globally. Whether it is crops wildering in the fields, herders losing their livestock to famine, drought-induced displacement of people from their communities, or loss of lives and properties, the impact of climate change is undeniable. Whether it is the displacement of people due to herders-farmers conflicts, flood washing away farmlands and destroying properties or outbreak of weather-related diseases, climate change hits and impacts the poorest people the hardest due to their lack of access to (sufficient) resources to help them adapt to or recover quickly from shocks. These extreme conditions make it all the more difficult for the extreme poor to escape poverty.

According to a 2011 report, the absence of climate change adaptation could result in an estimated loss of between 6 to 30% of Nigeria's GDP by 2050, due to Nigeria's vulnerability to a wide range of climate change impacts affecting all sectors of the country's economy. Therefore, climate change impedes efforts to achieving inclusive economic growth, leads to food/water insecurity and ecosystem degradation and poverty in Nigeria and Africa at large.

Reducing poverty in Nigeria and Africa to 3% by 2030 and achieving economic development as obtainable in some other regions of the world are a very tough and seemingly intractable challenge but not impossible; hence, the urgent need for governments in the region to tackle the threats posed by climate change by prioritizing climate actions. Governments in the region should demonstrate climate ambition by increasing budgetary allocations for climate action programmes and projects in their national budgets.

There should be adequate funding for capacity building for our climate scientists and for research targeted at improving evidence-based climate change policymaking and climate negotiations at the global stage. World leaders should henceforth view climate change as an emergency and take real and ambitious steps in combating it by reducing greenhouse emissions and providing climate finance to compensate countries worst impacted by climate change. Such actions will help these worst-hit counties to adapt to the devastating impacts of climate change and transition into cleaner energy technologies.

Also, the challenge of reducing poverty and combating climate change presents an opportunity for environmentalists and young professionals in Nigeria and Africa to develop innovative and bankable climate action ideas/strategies for climate change mitigation and adaptation across various sectors. For example, actions may include waste recycling, clean energy technologies, urban tree planting and forestation, climate change education and awareness using short films, comic hero videos, animations, drama and other social events etc. Such strategies can lead to sustainable economic growth while reducing carbon pollution and building resilient communities in the region by 2030.

Daniel O. Ugwu (PhD) is a researcher/lecturer and an Environmentalist.

Phone: +2348065671192 Email:
ugwudaniel2016@gmail.com



CORONAVIRUS, ENVIRONMENT, FOOD SYSTEMS AND **HUMAN RIGHTS**

By Praise Oyem (Volunteer with HOMEF)



“The world has long been questioning where the true power lies. Does [the] economy drive politics or the other way around? The coronavirus spread has shown that healthcare is the main power that shapes the economy and politics at a time when a disease brought nations to a standstill” (Sheikh Mohammed, 2020)

The world has been totally transformed by the outbreak of a global pandemic. Thousands of people have already died, and many have fallen ill, from a pandemic whose impact was first reported in the city of Wuhan, Hubei Province of China, in December 2019. The coronavirus disease (COVID-2019) was identified as the causative virus by Chinese authorities on the 7th of January 2020. On the 30th of January 2020, following the recommendations of the Emergency Committee set up by World Health Organization (WHO),

the WHO Director-General declared that the outbreak constitutes a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC).

World scientists on COVID-19 met at WHO's Geneva headquarters from 11th to 12th February 2020 to assess the current level of knowledge about the new virus, agree on critical research questions that need to be answered urgently, and ways to work together to accelerate and fund priority research that can contribute to curtail the outbreak and prepare for future outbreaks.

In recent times, especially in the past few weeks, a number of models predicting the number of Covid-19 cases and associated deaths have been published by government agencies and institutions, but limited research has centred on the impact of Covid-19 on vital areas of the global economy, and this has informed this article's interrogation of the impact of Covid-19 on the environment, food systems and human rights.

Impact on the environment

In most countries, airplanes are grounded, events cancelled, factories shut down: the coronavirus weighs on the world economy, with the unexpected corollary a fall in greenhouse gas emissions in industrial countries. While the world is being asked to wash their hands to fight the pandemic, the UN recalled that around 2.2 billion people do not have access to drinking water and that 4.2 billion—more than half of the world's population—are deprived of safe sanitation systems.

The pandemic has led to the abandonment of many environmental sustainability actions — in the United States, smaller municipalities have halted recycling programmes due to the risks associated with the spread of the virus.

Furthermore, with an increasing number of consumers isolated at home, there has been a spike in online purchases and meal deliveries made. This has not only increased the use and disposal of more single-use

plastic packaging but has further required more fossil fuels to be burned for the transportation and distribution of goods.

There has also been an increase in medical waste as much of the personal protective equipment that healthcare professionals are using can only be worn once.

Hospitals in Wuhan, for example, produced over 200 tons of waste per day during the peak of their outbreak, compared to a prior average of fewer than 50 tons. Even if mass isolation aided the reduction of greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere, it would not be a sustainable way of cleaning up the environment. (Voices of Youth, 2020).

Impact on Food Systems

The coronavirus is spurring dramatic changes to food systems around the world with regard to the provision of safe, affordable and nutritious food as well as sufficient incomes for people working in the food and agricultural sectors.

As the COVID-19 pandemic is still evolving, it is difficult to know the geographic reach and degree of impact we can expect to see across food production and distribution systems. Not only will vulnerable populations and communities have greater difficulty accessing enough food for survival and adequate nutrition, but many also depend upon the food system stability for their livelihoods. Shocks to the food chain may disrupt flows of production and trade, which can have volatile market effects and implications for both food prices and agri-food-based incomes.

Coronavirus and Human Rights

As the pandemic evolves, worrisome tendencies have begun to manifest themselves in a number of countries. In the UK, for instance, local elections have been postponed for a year, and the police have been empowered to arrest suspected coronavirus carriers and lockdown rule breakers. Lockdowns, curfews and strict restrictions on movements have been



enforced by Governments around the world including many in Africa.

Meanwhile, several countries have used the coronavirus pandemic as a justification to stifle social dissent, banning assemblies and protests. The international human rights system as we know it today was born from the lessons of the 1930s and 1940s and the hopes of a better future. Today, human rights are central in the situation we all face. Human rights are both a protection from the power of the state and a demand that our governments use their considerable power and resources to protect our lives, health and wellbeing.

Recommendations

1. Sound food security and agricultural policy are vital for countries to be able to weather viral outbreaks and the shocks they send throughout food supply chains. One way of doing this is to support local farmers and producers who grow chemical-free natural crops, raise natural animals and not genetically engineered

2. Governments around the world should fulfil their obligations by putting human rights at the centre of its response. In introducing emergency measures, it is vital from the outset that Governments ensure human rights are at the centre of all prevention, preparedness, containment and treatment efforts, in order to best protect public health, welfare, and support the groups and individuals most at risk.
3. The government must provide full economic support to protect people's rights at home and at work, and to provide an adequate standard of living. They will need to take action and extend the arms of state protection and support, perhaps more widely than ever before. These measures must focus first and foremost on the most vulnerable, those who are already struggling and those who are least protected.

I SEE RIVERS IN RED

By Udo Jude ILO

I see rivers in red
Oceans in crimson
Flowing uphill with messages of
despair
Turning white to grey as they
engraves the hillside with
eternal messages of destruction.

How is it that the river of death
can climb a hill?

How is it that gravity holds no
shield?

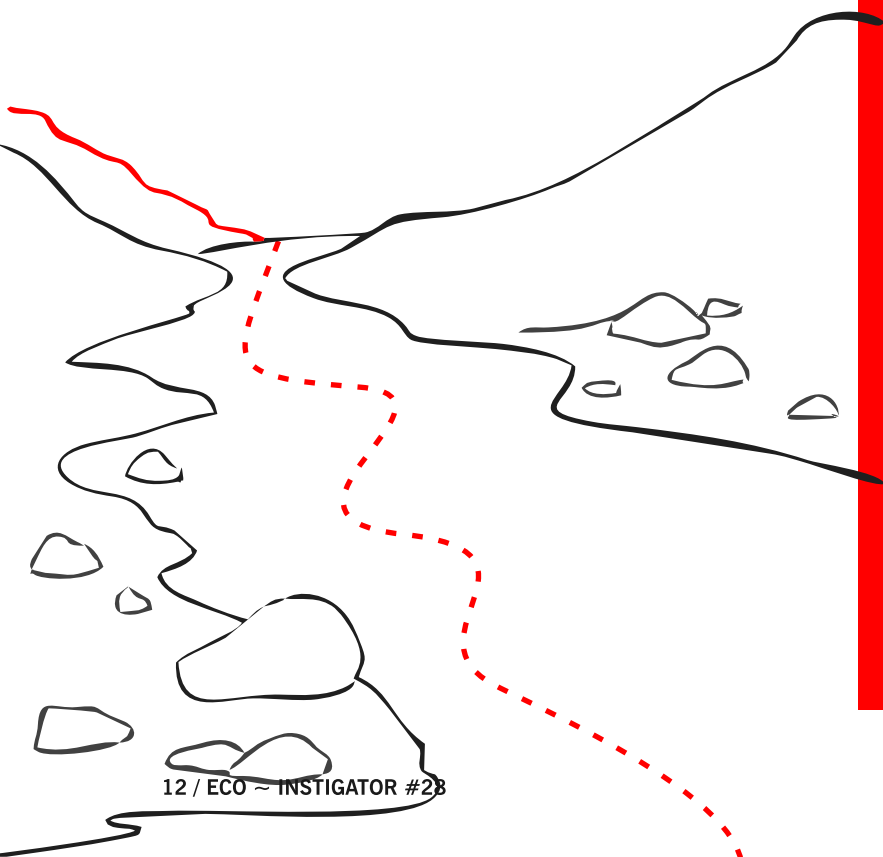
How is it that red turns white to
grey?

