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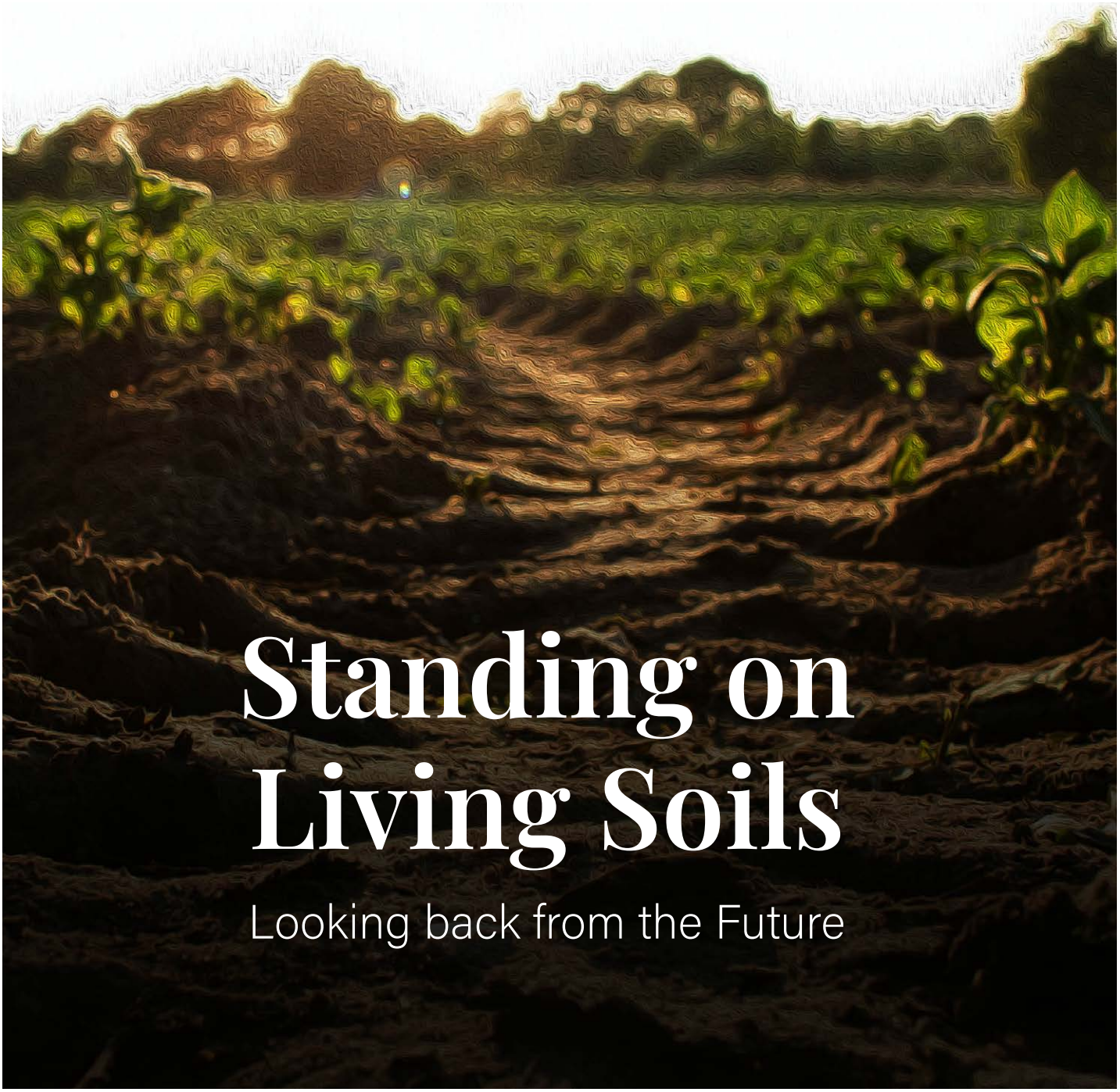

Standing on Living Soils

Looking back from the Future

BUILDING WEBS OF RESISTANCE AND CHANGE

EXAMINING THE ANTHROPOCENE

EXTINCTION REBELLION AND FRIDAYS FOR FUTURE

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Contents

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This edition of Eco-Instigator is supported by Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (RLS) and Brot fur die Welt (Bread for the World).