In the cacophony of empty
sounds

In the oasis of poisonous waters

We find no help or succour for
the wailing Mother and child
whose all is worth less than
nothing

Whose life has become a
bloodied mess
The blood of the innocent is
flooding the land and has lost
the power to cleanse.





OF EXTRACTIVISM and DISCONTENTMENT

By Stephen Oduware

Extractivism, they say, is the practice of extracting natural resources to trade in the world market. Globally, economies have turned to and are now based on competitive and senseless extraction of these resources with an accompanying and growing discontentment from those negatively impacted.

Market forces have been created around extractivism to support demand and supply. Economies have made it an index to watch out for in the measurement of growth or progress. For example, in 2018, the oil sector accounted for 90 per cent of Nigeria's foreign exchange. In June 2019, the then Group Managing Director of Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), Mr Maikanti Baru, said NNPC would resume oil exploration in Chad Basin.

He remarked: "We will go back there as soon as we receive security clearance."

There seem to be some prospects there because Niger Republic drilled over 600 wells and now, they are producing while we have only drilled 23 wells." This is the kind of competition that allows collusion between multinationals and the government to exploit even the most fragile ecosystems. In 2017, President Donald Trump vowed to revive the coal industry, despite the moratorium on coal leasing on federal lands placed by former President Barrack Obama's administration.

Continuous exploitation of these resources has huge negative impacts on the environment, livelihoods and the wellbeing of peoples of the world. They are known to release greenhouse gases (which absorb infrared radiation, thereby trapping heat and causing warming in the atmosphere), radio-nuclides, heavy metals etc. to the atmosphere. The extractive industry have become the economic mainstay of global governance, displacing indigenous people from their ancestral lands. Pollution and oppressions are also tied to the industry. In Africa, there have been various conflicts and wars all tied to the mindless exploitation of natural resources.

In Nigeria, for instance, there has been face-off between communities and oil giants in the past, leading to heavy militarization, oppression, repression and violation of human rights of community people. The problem is far more than this! In the midst of the existential global climate chaos, pollution is going on unabated in the Niger Delta, and it seems to me that the more the pollution in the region, the greater the quest to explore new fields – where then is environmental pollution and degradation emergency?

Part of the problems we are encountering regarding resource extractions lies with the World Bank; they encourage and promote these extractive industries, providing them with loans and funds. They encourage the migration of these industries to the less developed countries.

Nnimmo Bassey, in his book *To Cook a Continent*, analyzed three reasons behind the World Bank's involvement in promoting the extractive industries.

The first reason was that the measurement of the cost of health-impairing pollution depends on the foregone earnings from increased morbidity and mortality. That is to say, health-impairing pollution should be done in a country with the lowest cost so that more profits can be made from the peoples' suffering. He added that the cost of pollution is impeccable, and we should face up to that as well as get discontented with such ideologies as the

developing nations of the world.

Secondly, the costs of pollution are likely to be non-linear as the initial increments of pollution probably have very low cost in the developing regions of the world.

Thirdly, the demands for a clean environment for aesthetic and health reasons are likely to have a very high income-elasticity. With these reasons, you can see clearly that pollution in developing countries does not happen by chance. Poverty and ill-health are apparently engineered through ideological mindsets that will only secure the wealth of the mighty even if it kills or diminishes the capacity of the weak to survive.

Extractivism can be likened to an act of robbing Peter to pay Paul, impoverishing the grassroots communities while enriching a few people. Africa today is seen as the extractive base of nations from the Global North milking the continent dry of its natural resources while leaving the people stranded and dependent on aids from them. The hunger to probe more for resources to extract is on an exponential increase and the competition to be within the purview of power and dominance is rife among countries.

The negative effects of extrativism are global, but countries in the Global South feel the greatest impacts. There is, therefore, a need to pursue development that is in sync with nature. A new world is possible – let us demand a shift from a polluting age to an age of renewable energy, shared prosperity and Ubuntu!

“Continuous exploitation of these resources has huge negative impacts on the environment, livelihoods and the wellbeing of peoples of the world”

Fruitless trees and homeless bees
Water sapped rivers and fishless lakes
Bush and grasses are skirmishing for water
The last remaining, from the cloudless skies
frontrunner takes all and the chain collapses
Herbivores demise in the grassless terrain
Pallid skulls , little life, in the desert terrain

Soaring plastic and choking mammals
Fishless seas and declining vessels
blazing gases caused by soaring copters
flaming lungs and vanishing people

Tripping rain and scorching thunders
Tearing grounds and breaking structures
Smoking skies, smouldering voices here
strike the thunders
escalating graves, dreadful
tears, the signs are here

THE SIGNS are here!

By Reinhold Mangundu

Empty soils and varnishing food
Hungry people in the midst of conflicts
Shedding blood for the sake of food
escalating graves, dreadful tears, the signs are here

Cold-blooded governments, scattering gross
domestic propaganda
Ignoring the signs and thieving from the people
Missing people, missing money & growing pockets
escalating graves, dreadful tears, the signs are here

The signs are here, the time is now
To take up arms and to do what's right
To wipe away tears and to stop the signs
To restore the lost hope and to save our lives
The signs are here, the time is now





image from boingboing.net

BAN GMOS

– CSOs Demand in Lagos

By Joyce Ebebeinwe

“Nigeria does not need GMOs,... they are promoted on false premises of higher yields and nutrient than normal crops. Many of the genetically modified crops are designed to withstand herbicides which are produced by the same companies producing the seeds”

On the 17th of March 2020, hundreds of Nigerians including farmers, CSOs, community representatives, lawyers, medical practitioners, students, scientists, youth and women groups led by Health of Mother Earth Foundation and the GMO-Free Nigeria Alliance held a rally in Lagos to campaign against genetically engineered crops and food products.

The march culminated at the Lagos State Government Secretariat where a petition demanding a ban on GMOs, a nullification of the permits already issued for the importation and release of genetically modified maize, beans and cotton into the country and a halt to the illegal entry of GMOs was presented to the Government.

The coalition also demanded a ban of all toxic agrochemicals – especially those containing glyphosate which has been identified as a carcinogen and for a halt to the assault on our agriculture through genetic modification of our staple crops including cassava, maize and beans. Through the petition, the group urged that the Nigerian government should be circumspect about technologies that aim to contaminate our environment, destroy our agriculture and culture, rupture our socio-economic fabric and assert unbridled control over our agriculture and food.

Speaking during the rally, Nnimmo Bassey, the Director of Health of Mother Earth Foundation, stressed that Nigeria does not need GMOs, adding that they are promoted on false premises which include that they give higher yields and are more nutritious than normal crops. Bassey explained, also, that they do not use fewer herbicides and pesticides as many of the genetically modified crops are designed to withstand

herbicides which are produced by the same companies producing the seeds. He pointed out also that another main reason some crops are genetically modified (e.g., the beans that was approved by the government for commercial release in 2019) is for them to act as pesticides.

These processes destroy not only target pests and weeds but beneficial microorganisms - both in the soil and in the human guts, he explained. “What we eat must not eat us” he and the people chanted.

Also speaking at the rally, Akinbode Oluwafemi, Deputy Director of Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth Nigeria stated that Nigeria has the capacity to feed herself and that we cannot allow our food systems to be overtaken by corporate control/interest. He called, instead, for better support for the smallholder farmers who produce natural and healthy foods

Commrade Biodun Bakare, the Secretary of the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), Lagos Branch, buttressed this point when he said that just as the Nigeria government is currently encouraging local content in other sectors, local farmers should be encouraged because they provide the bulk of the food we consume, stressing that we don't want GMOs in the form of foreign foods or vice versa.

One of the women leaders, Funmi Ajayi, charged the government to take up the responsibility of protecting its citizens from the danger of GMOs, demanding that the government should put a stop to the introduction of GMOs in Nigeria as this will cause more harm to Nigerians as well as lead to the loss of livelihoods for our farmers.



Joyce Ebebeinwe, a programme officer at HOMEf, stressed that the introduction of GMOs violates the rights of the people to safe and healthy food as the majority of people are not aware of these foods or their health implications, including the few who are aware, have no way of identifying GMOs to help them make a choice as to whether or not to consume them.

The coalition was received by the Head of Public Affairs and that of Political Affairs on behalf of the Lagos State Governor at the Lagos State House of Assembly. Nnimmo Bassey while addressing the government officials noted that GMOs, in spite of the many issues surrounding them, are continuously being introduced into the country by the very permissive National Biosafety Management Agency and through illegal imports as seen by a market shelf survey conducted by Health of Mother Earth Foundation in 2018 and 2019.

Bassey explained that the National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA) Act established in 2015 and amended in 2019 needs to be repealed due to the loopholes in it. One of such loopholes is the lack of provisions for strict liability and redress,

which will mandate the biotechnology corporations to take responsibility for the immediate and forthcoming negative impacts of the use of their products. The Act contains no mandatory provision on access to information, public consultation and participation and lack of veritable provisions for the enforcement of the precautionary principle. He added that the NBMA Act confers enormous discretionary powers on the agency and gives little room for oversight.

Bassey added that the coalition brought these demands before the Lagos State government because as the Centre of Excellence and economic hub in Nigeria, a decision of the state in the right direction will definitely influence other states to do the same. The state government was urged to declare Lagos a GMO-free state. The coalition demanded that, as an alternative to GMOs, the Nigerian government should address the root causes of the challenges of food production. The group called for an increased investment in and support for an agricultural system such as agroecology which promotes soil health and biodiversity and ensures collaborative

research/innovations with farmers and increased/sustained production of healthy/nutritious food.

It was demanded that farmers should be provided with the needed infrastructure, extension services, access to lands and credit schemes and good road-market networks.

At the end of the presentation, the government officials promised to pass every detail of the demands of the people to the state governor and look critically at the petition submitted to ensure that the

demands stated are considered.

The was signed by HOMEF and some members of the GMO-Free Nigeria including Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth Nigeria, Peace and Development Project, Center for Human and Socio-Economic Rights, Child Health Organization, Spaces for Change, Justice Development and Peace Commission, Joint Action Front and Center for Children's Health Education, Orientation and Protection.





Do You Really Need That **EXTRA FASHION ITEM**

By Margaret Aligbe

Fast Fashion is believed to be the harbinger of the era of fashion democracy that offers every class of the society a taste of the latest fashion trends. It can also be described as an inexpensive, readily available, in-trend pieces of clothing or other fashion items from many fashion brands like ZARA, H&M, Fashion Nova. But how does democratizing fashion through diversity and affordability for everyone help the environment?

One of the targets of goal 12 of the sustainable development goals (responsible consumption and production) is to substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse by 2030. There have been claims of investing in a) Artificial Intelligence, b) Blockchain Technology, c) incorporating sustainability tracking into products, and d) a move from environmentally damaging model to a more sustainable (circular) business model contributing to SDGs 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), 12 (Responsible consumption and production) and 17 (Partnership for the Goals).

Despite these claims, democratizing fashion remains focused on more consumption. Consumers are compelled to buy more disposable fashion, which fuels the brand's determination to make a profit at all cost. With events like Black Fridays and Cyber Mondays, the holiest days of consumerism generating so much waste pushing the earth beyond the limit of the planetary boundaries, one is left wondering why we need more stuff anyway?

One study from the Ellen Macarthur Foundation estimates that a truckload of textiles is wasted every second. In addition to requiring resources to make and process as well as producing carbon emissions, the discarded material used in the so-called "fast

fashion" clothing often contains microfibers of plastic that eventually pollute the oceans. The fast fashion industry produces about 20 per cent of global wastewater and up to 10 per cent of global carbon emissions; this is more than all international flights and maritime shipping combined??? (UN Environment). Conventional textile dyeing methods are the second-largest polluter of water globally, as about 2,000 gallons of water are required to make a pair of jeans.

What Manner of Consumerism?

While consumerism is believed to be aimed at protecting or promoting the interest of consumers, it gives manufacturers the leverage to fan the insatiable desire of humans for more.

The more you buy, the more you gain points to keep your purchasing cycle running; you are offered vouchers and discounts "on the next purchase". Companies try to keep cost low by moving manufacturing to low-, middle-income countries (what would be likened to carbon colonization), the pollution burden also shifts to the "less developed" regions where the people doing the bulk of the work have very little say in the process in addition to the unequal terms of global trade which limit governments to act.

Fast Fashion underscores the injustice in the world. Fast Fashion produced in low-income countries comes with occupational hazards due to the poor implementation of safety standards. Poorly ventilated factories create respiratory hazards for workers like cotton dust, synthetic air particles from routine tasks leading to lung diseases, cancer, damage to endocrine function and adverse reproductive outcomes as well as life-threatening injuries.

COVID-19, Advertising and Pushing the narrative

Recently, I saw a YouTube video of New York's famous Times Square with multiple advertisement boards running which left me wondering what the point of burning energy to run adverts no one sees in the lockdown is. That is the obsession of a growth-inclined society; the “business as usual” must go on.

The COVID-19 outbreak has left us considering why we must slow down, focusing on a more distributive and regenerative economy design because “business as usual” is clearly plunging the

Nobody is talking of “kinds of stuff” anymore, we all now want to be alive. Fast Fashion brands allocate millions in advertisement budgeting to push the social addiction to the endless capitalist growth model. Michel Foucault, the famous French philosopher, addressed the power dynamics in the language used in knowledge production, which influences society. Advertisement and PR companies constantly work on our psyche, persuading us to have that extra item, just one more, just one more shirt, just one more bag, just one more to make us happier, higher status.

(No, the feeling is short-lived and not always worth it most times). The goal is eventually more profit, enabling an environment where interactions, materials and coercion become effective tools in reproducing the fast fashion model. No questions asked.

Fast fashion model's deliberate use of sustainability buzzwords with bogus labelling seems intentional. One wonders how many consumers will read lengthy and sometimes ambiguous labels?

Sustainability has remained a complex, relative and elusive term to define. Companies define what sustainability means to them and run with it. This reinforces power play that influences institutional, industrial rigidities and hegemony. 2020 is such a challenging year, reminding us all that if it is not essential, then it is not important. So, maybe it is time to convince ourselves why we must not buy that extra item.

Margaret Aligbe is studying Sustainable Development at Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden.
margaretaligbe@yahoo.com
<https://chide360.home.blog/>



whole world into hopelessness. The Earth is tired, and the system is broken, everyone is affected. If the economic pie only gets bigger without equity, it is a disaster.



AN OPEN LETTER TO THE GOVERNMENT OF ETHIOPIA

By Tewolde Berhan Gebre Egziabher

In an open letter, Tewolde Berhan Gebre Egziabher, the former Director-General of the Environmental Protection Authority of Ethiopia and the spokesperson of the Like-Minded Group (Group of 77 & China) at the Montreal and Cartagena biosafety talks, urged the government of Ethiopia to respect the legal status of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

My name is Tewolde Berhan Gebre Egziabher. I turned 80 on 19 February 2020.

I studied in Bangor, North Wales, United Kingdom, for my PhD in plant ecology. It is obvious that there is an overlap between plant ecology and animal ecology. It is with this background that I served my country as the Director-General of the Environmental Protection Authority of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, based in Addis Ababa, my country's capital. It was because of this background that I led the Ethiopian delegation, including in the negotiations on biosafety and genetic engineering. The outcome of the global negotiations on biosafety included the full socio-economic and environmental impact assessment of genetically modified organisms. This assessment looks at possible new and unexpected outcomes of plants and animals that could be harmful to the environment. It includes the transfer of genes modified through genetic engineering to life forms and their possible consequences. This can be avoided if it is done in a contained environment and as and when the effects have been studied and are found to be safe for all forms of life. The genetically modified organism will be allowed for use as food, feed as well as for industrialization.

The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity is an international agreement which aims to ensure the safe handling, transport and use of genetically modified organisms (GMO's) resulting from modern biotechnology. This will prevent adverse effects on biological diversity, also taking into account risks to human health. To date, 172 countries around the globe, including Ethiopia, have ratified the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The Protocol also requires that the cultivation of genetically modified organisms does not pollute organic agricultural crops and animals, wildlife, and other farming practices that must avoid contamination by the modified gene in the area where they are growing. It also includes the appropriateness of labelling genetically modified organisms to inform those who wish to use non-genetically modified products so that they are assured of their choice. This is a fundamental social right, the right to choose what to grow, what to eat, what to wear, and how to interact with the environment. Once a modified gene gets into the environment and the living organisms therein, it cannot be taken out, eliminating the right to choose.