ROSA LUXEMBURG STIFTUNG

Brot für die Welt

Home Run

NNIMMO BASSEY,
Director, Health of Mother Earth Foundation

This is our Year of Building Alliances and Resistance. We are strengthening our capacity to break barriers to the recovery of climate resilience, to defend communities, stop destructive extraction and promote food safety and justice.

In January 2021, we partnered with Ecole Urbaine de Lyon (Urban University of Lyon) in France to host our first School of Ecology (SoE) for the year. It was a truly enlightening session with a general focus on the Anthropocene and a detailed look at the rot of resource exploitation in the areas of food, extractivism and ecology. The debates were intense as we examined "Who feeds the planet," "Plantation" and "Extractivism" as well as "Green Colonialism." In this edition, we bring you a short report on the School.

In February 2021, we took a giant leap in our Conversations series, beginning with the first series for the year titled "Conversations with Thomas Sankara". This series on Thomas Sankara was led by Isaac 'Asume' Osuoka, a renowned scholar/activist. Our partnership with Friends of the Earth Latin America and the Caribbean (ATALC) in hosting the Sankara Conversation added to its significance. Building solidarity between regions and like-minded groups through shared knowledge is the route we plan to walk not only in keeping faith with our theme for 2021 but also going forward. Reports on the Conversation will be featured in the June Edition of the Eco-Instigator.

Building solidarity between regions and like-minded groups through shared knowledge is the route we plan to walk not only in keeping faith with our theme for 2021 but also going forward.

Join us to congratulate our Fellow and supporter, Firoze Manji, on his winning of the Nicolás Cristóbal Guillén Batista Lifetime Achievement Award. Firoze Manji was awarded the prize for his years of dedicated work as the founder of Daraja Press and his continuous global activism and involvement in the building of global networks committed to the promotion of dignity, freedom and liberation. We are proud of you, Firoze Manji. Keep inspiring!

As you enjoy reading the reports, articles and poems in this edition, remember to drop us a line or share your stories, articles, photos or poems at editor@homef.org. We always look forward to hearing from you.

Until Victory!

Standing on Living Soils...

Looking back from the Future

BY NNIMMO BASSEY

We have got to the stage in the world where selfishness has been exalted as a national interest. It is a sad platform where inequalities have been hoisted as a virtue. Humans have become so "smart" that we think machines can replace us, replace relationships and replace agriculture. We even think we can relocate to destinations on asteroids or somewhere else in space! And the truth is that we do not seem to be diminished by all that.

The Years of Repair, a short animated film, challenges us to jump into the future and look at the paths by which we got there. It shows us the power of our imaginations and underscores the fact that we can get to our preferred destinations by acknowledging the strength of going together in movements powered by love and solidarity.

Looking back requires that we step forward. Looking back from the past is an uninteresting, unimaginative and unproductive enterprise.

Looking back from the future enables us to lay the paving stones that ensure we are not trapped in the quicksands of toxic relations with Nature. It helps us escape the entrapment inherent in the pursuit of primitive accumulation of capital and power. It helps us show how sterile racism, colonialism and imperialism are. It takes us to the end, restores our faith in humanity, and takes us back penitent and renewed.

Washing hands should not stop us from seeing each other's hands and learning from the hands that promote our entangled dreams.

We cannot afford to dream alone. And after a good dream, it does not make sense to remain prostrate in dreamland. Rather after a good dream, it is time to get up and jump into the struggles to build the dream.

We learned a few critical lessons from the pandemic... Brave smallholder farmers hold the key to feeding the world. They are ignored everywhere, never bailed out and never helped even as they

> Looking back from the future enables us to lay the paving stones that ensure we are not trapped in the quicksands of toxic relations with Nature

point the right way forward as agriculture gets to the crossroads.

Real farming frames the imaginations of today and tomorrow … Real farming brings back to life soils killed by agro-toxics. Real farmers fight against seed laws that criminalise the use of indigenous seeds and stifle knowledge and local wisdom. Real farmers halt the erosion of native species that are truly climate-smart and reject the promotion of alien species that are truly climate-dumb.

Agri without culture is the highway to disease, pandemics and extinctions.

This mindset tramples on Mother Earth and ignores critical creatures such as worms and a variety of pollinators that labour to ensure we stay alive.

Healthy soils produce healthy foods and healthy populations … Healthy soils produce healthy crops that are strong enough to resist pests. One clear trouble is that humans operating behind corporate shields are not just the worst pests but are incurable and insatiable predators…

Farmers are essential workers. The time has come to insist that essential workers must no longer be discounted and overlooked

Sparks change things. We are the spark needed for the change and transformation that must happen … We truly need to repair relationships

At personal levels: pay the debt of love

At collective levels: pay the climate and ecological debts

The building blocks to the future on the finite planet reject the destructive exploitation of nature, and refuse any act that promotes species extinction and trashes the dignity of our peoples.