I led the Ethiopian delegation in the negotiations in biosafety. When the negotiations started, the African Group of Negotiators chose me to become their chief negotiator. Following that, the Developing Countries Group of Negotiators asked me to be their lead negotiator. Finally, all the negotiators except those who called themselves the Miami Group also asked me to be their chief negotiator. The Miami Group consisted of the United States of America, Canada, Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. The negotiations were finalized in Cartagena, which is a city in Columbia. Thus, the final agreed biosafety protocol is called the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

Tewolde Egziabher, and Gurdial Singh Nijar, Malaysia, at the conclusion of the second meeting of the Group of the Friends of the Co-Chairs on Liability and Redress in the Context of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, 8-12 February 2010. Now, I read and heard in the news that the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia is allowing the cultivation of genetically modified crops in Ethiopia. I have several worries, including the feasibility of 130,000 hectares for research being a contained environment, and how these things have been legally handled with the biosafety protocol as it stands ratified and procedures defined by the Biosafety Framework of Ethiopia defined by the Law, Policy, and Standards of the Directorate General of the Environment, Forest and Climate Change

Commission, in February 2019. If these have not been implemented, the involved parties are breaking the law, stipulated in February 2019 and laws gazetted in Proclamation No 655/2009 that was amended in 896/2015. It would also mean that Ethiopia has de facto withdrawn from the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. To the extent that I know, Ethiopia has thus far kept all its laws and replaced or amended them when necessary, and it has not legally withdrawn from the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. As a retired old man past 80 years of age, I have no direct contact with the Federal Government of Ethiopia. Therefore, I have no way of checking whether Ethiopia is simply ignoring the legal status of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety or not.

If the Federal Government is simply ignoring the legal status of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, then it would be obvious that it is breaking International Law.

This should not be allowed to happen. Therefore, I want to encourage the younger generation of Ethiopians to protest in all the ways they can. This is because breaking an international law, which includes the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, without legally withdrawing from it, is breaking international law and degrading rule of law in Ethiopia, in the continent of Africa and the world at large with the exception of the members of the Miami Group, which are only 5 countries as opposed to the rest of the globe. I would also urge the young generations of Africa and the rest of the world to urge their respective governments to continue respecting international law, including biosafety, globally.

Culled from: <https://www.ethiopiaobserver.com/2020/05/08/an-open-letter-by-dr-tewolde-berhan-gebre-egziabher/>



HOW WORKING FROM HOME WORKS

By Joyce Ebebeinwe

COVID-19 has brought a rude change to our lifestyles, collectively and individually. In many ways, this change will persist beyond the pandemic while we may bounce back to normalcy in some aspects. Whereas the lockdown means a general/indefinite holiday for some, others have to continue working whether as employees or as freelancers or both. I started working partly from home in January for reasons other than Mr Corona, and so I decided to make my “book for the month” one which would help me to productively cope with working from home. It feels like I was sent ahead to kind of prepare for what was coming right?

Let me share some ideas I got from the book: *Working Smartly from Home* by Nancy Struck, and other ideas which I have gleaned from experience.

a) Draw up and Maintain a Daily Schedule:

This typically helps you focus and achieve specific goals which then energizes you for the next day. Working with a plan makes the day go faster. You won't have time to be bored.

b) Evaluate regularly: This can be done daily and/or weekly. When working from home, what matters most is your output and not the number of hours you spend sitting on a chair or what time in the day you work.

c) Use your Peak Time: Take advantage of that time of the day when you feel more motivated and when you generally have less distraction. It could be at midnight, early morning or in the evenings.

d) Be realistic with your schedule: Your best plan is one that has a good work-family-fun balance. When working from home, it is easy to overdo it. Avoid this by strictly creating time for other important aspects of your life.

e) Anchor Activity: This is an activity that refreshes you, clears tension and energizes you. For you it may be listening to a music track, taking a walk, or getting on a phone conversation with your best friend. But be careful. You don't want an activity that clutters your mind more or drags you away from your entire plan.

f) Guard against Distractions: If you live alone, it is easier to work from home, but with housemates (spouse, children etc) it is tricky. It is helpful to understand how the rest of the family works. What do they need from you? When? Plan your time accordingly. Communicate your schedule to them and nicely but firmly say no to them when they interfere with it. Make exceptions only when it is absolutely important. Don't feel too guilty to say no or wait.

g) Don't jump on tasks on impulse. If you remember something you should have added to your to-do list or if something comes up during the day that you need to do, pen them down and get done with your planned tasks. Rearrange your to-do list when it is necessary.

h) Get a Workspace: Improvise if you must. Ideally, your workspace should be [in] a separate room where you can close the door (this signals to your housemates that you are on the clock), otherwise you should map out an area of the house where you would have less interference. This space should be clear of clutter, especially if you are very sensitive.

i) Don't sit throughout your work hours! Except you want to complicate your BMI. Stand, stretch and take a few steps, say, at an hour interval. Mind your sitting posture. And keep healthy snacks close. A trip to the kitchen during your work hours can get you trapped. You may say: "Oh, all this can't work for me. I am a nursing mother" or "You don't get it. I have little children who need all the attention in the world". I understand that it is tougher in these scenarios. But try. Children have patterns. Understand them and adjust yourself accordingly. Personally, my peak

time is early morning (say 4am-10am) but I am currently in a family house where general morning devotion holds from 5:30am to 6:30am, and I have to proceed to make breakfast right after that. I am adjusting. Sometimes I take a short nap (anchor activity) afterwards, so it feels like my day is just beginning.

j) Whatever you do, however, your peculiar environment is, just do not waste time. Your sanity, your progress, your finances depend on your use of time, whether now or later. I am happy for those whose current jobs can't be done from home. Because this means you have enough time to creatively think! You have enough time to discover and harness your other areas of strength. You have enough time to build a side hustle-even if it is just to get the training on it in the meantime.

k) "Oh, I don't have data and internet connection is terrible where I am" "I can't get my devices charged". If this is you, perhaps, God is calling you to a place of constant fellowship and ministry. Lol. Seriously, we all ought now to have more time for fellowship with God. On a lighter note, however, you can use the time to read hard copy books; interact with your family and neighbours; practice singing and write stories, your thoughts/experiences, your dreams/ambition. You can even plant a garden!

l) Then rest. For some, this is a rare opportunity to rest from the hustle and bustle that hitherto characterize their days. Do not feel guilty if rest is all you really can do now.

Some of you may realize after now and after trying all these tips that working from home does not work for you. You like dressing up and showing up at the office and interacting with people you physically come in contact with. Or it will be obvious that it is more productive for you to work in the office with other team members. This realization is also an important achievement.

COVID-19, Climate Justice & Access to Energy in Africa

Notes By Mfoniso Antia

The lockdown across the world and the restrictions on travels occasioned by the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic have made it impossible for face-to-face meetings at this time, but that must not stifle our resolve to organize and demand environmental/climate justice – the campaign must go on.

Oil Change International and **Oilwatch Africa** organized two webinars in May 2020. The first was held on 5 May while the second was on 12 May. These meetings were organized to fill any vacuum in information exchange during this pandemic with regard to access to energy and energy alternatives. There were four panellists, each given time to speak on the subtopics and another allotted time to respond to questions.

The first webinar examined the question of fossil fuel energy in Africa from the supply side. The webinar was moderated by Thuli

Makama and had Nnimmo Bassey of HOMEAF and Oilwatch Africa as a panelist. He spoke on the latest developments in the oil, gas, and coal industries, including how the oil price crash and drop in global demand are affecting planned investments and existing fossil fuel producers in Africa.

Nikki Reisch, formerly an independent researcher with Oil Change International, now with the Center for International Environmental Law, shared highlights from a forthcoming Sky's Limit Africa report on the human and environmental costs of fossil fuel expansion in Africa.

Similarly, Ikal Angelei of Friends of Turkana spoke on the heavy crude and boiling pipelines of East Africa. Finally, Hamza Hamouchene of Trans National Institute (TNI) addressed the question of environmental justice in North Africa in the time of COVID-19.

This report focuses on the second of these webinars. Before the sessions started, there was a review of the first webinar which focused on the fossil fuel sector and what the industry looks like at the moment. The major take-away from that meeting was that there is a need to ensure that we do not relax our efforts even as oil and coal prices continue to fall, and that civil society should push up and consolidate efforts for alternatives.



Makoma Lekalakala spoke on The Energy we need and the Energy We Want. According to her, the pandemic has provided us with an opportunity for collective actions and our obligation is to ensure that we protect the environment and prevent it from being further degraded at this time.

She made this point because some countries have continued to make laws that take our struggles backwards.

The pandemic has given us an opportunity

and paved the way for us to see the kind of energy that we want. It has given us the opportunity to interrogate the kind of energy systems we have and plan towards a complement of the renewables (solar, biogas, wind etc.) in Africa.