These building blocks hold corporations accountable for ecocide — whether they are in the extractive or colonial agricultural sectors. It all boils down to building systems of care and repair to ensure that Mother Earth is not sacrificed and that our peoples are not sacrificed on the altar of capital.

Life-sustaining Soils

Soil is the skin and flesh of the Earth. It is a source of life. We are sons and daughters of the soil. Earth rootedness holds the key to building global citizenship, securing the commons and propagating love both for humans and for the Earth.

A handful of fertile soil contains thousands of species, billions of bacteria and other microscopic organisms. Each organism in the soil system has a function in the food web, with some specialising in the decomposition of matter while others help in the dispersal of

dead organic matter. There is a living give-and-take economy beneath our feet that we must bend down to learn about as well as learn from.

The linear and extractivist mindset has led to a rapid deterioration of soils worldwide.

Economies of exploitation see labour as disposable and nonessential, and continuously look for ways to replace humans.

Bad soils and land grabs lead to displacement, forced migration and, at times, outright violence. We easily forget that there is a loss of knowledge and culture when farmers are displaced to seek livelihoods in cities. Healthy soils are spongy and retain water, while poor parched soils are more impervious and get easily eroded. Urbanization and cementification of soils are agents of soil exploitation... Killing of soils!

In contrast to the barren concrete landscapes, healthy soils are a great carbon sink. We can learn to regenerate our lands through simple, tested yet inexpensive methods, including the Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) and the rebuilding of soils using the indigenous Zai technology of Burkina Faso.

As Gandhi said, “the earth provides enough to satisfy everyone’s needs, but not a few people’s greed.”

The scare of scarcity — hides the cause of scarcity and hunger. The appropriation of the commons, exclusion

> Soil is the skin and flesh of the Earth. It is a source of life. We are sons and daughters of the soil. Earth rootedness holds the key to building global citizenship, securing the commons and propagating love both for humans and for the Earth.

and conversion into private properties and for-profit speculators and so-called investors, have led to the grabbing of millions of hectares of fertile land/soil without any concerns for local populations. In the end, locals are turned into outgrows or outright farmyard slaves.

Economies that do not recognise the intrinsic value of Nature and the continuous nurturing contribution of Mother Earth will continue to reel from the socio-economic injustices and pain that emanate therein. Any competition that tramples cooperation and displacement of farmers disconnects millions not just from their farm but from the soil—and their life!

The dependence on herbicides and crops genetically engineered to withstand them has led to the rise of super weeds. These super weeds emerge as an attempt by nature to repair the ruptures created by humans—a way of human-proofing biodiversity. We have to come to the realization that one man’s weed may well be another man’s vegetable.

In all, we must never forget that there are consequences for every action. And we must bear in mind that we all have a shared duty of care or repair. We have a duty of rebuilding relationships with the soil and with one another.

HOMEF Trains Fishers in Bayelsa

Bayelsa is among the states with well-defined coastlines and sandy beaches. It is home to foraging and nesting for several species of fish, mammals and other animals. The principal threat to marine freshwater ecosystems is the extractive activities taking place in the state/region.

In response to this, Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF) organised a one-day training for fishers in Bayelsa State on 10 December 2020. The training aimed at building and strengthening the grassroots fishers to monitor, report and advocate for a healthy marine environment and to ensure their participation in the formation of policies concerning aquatic environments. Participants were drawn from fishing communities around Yenagoa as well as from Southern Ijaw, Ekeremor and Brass Local Government Areas (LGAs). Also present were Civil Society CSOs and the media.

In February 2020, an enormous number of dead fish were washed up on an extensive stretch of the Niger Delta coastline. This news first broke out when community people from Ogbulagha Kingdom in Burutu LGA of Delta State raised an alarm over the massive death of fish floating and littering their shores. Reports also came in from fishing communities in Ondo, Bayelsa, Rivers and Akwa Ibom States, complaining of similar incidents in their states. It is, however, worrisome that the actual cause of the incidents has not been found to date. Just as the community people were grappling with the challenges of the massive die-off of fish believed to be caused by pollution from oil and gas-related activities, COVID-19 came and obstructed their path to recovery.