She also remarked that at this time, we have to push for collaborative efforts to ensure that the pandemic bailouts work for us and not end up supporting the fossil fuel industries.

As we push for transition, we must ensure that the transition we are aiming for is all-inclusive, creating opportunities and jobs for all. We need to ensure that this transition is not “business as usual” and challenge the

“the pandemic has provided us with an opportunity for collective actions and our obligation is to ensure that we protect the environment and prevent it from being further degraded at this time.”

policies hindering the move from dirty, polluting energy to renewables. She finally noted that we are already in a transition; our responsibility now is to make this a just

Lorraine Chiponda presented on An Outlook of How Coal Power Plants are Spread Out in Africa. She noted that about 80% of energy in Africa is from fossils, and 40% out of that is from coal. Renewables are only 16% - this is a long way from transitioning into 100% renewables, and if by 2030 we maintain the same trajectory of announcing and commissioning new coal projects as seen in some African countries, our energy mix will be 50% coal. She added that funding for coal projects in Africa mostly comes from China.

About 1.2million people still suffer from energy poverty in the world, and about 850, 000 (i.e., over 70%) of this number are in Africa – this means that the coal trajectory is not working in Africa.

Coal projects have continued to enjoy tax exemptions and stimulus packages in some countries so that energy from coal comes out as a cheap energy source.

In the midst of the call for a just transition, some countries continue to make policies that show their intentions to expand projects on coal and coal plants.

Some of these policies come with the promise of a clean coal technology – a venture that is known to be water-intensive, which means that countries affected by droughts cannot afford coal projects with such technology.

Chibeze Ezekiel shared thoughts on *Experience of How to Push Back Successfully Against Coal*. He used Ghana as a case study. He remarked that the advocacy against a planned coal plant in Ghana started with information-gathering and the mobilization of critical stakeholders.

He also talked about information-gathering on the issues at hand:

- Types of coal to be imported (Peat, lignite, black coal and anthracite)
- Characteristics of fly ash and how it will impact on the environment and people
- Contact details of NGOs and all local stakeholders engaged
- Effect or impact of a proposed coal plant on biodiversity
- Specific kinds of job opportunities to be created or offered (comparing this with what would rather be the case if renewables were promoted instead).
- Youths demonstrating against Asoogli power plant due to marginalisation

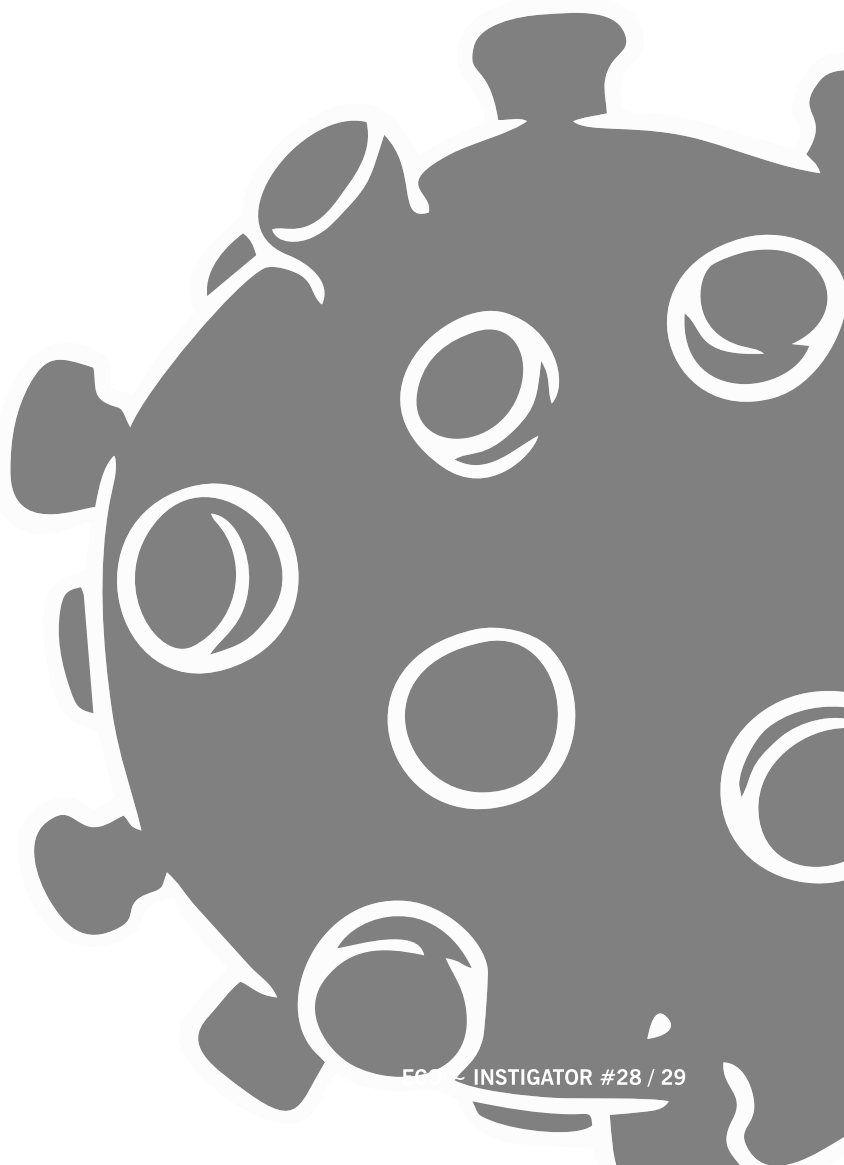
and noise pollution

- Supply of coal from South Africa may be unreliable as in the case of West African Gas Pipeline.
- Ghana's commitment to the Paris Agreement was a sham if the government pressed on with building the proposed coal plant

In the end, the Ghanaian Government halted the coal power plant project.

The campaign was a success at this point, but the campaign didn't stop there. The campaigners went ahead to create awareness for renewables and supported the government in their effort towards renewable energy. They also helped local governments to mainstream renewable energy into their local energy plan.

In addition, they empowered children also as green champions through our Children for Climate Action Initiative.



T H E I R O N Y O F G R O W T H

By Nnimmo Bassey

The rage of the Covid-19 pandemic has been as astonishing as any epic disaster can be. What startles some of us more is the unabashed projection that millions of Africans will die, probably as soon as the pandemic ends at the current epicentres. How come some of these analysts speak with so much certainty and do not suggest that they are merely projecting from indices that only they know? My deep hope is that their projections do not get validated.

One might say that this is about science and not a matter of what our wish may be. But, what will the power brokers of this world do if the pandemic never takes root in Africa or in more places in the Global South?

While the pandemic persists and we are on lockdown across the world, we have time to look at the world and the power plays at work. So many lives have been snuffed out. So many health workers have been exposed. The poor have been herded into ramshackle shacks, in stadia and some open fields since they could not say their homelessness or flimsy shacks back home were any better. The stratifications in societies are laid bare for all to see and to feel.

One thing that is stark at this time is the fact that disasters offer opportunities for profit. Whereas this should be a moment for a rethink of systems of production, distribution and consumption, the battle cry appears to centre on how to bail out sectors that are most adversely impacted in persisting socio-economic and climate crises in the world. Workers get laid off while corporate executives receive hefty paycheques.

At a time when the social wellbeing of the majority of the people ought to be the concern of everyone, the focus is on how to cushion the inconveniences of the 1 per cent. In the current paradigm, economic growth trumps the social wellbeing of the people; growth at any cost, even if workers are to be discounted and hurled away in body bags.

The pandemic has revealed the spirit of solidarity in cities and nations. Citizen journalists have brought us heart-warming videos of neighbours joyfully banging pans or singing together from isolated balconies. We have seen free donations of supplies to help health workers and to bridge the food shortage gap for persons trapped without cash or access to food.

At a time when the social wellbeing of the majority of the people ought to be the concern of everyone, the focus is on how to cushion the inconveniences of the 1 per cent. In the current paradigm, economic growth trumps the social wellbeing of the people; growth at any cost, even if workers are to be discounted and hurled away in body bags.

The pandemic has revealed the spirit of solidarity in cities and nations. Citizen journalists have brought us heart-warming videos of neighbours joyfully banging pans or singing together from isolated balconies. We have seen free donations of supplies to help health workers and to bridge the food shortage gap for persons trapped without cash or access to food.

We have also seen individuals, despots and autocrats using the pandemic as a cover for racism, xenophobia and abuse. Politicians have used the emergency as an excuse to shut national borders as though the coronavirus could be stopped by a wall or by the border police for that matter. Myopia can be a disease as dangerous as Covid-19.