During the training, Nnimmo Bassey, Director of HOMEF, emphasised the need to train fishers to monitor and report changes in their environment and for fishers to be recognised in the policy circle as key stakeholders for aquatic environment management. He expressed serious concerns on how the once cherished mangroves of the Niger Delta have been destroyed by the polluting activities of oil and gas multinationals.

An astute environmental justice campaigner and renowned field monitor, Morris Alagoa, in the training session, stressed that oil pollution degrades the environment and threatens aquatic ecosystems, health, livelihoods and lives. According to him, “because the environment is our life

and our survival depends on it, the only sensible option is to take actions aimed at preserving and protecting the environment. This is why we need to effectively monitor our environment with tools that will provide proofs to support evidence-based advocacy." He informed that "this year alone there have been several oil spills that occurred due to equipment failure from the facilities of oil companies such as Shell, Agip and Aiteo." As he further pointed out, "most of the spills happened during COVID-19 lockdown, affecting our rivers and creeks, especially in Odioama, Okpoama,/Iwoama, Baberegbene, Olugbobiri, Ikebiri, Gbaraun, Angiama, Ogboinbiri, etc. in Brass and Southern Ijaw LGAs of Bayelsa State. Apart from the oil spill incident in Ogboinbiri that is still under contention, all other incidences were reported to be caused by equipment failure."

Mr Prince Ebi Clifford Enaibo, who is the secretary of Nigerian Union of Fishermen and Seafood Dealers as well as vice-chairman of the National Fishing Association of Nigeria, Bayelsa State chapter, in an interview noted that fishers are faced with both environmental and livelihood challenges. "Fishermen are suffering because there is no fish in the rivers anymore due to oil spills that have become a household name in Bayelsa State," he said.

Henry Raynus Ebiegberi (also known as "the Shoreline Traveller"), an indigene of Minibie community in

"Fishermen are suffering because there is no fish in the rivers anymore due to oil spills that have become a household name in Bayelsa State,"

Bayelsa and the Youth Affairs Coordinator of the Akassa Development Foundation (ADF) highlighted the challenges faced by community folks. He sued for intense monitoring and data gathering during his presentation at the training. Mr Ebiegberi emphasised that "there are heavy plastics littered around beaches that are causing temperature rise." He further commented that "environmental erosion, oil spills, gas leakages, artisanal refineries, bunkering and the presence of illegal fishing trawlers fishing near shore are all quite sadly destructive indeed." Mr Ebiegberi also complained that "there has been no reliable baseline survey report to authenticate coastal information, especially in Bayelsa State.". He saw it as an imperative to have such a report to harmonise common actions. He concluded that "for fishing to thrive, the marine environment should be thoroughly monitored with the aim of ensuring biological diversities, protecting and conserving the environment so as to support depollution and create a habitual environment for marine lives."

The meeting ended with a call to unite fishers and the need for fishers to be part of the FishNet Alliance - a network of fishers engaged in and promoting sustainable fishing in line with ecosystem limits. Fishers were encouraged to stand in solidarity against extractive activities in water bodies, including rivers, lakes and oceans.

At the end of the training and group sessions, the fishers resolved that:

1. there should be increased participation of fishers in policy spaces as regards aquatic environment management;
2. the extraction of oil and gas of any kind offshore and onshore must stop, and no new fields should be opened;
3. there should be promotion of traditional knowledge of fishing practices, including those that would help mitigate climate change impacts; and
4. the activities of industrial trawlers along the Atlantic coast of Bayelsa must be duly regulated.

Notes from Dialogue with Smallholder Farmers

BY OGECHI OKANYA COOKEY & JOYCE EBEBEINWE

Smallholder farmers feed the world – this is an undiluted fact both in the Global North and South. Industrial agriculturists may continue to invent technologies that they want people to believe will feed the world, but their innovations remain what they are – means of profiteering. Smallholder farmers hold the key to healthy food and sustainable agricultural systems. However, a resilient food and farming system is highly dependent on the protection and preservation of biological diversity. While industrial agriculturists and their market-based technologies are destroying biodiversity, real farmers (i.e., the smallholder farmers) are struggling to maintain a sustainable food and farming system. In recognition of the threats to biodiversity and the struggles this crop of farmers face on daily bases, Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF) held a dialogue with smallholder farmers in Kano State, Nigeria, on 28 January 2021.

Issues deliberated upon during the dialogue include Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) and their implications for Nigeria's food industry, alternatives to GMOs; agroecology as a viable solution for food and climate challenges, general and specific challenges farmers face in the cultivation of different crops, harmful farming practices, sustainable indigenous farming practices, and indigenous crop varieties. Knowledge was shared on how GMOs tamper with smallholder farmers' ability to secure food sovereignty for Nigeria. This is due to the fact that GM seeds come with patents that disallow re-cultivation of the same seeds in the next planting season. This is coupled with the fact that the cultivation of the seeds lead to soil degradation and loss of biodiversity, which can be linked to various diseases and viruses, including Covid-19.

The dialogue re-enforced the farmers' understanding of their vital role in the

preservation of biodiversity and the indigenous food systems in Nigeria. To strengthen this understanding, Joyce Ebebeinwe, HOMEF's Programmes Manager, who represented the Director at the dialogue illustrated the connection between food and agricultural system and the invasion of diseases such as Covid-19. According to Ebebeinwe, "industrial agriculture and the attendant risky technologies thrive in monocultures and bring about reduced genetic diversity. Consumption of GMOs has been linked to immune disorders as well as other conditions that reduce our ability to fight infections."

Dr Olugbenga Adeoluwa, a senior lecturer at the University of Ibadan and a practising farmer, informed participants that when farmers adopt farming techniques like the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and the cultivation of GM crops, there is the likelihood of importing foreign problems. These practices are promoted by industrial agriculturists. The lecturer cum farmer, therefore, championed agroecology as a practice that promotes preservation and cultivation of natural seeds found in the immediate environment of farmers. It promotes farming practices that enhance the resilience of agroecosystems as well as safeguards the rights of farmers.

Agroecology is against industrial agricultural practices which involve the heavy use of toxic chemicals that degrade the soil and fossil fuel, resulting in 25-30% of global greenhouse gas emissions, amongst other unsustainable practices. Agroecology supports biological pest control, agro-forestry and mixed cropping as against the monoculture systems promoted by industrial agriculture.

Agroecology is against industrial agricultural practices which involve the heavy use of toxic chemicals that degrade the soil and fossil fuel, resulting in 25-30% of global greenhouse gas emissions, amongst other unsustainable practices.

The farmers agreed that farming practices championed by the industrial agriculturists are alien to the indigenous farming systems. According to the farmers, some of the impacts of the alien practices are: the loss of taste of some harvested crops like tomatoes, loss of firmness, slower crop growth, increased post-harvest spoilage and increased pests, which tend to force them to use more pesticides.

For the cultivation of different crops, the farmers narrated the different and related challenges that they experience. For groundnuts, beans and maize, the challenge is pest; for cotton, it is stunted growth; while rice is challenged by rusting or bronzing. All these challenges were clearly linked to the use of chemicals. Indigenous and natural remedies were recommended as the panacea for these challenges. One remedy was the use of compost or natural manure, examples of which are cow dung, goat droppings and poetry manure. Another solution was the use of neem or dogonyaro leaves, seeds and oil, recommended for controlling pests that trouble crops like maize, cowpea and okra; and the use of chilli pepper to drive pests like grasshoppers. For better cotton heads, an adequate use of phosphorous and potassium was recommended.

The farmers shared their experiences with chemical fertilizers versus manure. According to them, the application of chemical fertilizers on a farmland only allows short term use of the land after which the farmer has to seek another land to plant on. Again, where the application of a mudu (a local measuring instrument of about 1.13 kilograms) of chemical fertilizers will perform optimally for a short duration of two weeks, a mudu of compost like cow dung will last almost a year. Also, crops, such as yam, cultivated with

> **The abandonment of indigenous crops for some exotic crops that are believed to be more economically viable was identified as a problem that may lead to a further loss of indigenous crops.**

chemical fertilizers, sometimes seem to be bigger but begin to rotten within a short time of one week.

The heavy usage of chemicals in farming was observed to be connected to the infertile soils that farmers now battle with. The chemicals destroy microorganisms that keep the soil and crops nourished.

The farmers shared insights on the indigenous farming practices that they wish to preserve, considering their huge benefits and the harmful practices that they need to shun. The beneficial indigenous practices include crop rotation, bush fallow and shifting cultivation. Irrigation farming was suggested by the farmers as a way of boosting their productivity and mitigating the harsh impact of climate change. Conversely, some of the harmful practices which the farmers discouraged include bush burning, leaching (too much irrigation) and over-cropping.