The pandemic has given a reprieve or a sabbath of rest to Mother Earth. The skies are clearer and quieter. Waterways are cleaner in some countries. Wildlife is free to go wild in many places. We must not allow the message that the lockdown could help show the direction of climate action to be buried by those profiting from dirty energy. International financial institutions and governments persist in assessing the state of national and global economies by the discredited Gross Domestic Product (GDP) measure. When a defective measure such as the GDP is used in gauging the state of any economy,

it is easy to see that actions to improve on such economies are bound to be defective. The GDP has been largely weaponized over the years to beat less powerful nations into line. It has been used by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as a measuring rod or diagnostic tool by which they prescribe and enforce unpalatable, unhelpful and ruinous policies. Today nations are wincing as the drop in GDPs stares them in the face.

Actions to shore up GDPs can be a measure of the deftness of statisticians. It is a cloak that covers the raw wounds of the consciences of corporate and political leaders. It is amazing that with so much destruction in the world, global GDP is not rising. Has it stopped taking destructions as domestic products?

The impact of the pandemic on the crude oil market should wake us up to the power of the fossil fuel sector over politicians and political sectors. Imagine the fact that the production cost of a barrel of crude in Nigeria is about 30 dollars whereas in some other countries the cost is as low as 5 dollars. What is unique about the Niger Delta of Nigeria that makes oil production so expensive there? This is a pertinent question considering that the region has earned a place as one of the top ten most polluted places on earth, thanks to the free reign of ecological corruption, corporate irresponsibility and environmental racism.

The bailout being contemplated for banks and corporate entities could very well be aimed at reshaping the power sector from fossil dependence to a renewable energy system. Let's bail out the peoples for once and not focus on the drivers of the multiple crises in the world. It is time to decouple the interests of corporate CEOs from those of political leaders even though they appear to be mutually reinforcing, just as in some cases the "pandemic and corruption are mutually reinforcing and inclusive," to quote a post by Jaiye Gaskia on Facebook.

READERS COMMENTS & FEEDBACK

Too Much in One Edition

Over the years, Eco-Instigator has been an avenue for information-sharing and learning. Eco-Instigator #27 contains pressing issues affecting us today. Reading the article on 'Hunger: the new phase of climate change in Africa', it came through indeed that access to food has clearly become a challenge for countries vulnerable to climate change impacts. Also, the 'Implementation of UNEP Report on Ogoni Clean-up' is outstanding as it keeps readers abreast of the current position of the clean-up exercise. Additionally, I love poetry; the poem 'I am an African' is mind-blowing, and it made me feel connected to my roots.

Eco Instigator #27 has quite a lot of interesting topics and gives a clear position of what we are currently facing as a continent and as a world. Too many enriching articles in one publication. However, in my opinion I think there is always too much to read in one edition. It could be moderately reduced in order to give readers the opportunity to digest and gain knowledge without feeling overwhelmed.

This could also attract more people to read the publications.

Benita Siloko

Northumbria University, Newcastle, UK



Floating Dead Fish across the Niger Delta Coastline

– a call for thorough Investigation

Community people, environmentalists and members of the FishNet Alliance have called on relevant regulatory agencies including the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA), the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) and the National Environmental Standards and Regulatory Enforcement Agency (NESREA) to ensure that the actual cause of dead fish being washed ashore in the Niger Delta Coastline is identified, addressed and, should it be an unnatural cause, the perpetrators brought to book.

This call was made in a field report titled The Mysterious Death of Fish Across the Atlantic Coastline of the Niger Delta which was made available to the media on 4 May 2020 by the FishNet Alliance, Nigeria. Findings were gathered from field visits to affected communities, reports by other stakeholders, news publications and statements by community persons.

According to the report, the news of dead fish washing ashore first broke out on 20th February 2020 when community people from Ogbulagha Kingdom in Burutu Local Government Area of Delta State reported massive death of fish, floating and littering their shores. “This incident has replicated itself in other fishing communities along the Atlantic coastline in the Niger Delta states of Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa Ibom and Ondo.

Furthermore, the report outlines: “The immediate cause of the incident is yet to be known, but there are speculations that it is related to the activities of multinational oil and gas production companies operating in the region. The species of fish mostly affected is the Croaker Fish popularly called the Broke-Marriage or Onah in local dialect”, the report states.

Among other pointers to the oil companies as the source of the incident, environmentalists (e.g. Surveyor Furoebi Akene) have attributed the incident to the discharge of toxic chemicals

from Shell's operations at Forcados oil export terminal and urged governments at the affected areas to wake up to their responsibilities in the protection of the environment and the people while calling on NOSDRA to ensure that the result of the tests, when ready, reflects reality. Whereas Shell is being accused in Delta State, some persons in Chevron host communities are alleging that Chevron is responsible and have even threatened to shut down the company's operations.

It is still not very clear why only one species of fish seems to be more affected; only a scientific investigation can determine this. The selective nature of whatever is responsible for the death of this species of fish is another mystery. One explanation given by a local fisherfolk is that this particular fish occupies the lower section or portion of the sea/ocean. According to him, that is why fisher folks who target this fish [the Onah] have to set the fishing nets down enough. If this is true and the fish is dying from any particular pollutant, then that pollutant must be spreading at a lower level, near the seabed where this fish species is naturally found in the water."

The report confirmed that some community persons are picking up the dead fish and taking them home for consumption and/or to process and sell to unsuspecting members of the public. In some communities, there have been reported cases of dogs dying after consuming the dead fish. There are also fears that if not properly and timely investigated, this trend could continue and even spread to other communities, considering the interconnectedness of rivers (in the Niger Delta and other waterways in Nigeria). These communities need help as they are faced with severe hardship caused by the lockdown to curb the spread of coronavirus and threats from the pollution of their waters – which is their major source of livelihood.

In the report, the Director of Health of Mother Earth Foundation, Nnimmo Bassey, expressed serious concerns, stating that when our coastlines become littered with dead fish, it is a clear indication of toxicity of

the rivers which has serious public health implications. He noted: "The dead fish are smoking guns for a serious crime. The coronavirus pandemic should not deter the relevant institutions from getting to the root of the matter. By now NOSDRA should have let the public know what exactly the cause of the incident is, especially since there are oil platforms not too far from the coasts. This matter should not be swept under the carpet because we are focusing attention on the pandemic."

While the report acknowledged that NOSDRA and NIMASA have taken samples of the dead fish and water from the affected areas for analyses, the stakeholders demand a full and unbiased investigation into the issue and for perpetrators to face the full weight of the law.

They called on other stakeholders, especially the environment and health NGOs, to put pressure on the authorities to see this as a major disaster and ensure that the cause of the pollution is quickly detected, and the public is duly alerted.

They also called for adequate sensitization to raise awareness among people, especially in environments experiencing this phenomenon, to ensure that the dead fish are not consumed or sold in view of possible health implications.

"While we anxiously wait for reports of investigations into this mysterious incident, affected communities should remain peaceful and follow all legal means available in addressing the situation," the report concluded.

See a video report on the Bonny experience:
<https://youtu.be/2yldB1Wldm0>

Signed:
FishNet Alliance
Health of Mother Earth Foundation
Oilwatch Africa

Earth Day Twitter Hangout

By Magdalene Idiang



Earth Day is marked annually (on April 22) all over the world to demonstrate support for environmental protection. To mark the 2020 Earth Day, Health of Mother Earth Foundation hosted a virtual hangout on Twitter with the following guests: ***Babawale Obayanju, Olumide Idowu and Chibeze Ezekiel***. The theme for the day was Climate Action. Participants engaged the guests via their various twitter handles. Discussions for the hangout centred around COVID 19: Implications for Climate Action. The speakers were given 15mins each to share their thoughts on a range of topics anchored on the topic.

The hangout started at about 10:00a.m with a welcome note by HOMEF @Health_Earth followed by a brief introduction of the speakers and their profiles.

The first speaker was Babawale Obayanju @tifikorede on the implications of COVID-19 pandemic on climate change (as it affects hydrocarbon emissions from industrial activities, agriculture, health and well-being).

He said that one beautiful thing about #covid19 pandemic is that all nations have agreed that it is an emergency and it requires all hands on deck to tackle it. But the same degree of emergency has not been globally accepted when it comes to climate change may be because the deaths and destruction are not "microwaved" like the #covid19 impact.

He pointed out that covid19 has offered an opportunity for the world TO REGAIN a sense of shared humanity, in which people (should) realize what matters most: the health and safety of their loved ones and by extension the health and safety of their community, country and fellow global citizens.

Reports have it that Greenhouse gas emissions are down and air quality has gone up which is good news, but the danger ahead would be that after the pandemic as is the case with humanity over the years...they might want to intensify pressure on the system to recover lost grounds in businesses, thereby increasing the release of more greenhouses gases.

He added that there is an increased amount of medical and hazardous waste being generated and many other wastes adding to the worldwide burden of plastic waste. The second speaker was Olumide Idowu, @ClimateWed, who spoke on lessons learnt so far from the pandemic as it relates to Climate Action.