On the issues of indigenous crops, the farmers explained that there are several crops that they get from the government. However, there are indigenous crop varieties that they wish to preserve and continue to have unrestricted rights/access to. Some of these indigenous crops are corn, millet, maize, guinea corn and soya beans. The indigenous crops that have been lost are bambaranuts and cocoyams. These crops, according to the Kano farmers, are no longer available for cultivation.

The abandonment of indigenous crops for some exotic crops that are believed to be more economically viable was identified as a problem that may lead to a further loss of indigenous crops. While the cultivation of some foreign or exotic crops was not ruled out, the consciousness that such crops come with their own challenges was instilled during the dialogue. For example, an experience was shared about the planting of cauliflower, a non-indigenous, low-calorie, vitamin- and fibre-rich cruciferous vegetable in the class of broccoli, cabbage, arugula, turnips and the likes. Out of all the other crops on the farm where the cauliflower was planted, lizards chose to eat up only the cauliflower. This led to the inability to meet up with the demand for the vegetable, which has been found to be beneficial in combating cancer, for better memory, stronger bones and improved cardiovascular system.

It was, thus, reasoned that it is generally better to plant crops that come from the immediate environment. Such crops can easily be cultivated and earn smallholder farmers finances. Most of these crops do not need to be bought from the government or other seed-selling corporations who tend to focus more on their own gains than on making life easy for local farmers. “Agriculture should also be a means of making money for local farmers,” Dr Adeoluwa had said during the dialogue.

The farmers also complained about other challenges such as lack of capital, storage facility, social amenities and land, inadequate water supply, and insufficient government intervention.

At the end, participants at the dialogue unanimously agreed that to produce enough food and build good resilience to climate change, there is a need to continue to:

- say No to GMOs;
- opt for natural manure as well as natural ways of achieving good yield and of controlling pests and weeds; and
- adopt other practices that are much more beneficial to the soil and ecosystem.

They Feed Us: *A Celebration of Smallholder Farmers*

By Babawale Obayanju and Edgar Imafidon

In the early months of the year 2020, before the COVID-19 pandemic, we journeyed to Kano State, one of the food baskets in Nigeria, as well as to places such as Enugu State and Benin City in Edo State. The mission was to find out the impacts of climate change on food production and to ascertain if the claims that Nigerians are hungry were a fact or a myth. We made relevant portraits that tell stories of community resilience, nutrition, agroecology, and the critical role of seed and food sovereignty in mitigating climate change. Our journey lends a voice to the people who really feed the world – the traditional smallholder farmers.

Traditional smallholder farmers grow about seventy per cent of the world's food on less than a quarter of the Earth's available agricultural land. They are called smallholder farmers because they own or farm on small plots of land on which they grow subsistence crops, relying almost exclusively on family or manual labour. They make use of available workforce (which is shrinking due to mass rural to urban migration) and manual tools to ensure that the world does not go hungry. Yet many of these farmers are often overlooked and constantly find their livelihoods threatened by climate change and industrialized agriculture, which undermine the biological diversity on which we all depend.

During a visit to Dawanau Market, the biggest seed market in Nigeria and one of the largest in West Africa, situated in Yangari, Kano State, we met with traders who told us they were nearly never out of foodstuff all year round regardless of

seasonal changes and the impact of climate change. The market always has supplies coming from different parts of the country and at different months of the year. For example, substantial yam supplies come to the market from Benue, Adamawa, Gombe, Nasarawa, Taraba, Niger and Plateau States at different months of the year. The traders have observed that climate change impacts – excess or low rainfall, drought and so on – affect regions differently; hence, the availability of food in the market remains unshaken. With the closure of the Nigerian borders to food importation, there have been significant efforts by the Nigerian government to support farmers to grow rice, beans, yams and wheat.

In the past years, we have not seen this kind of increase in the volume of food supplied to the market. We are adducing that one reason for the increase is government's support to farmers, says Alhaji Sani Abdulahi, Leader of Dawanau market yam traders. He informed us that over 100 trucks laden with yams enter the market daily for nationwide distribution. According to the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Nigeria produces about 71% of the annual supplies of yams globally, equalling more than 37 million tons (for details, visit https://www.iita.org/cropsnew/dioscoria/).

In consonance with the Alhaji's statement, a trader at New Site Yam Market, in Dawson, Benin City said they typically receive yams from Zaki Biam, Benue State (the acclaimed biggest yam market in Nigeria) from January to July, while from August until around October supplies come from Owan area of Edo and Kwara States.