Idowu stated that as the world grapples with #COVID—19, we cannot afford to ignore an even more serious global emergency that will persist long after the pandemic has passed: climate change. That climate action and COVID—19 are two very different challenges, but they do have some key things in common. Both are global - they do not respect national boundaries - and both require countries to work together to find solutions.

Without dramatic and sustained emissions reductions, higher atmospheric and marine temperatures will bring more deadly

heatwaves, catastrophic storms, rising seas, food insecurity, health crises and mass displacement.

He further explained that last month, the UN issued a dire multiagency report warning that the world is "way off track" on its commitments to cut emissions under the #ParisAgreement. And due to #COVID-19, around 1.6 billion children are being deprived of their education. This risks creating a generation less equipped to take action on, or deal with the impacts of, climate crisis.

In conclusion, he said that the time to act is now! Governments, businesses and individuals should take measures toward changing behaviours in response to the pandemic.

The third speaker, Chibeze Ezekiel @Chibeze1, spoke on the way forward for Climate Action post-pandemic. He posited that all hands must be on deck for collective actions – drawing from the lessons gained from the outbreak of COVID-19 and the accompanying forced and unescapable lockdown worldwide.

He proposed what the post-pandemic roles of key institutions should be: -\

“covid19 has offered an opportunity for the world to regain a sense of shared humanity”

Government:

1. Should invest more in renewables to help ensure that the poor and vulnerable have access to electricity in times like this
2. Should protect forests and water bodies to ensure the availability of water in critical times like this.

CSOs:

1. Strengthen advocacy at all levels by holding policymakers accountable for their pledges
2. Intensify public awareness and community sensitization efforts to help promote behavioural change among citizens

Private sector:

1. Invest more in climate-friendly businesses
2. Develop a partnership with other actors towards the achievement of sustainable development.
3. Channel CSRs into climate actions

Media:

1. Provide platform or airtime for education targeting both policymakers and citizens
2. Should recognize their important role in the global development agenda, thus the need to show more interest and not just "politicking."

Participants were given the opportunity to tweet their questions and to make contributions.

Below are some of the interactions:

1. @Benita Siloko: The pandemic may end, but climate change needs daily attention - just like we brush our teeth each day
2. @kd2cad: As a Climate Justice Campaigner, seeing how unprepared the world is to handle pandemics, what do you think we can do differently to prepare for catastrophic Climate change?
3. @health_earth: In your view what parallels or divergences do you see in the response by countries to the

climate crisis and to the Covid-19 pandemic

4. @flow_Steve: Thanks for your presentation @tifekorede. If the lockdown necessitated by this pandemic persists, what would be the options for campaigners pushing for effective climate action?
5. @raresp: What impact do you think that the pandemic can have on agriculture, especially on our small-scale farmers?
6. @kabarimorris: how do we move from a consuming economy and over-reliance on non-renewables and neo-colonialists to a production-driven economy without heavily impacting on climate and the envt given that we are a developing nation.

How do we check that and still thrive? Manufacturing, production and being self-reliant come at a cost which cld be both environmental (natural) and human resources, how do we manage those?

7. @NnimmoB: Absolutely agree. Competition. Accumulation. Dispossession. Inequalities. These will drive us to the wrong destination. Continuing on the wrong path doesn't make sense.

It was unanimously agreed and established by the guests and participants that this pandemic is a warning sign to humans on the need to relate better with Mother Earth.

Overall, the hangout outlined that our post-pandemic future should be characterised by a transition to a renewable energy system and an agroecological system of farming, and a halt on the "business as usual" model.



STAKEHOLDERS' CONFERENCE ON BIOSAFETY/ BIODIVERSITY

By Joyce Ebebeinwe & Magdalene Idiang

“ There are serious loopholes in the country's biosafety law including excessive discretionary powers given to the agency, which directly undermines any effort at oversight; no mandatory provisions on liability and redress; lax attention to the precautionary principle “

The issue of biosafety is one of the ongoing concerns, that require critical attention and constant interrogation, especially as modern agricultural biotechnology advances speedily at various levels and its products freely make their way into Nigeria. To ensure the preservation of biosafety and biodiversity, Health of Mother Earth Foundation held a stakeholders' conference with a focus on decolonizing the narratives around food systems. The conference examined the implications of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and the products of other related emerging technologies and proffered viable solutions to the challenges of food security and climate change.

The conference was declared open by the Minister of State for Environment, Barrister Sharon Ikeazor, who was represented by the Director-General of the National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA), Rufus Ebegba. Speaking about GMOs permits, the Minister revealed that NBMA has on 31 December 2019 issued “eleven (11) confined field trial permits, seven (7) importation permits for food and feed processing and two (2) commercial release permits.”

Presentations were on Climate, Biosafety and Food Sovereignty, Risk Assessment of Genetically Modified Organisms, Communicating the Right to Safe Food, Healthy Soils, Healthy Foods, Healthy Society, and Agroecology as a Viable Solution for Food Security and Climate Action.

Resource persons included Nnimmo Bassey, Director of Health of Mother Earth Foundation; Tatfeng Mirabeau, Professor of Medical Microbiology; Olugbenga AdeOluwa, Senior Lecturer in Agronomy at the University of Ibadan and Coordinator, Network of Organic Agriculture Researchers in Africa; and Jaqueline Ikeotuonye, Country Representative, Bio-integrity and Natural Food Awareness Initiative.

There were 2-panel sessions with a focus on the health, environment and socio-economic implications of GMOs, the legal framework on Biosafety in Nigeria; Farmers/consumers' needs/rights; and viable solutions to the challenges to food production and climate change. Speakers were legal practitioners, scientists, CSOs and farmers, including Chima Williams, Ifeanyi Nwankwere, Ifeanyi Casmir, Musa Wazani, Lovelyn Ejim and Gloria Okon.

After the extensive interactions and deliberations, the following observations and resolutions were made:

Observations:

1. GMOs have associated health, environmental and socio-economic implications.
2. There is a dearth of knowledge about GMOs and their implications.
3. There is a lack of public participation in the processes that lead to the approval and deployment of GMOs across the country.
4. There is an unhealthy relationship between the regulator and promoters of GMOs in Nigeria, as evidenced by the National Biotechnology Development Agency (NABDA) sitting on the board of the National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA).
5. There are serious loopholes in the country's biosafety law including excessive discretionary powers given to the agency, which directly undermines any effort at oversight; no mandatory provisions on liability and redress; lax attention to the precautionary principle etc.
6. There is weak attention to risk assessment of products derived from GMOs.
7. GMOs are promoted and supplied by corporations for economic gains and not necessarily to feed the people.
8. Nigeria produces enough to feed her population, and food unavailability is largely due to poor infrastructure, poor processing and storage facilities, lack of access to markets, lack of credit loans, poor access to land, irrigation problems etc.
9. Labelling will not be effective in Nigeria due to the way we purchase, process, market and consume our food. Our informal markets make labelling a hopeless venture.

Resolutions:

1. A moratorium should be urgently enforced against food products of genetically modified organisms and their derivatives.

2. The NBMA should stop issuing out permits for GMOs, and the already issued ones be revoked.
3. More research should be done/supported on GMOs and biosafety. There should critical studies and analyses of the health hazards of GMOs.
4. Messages on GMOs should be disseminated in forms that are understandable to different stakeholders, including by use of pidgin or local languages for a greater reach to the grassroots.
5. Efforts should be made by all stakeholders/citizens to bring about radical changes in biosafety management in Nigeria.
6. There should be better support for smallholder farmers in terms of infrastructural development in rural and sub-urban areas, including the construction and maintenance of feeder roads, storage and processing facilities and essential social amenities.
7. National food production, storage and processing standards should be established and enforced to address the issues of post-harvest losses.
8. There should be just access to land by women/communities as well as the provision of irrigation and extension services.
9. The government should incentivize and encourage agroecological food production and the use of organic inputs to address the issues of pest and diseases, increase the production of nutritious and healthy foods, among others.
10. The NBMA Act should be urgently amended with the NABDA taken off the board of the NBMA; strict liability clauses should be introduced, and other identified loopholes rectified.
11. There should be a multi-sectoral approach to the regulation of biosafety. Collaborative synergy between the National Office for Technology Acquisition and Promotion, the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC,) FCCPC (Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission) and Standard Organization of Nigeria (SON) in the regulation of biosafety in Nigeria.
12. Stakeholders should promote networks of organic agriculture producers as part of the GMO-Free Nigeria Alliance to promote the market for organic products and tackle climate change.
13. Seed banks should be developed for the preservation of indigenous seed varieties.
14. Lessons should be learned from the Covid-19 experience and embark on a radical rethink of tinkering with genetic materials of living organisms as this can compromise our food system and health and can easily be weaponized.

These resolutions were signed by various stakeholders at the conference including farmers, students, CSOs, medical practitioners, lawyers, journalists, legislative researchers and some public officers.