Dawanau Market also plays host to huge storehouses for rice, beans, millet, wheat and other seed traders who also come from different cities of Nigeria.

Women were observed to be marginal workers in this food processing market. Younger men were seen doing most of the farm work and food processing.

On our way to a farm called Dakasoye, around Kura in Kano State - where wheat, beans, rice, cucumber and some other crops were grown -- we came across local rice millers in small "shack" rice milling houses.

They were milling rice and packaging it using manual/traditional tools and materials such as sacks, wooden sieves, drums, plastic containers and sticks. The average quantity of milled rice per hour using this manual method is 48kg/hr, which when compared with pedal-operated thresher (90 kg/hr), bullock treading (140 kg/hr), and motorized threshers (above 500 kg/hr) is very low. Young men were either at the machines milling the paddy or using the wind to filter the chaff from the rice. The women, on the other hand, were seen doing smaller-scale processing of leftover milled rice. We were told that they got their rice from farms around Tundun Wada in Kano State. Kano State is one of the most important rice-producing areas in Nigeria, with more than 20,000 rice farmers involved in rice farming and processing. The processed rice is later sold in the Kano markets, which serve a population of over 9,000,000 people.

On the farm in Dakasoye area, it was observed that farmers were adapting to the impacts of drought by using water from the Challawa Gorge Dam, which is another government intervention to irrigate their farms. Water from the dam supplies the Kano River Irrigation Project as well as Kano City (see: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261401292_Study_Towards_Upgrading_the_Prevailing_Method_of_Rice_Threshing_in_Kano_State). But this intervention is not without some negative impacts on the communities around it. However, for these farmers here, its benefits outweigh any negative impacts.

The pattern of agriculture in Kano State, like in other parts of the country, is completely regulated by the available water resources. Kano experiences a short rainy (wet) season from May to October, which restricts cultivation to one cropping period each year. A further limitation on agricultural production is caused by the floods, which inundated over

one million acres of land in the river basins during the wet season, as was observed during our first visit to communities around Dawakin Tofa, Kano State, in 2019. The floods left the land unfit for cultivation.

Traditional smallholder farmers, with their very rich experiences and in-depth knowledge of local seeds and the conditions for their survival, hold many of the practical solutions that can help place agriculture on a more sustainable and equitable footing given the needed support. To do this efficiently, they will need help to overcome market challenges, chief of which are bad road networks, lack of adequate storage facilities to keep their produce, and other disincentives for sustained land use, including insecure land tenure, high transaction costs and weak institutional support.

It takes an average of 2 days to bring yams from Zaki Biam in Benue State to Benin City due to bad road...a driver in Benin complained. Moving a truck laden with 350 40kg bags of local rice from Kano to Benin takes me an average of 2 to 3 days with several security challenges, double interstate taxation/extortion, and bad road networks...complained the driver.

In Nigeria, food is available and in abundance, but the access to safe, healthy and appropriate food fit for our people and their culture is a major cause of hunger in the land. Our indigenous seeds are at risk with the influx of Genetically Modified (GM) seeds into our farms. An example is GM beans which were approved and released by the Nigerian Government in January 2019 into our markets and farms as a possible solution to the hunger crisis.

The truck drivers who move food from one region to another highlighted bad roads as a significant factor that increases the number of hours/days they spend delivering foodstuff. The traders we encountered also highlighted the lack of adequate storage facilities as another issue that causes food shortage.

Our women, especially in the Northern region, need to be given more space to function with the men at the markets and at the farm, like is the case in the southern communities visited.

Climate change is real, and more positive steps need to be taken by the government to help farmers cope with its devastating impacts. It is time our governments moved beyond the promised Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) as was made in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties (COP) to real actions on the ground.

Babawale Obayanju and Edgar Imafidon are photographers from TellThatStory.

LAWSUIT AGAINST BIOSAFETY AGENCY PLODS ON

The case against the National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA), the Biotech company- Monsanto Agricultural Nigeria Limited and others with regard to permits for the introduction of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) into Nigeria plods on.
The hearing of the case, which was earlier scheduled for 20 January 2021, was adjourned to 23 March 2021. The case was mentioned at the Federal High Court, Abuja, with both parties present and ready for hearing, but the court excused the proceeding for lack of time.
Director of HOMEF, Nnimmo Bassey, stated that the adjournment will not deter efforts to ensure that justice prevails and to secure our food system from the hazards of modern agricultural biotechnology. “The case is very much alive,” he insisted.