Dear Editor,

I read the Eco-Instigator Issue 27, and I really commend you for starting with the locust invasion in East Africa and the Horn of Africa. The COVID-19 Pandemic has clearly overshadowed a lot of information about the destruction caused by these swarm of locusts, leaving many without any source of livelihood. It is important that Africa continues to look inwards to solve her problems, amplify critical issues as top global media will also focus only on what affects them or what they consider is top newsworthy. The article on Green New Deal is brilliant and reinforces why Africa must continually push for autonomy. The "Global South" must focus on being independent in thinking and negotiation. We must do our own research with resources within our reach. Your magazine is of great quality, and I like that we can read a different kind of poetry (Eco-friendly poetry).

I also read your annual report. The idea of the "life after oil" initiative is really interesting because it seemed like a foresight before the crash in global oil prices, leaving Nigeria in limbo.

READERS COMMENTS & FEEDBACK

Keep up the good work, and this is my first time reading the Eco-Instigator.

-- **Margaret Aligbe**
Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden.

Eco-Instigator: The Voice, The Map and The Judge

Eco-Instigator is a must-read for everyone living on the planet. As an avid reader and one passionate about my environment, I have always searched for trusted and up-to-date educational materials and articles with information about the environment. Unfortunately, I have been disappointed many times because a good number of written materials available on the environment are either historical or give no accurate information about what is happening presently. Others may be too scientific, tending to just show studies, hypothesis and the analysis of the different parameters that make up the environment. When I discovered ECO-INSTIGATOR sometime in mid-2019, it was like rain on parched ground. I soaked it all up and wanted so much more that I immediately downloaded the previous editions to read because sincerely I could not get enough of the deep, unbiased, objective, unambiguous truths that were being shared.

I imagine that if Mother Earth could read, she would most likely read out one and perhaps all of eco-Instigator columns. This is not an attempt at flattery or sycophancy to the editorial team but a reflection of my true state of mind. Eco-Instigator is a perfect blend of facts and science mixed with a healthy dose of poetry with strong storytelling. It captivates, allures and keeps you spellbound. Eco-Instigator has become for me three very important things, namely the Voice, the Map and the Judge.

Eco-Instigator as the Voice: Many times, when reading a column in the Eco-Instigator, I have almost felt like the voices in my head are being heard and echoed loudly. Eco-Instigator gives a

clear, loud and audible voice to the environment; it screams about its abuse, the exploitation, the ecocidal practices, and calls out loudly in a way that cannot be ignored. It expresses its opinions succinctly and without fear.

Eco-Instigator as the Map: A map is a symbolic representation of selected characteristics of a place. Eco-Instigator as a Map shows climate change directions, establishes environmental benchmarks, identifies climatic boundaries and predicts future navigational patterns which, if carefully adhered to, will bring about a lasting change which the planet desperately needs.

Eco-Instigator as the Judge: A judge according to the Cambridge English Dictionary is a person who has the knowledge to give an opinion about something or someone well able or qualified to decide if someone or something is good, bad or of no consequence. In today's world where a few number of people command trust, a world where political correctness and economic growth have become the sole and most important parameters by which a country is judged, Eco-Instigator has filled the daunting shoes of becoming a Judge over Multinational Corporate Entities and powerful countries. Some of these powerful countries are bound by Unions and armed with nuclear warheads with trigger-happy leaders as well as underdeveloped and developing countries shackled with neo-colonialism and buried deep in years of corrupt leadership. Eco-instigator is faced with a Herculean task to pass and execute judgement without prejudice. Above all, the magazine calls its readers to action. Act Now, Act Today! A wise man once said, "The Virus won't change anything we won't change."

Odudu-Abasi Asuquo
Climate Change Activist and Board member of Green Restore

She wrote in from Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria

Books You should Read



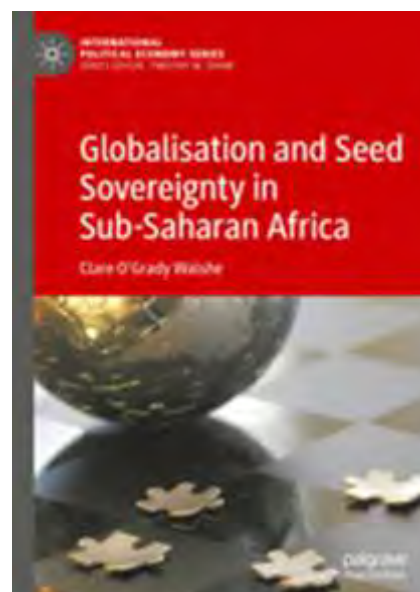
The Green New Deal and Beyond: Ending the Climate Emergency While We Still Can

By: Stan Cox

In *The Green New Deal and Beyond*, author and plant scientist Stan Cox explains why we must abolish the use of fossil fuels as soon as possible, and how it can be done. It's up to each of us, Cox writes, to play key roles in catalyzing the necessary transformation. A clear and urgent call for the national, social, and individual changes required to prevent catastrophic climate change. Other authors and activists have these to say about the book:

"An iconoclast of the best kind, Stan Cox has an all-too-rare commitment to following arguments wherever they lead, however politically dangerous that turns out to be."—Naomi Klein, author of *On Fire: The (Burning) Case for the New Green Deal*

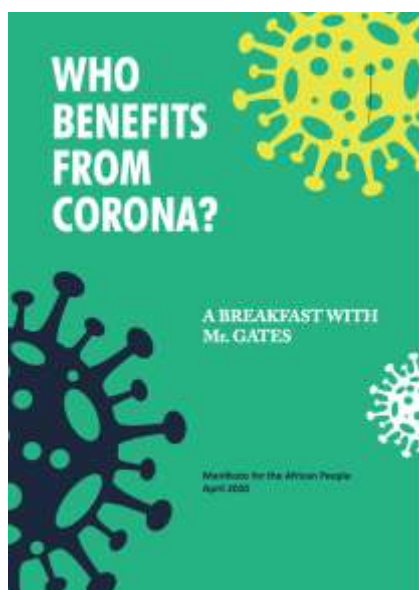
The prospect of a Green New Deal is providing millions of people with a sense of hope, but scientists warn there is little time left to take the actions needed. We are at a critical point, and while the Green New Deal will be a step in the right direction, we need to do more—right now—to avoid catastrophe. In *The Green New Deal and Beyond*, author and plant scientist Stan Cox explains why we must abolish the use of fossil fuels as soon as possible, and how it can be done. He addresses a host of glaring issues not mentioned in the GND and guides us through visionary, achievable ideas for working towards a solution to the deepening crisis. It's up to each of us, Cox writes, to play key roles in catalyzing the necessary transformation.



Globalisation and Seed Sovereignty in Sub-Saharan Africa

By: Clare O'Grady Walshe

This book studies the relationship between globalisation and seed sovereignty in Sub-Saharan Africa. It provides comparative case studies of the most recent Kenyan and Ethiopian seed laws, as well as a study of seed sovereignty 'on the ground' in a locality within Ethiopia. Based on extensive fieldwork, it identifies the interests and motivations of transnational seed corporations, global philanthropic organisations, state actors, and local farmers. It finds significant differences in the wording of seed laws and the exercise of seed sovereignty, applying theories of globalisation to help us better understand these varied outcomes. It shows that seed sovereignty has the potential to be shared between local, national, regional, and global authorities, but in different ways in different countries and localities. In the face of what might sometimes appear to be unstoppable global forces, these findings suggest that the exercise of seed sovereignty can be transformed even in a highly globalised world.



Who Benefits from Corona? – A breakfast with Mr Gates

By Nnimmo Bassey and Juan Lopez

Who Benefits from Corona? provides a detailed overview of the African scenario with regard to the pandemic, describing the finances around this crisis and the main features surrounding COVID-19. The book calls for an urgent change of the current socioeconomic and development model, and a shift to become a continent that refuses to be used for risky experimentations whether for financial speculation or for purposes of “depopulation.”

You can download a free copy at <https://homef.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Who-benefits-from-Corona-1.pdf>



UPCOMING EVENTS

Within the next quarter, HOMEf will be hosting or co-hosting some thought-provoking, informative and educative events:

•School of Ecology / International Convergence
(Freshwater Protected Areas)

•Community Dialogue/Monitoring training

•Rights Livelihood Lecture Webinar

•School of Ecology -- Climate & Power
Alternatives

•School of Ecology - Blue Economy Blues

•Dialogue with Students on food and farming
systems

Want to be part of any of the event?
Regularly visit our events calendar
at www.homef.org
for information about upcoming events
and how to participate.

Follow our social media pages.

 Health_Earth

 HealthEarth

 homefthethinktank

A circular arrangement of white dashed lines and small white circles, resembling confetti, surrounds the central yellow speech bubble.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED



LOOKING TO HELP?

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



volunteers@homef.org