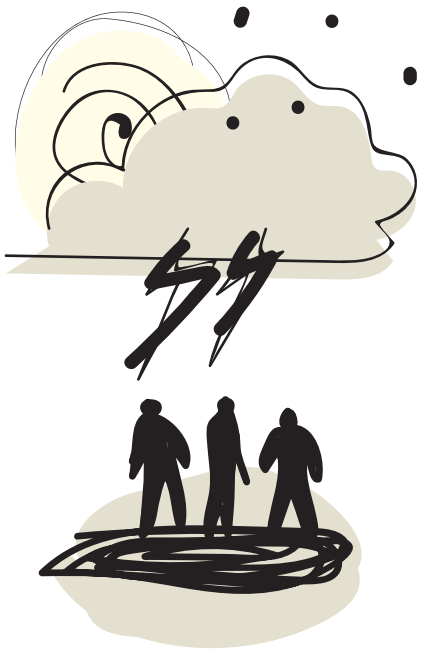
The case seeks a declaration that the Bt cotton (MON 15985) and maize (1) NK603 & (2) MON89Q34 x NK603 supplied by Monsanto and approved by the NBMA for commercial release and confined field trial respectively in Nigeria contravene the fundamental rights to life and human dignity of Nigerians. These rights are guaranteed under Section 33 and 34 of the 1999 Constitution (as Amended) and Article 4, 5, 16 and 24 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (Ratification and Enforcement) Act.

Also, the case seeks a declaration that the continuous refusal by the NBMA and Monsanto to provide scientific evidence to dispel fears of the applicants as contained in the exhibits presented in court infringes on the fundamental rights of the applicants as guaranteed under the Nigerian Constitution and aforementioned Act.
The case was first filed in the Federal High Court of Justice, Abuja, in 2017 but was struck out on 15 August 2018, not for lack of merit or Cause of Action but for technical reasons. The case was, however, resumed in 2018 as a matter of fundamental human rights and has been scheduled for hearing at the Federal High Court of Nigeria on 23 March 2021 after several shifts on hearing dates.

Various studies have linked GMOs to serious environmental and health maladies. They have grave implication for biological diversity, which enhances resilience to climate change and pandemics such as COVID-19. They threaten our indigenous and nutritious foods and promote unsustainable agricultural practices.
HOMEF calls for a ban on GMOs in Nigeria, stressing that the way to food security and food sovereignty in Nigeria is through agroecology and adequate support for smallholder farmers.

Net Zero Comes to Zero

BY NNIMMO BASSEY



Extreme climate stands at the door
Record temperatures
Boiling oceans, cyclones and deaths
Shrinking ponds, parched lands
And a smiling line-up of power-drunk deniers

Climate inaction a hellish creed
Extreme avoidance of action intensified
Voluntary modes activated for climate inactions
Nothing but sophisticated mathematical acrobatics
Net zero pathways

Youths to whom tomorrow belongs resist
Community lands stolen by foods, swelling seas and raging deserts XX

Question is what does the voluntarism add to...
The world has no history of cooperation
History is replete with conflicts, conquistadors, thieves and xx

Yet, cooperation is in the memory of humans
The only sure tool for survival is watching each other's back
It means each person carrying her fair share
And not offset loads by wishful thinking

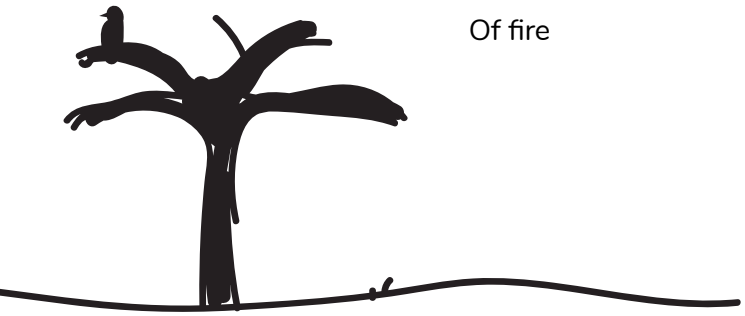
Your ambition aims at 1.5 or well below 2 degrees
And well below hits below the belt of the victims long discounted

But greed and profiteering vacuous pledges point at 3 degrees
Or more
You are bent on
Incinerating the planet

While pretending that persons displaced by climate impacts are not refugees
You pen beautiful theses on how the Geneva Convention
Set definitions of a refugee in untouchable concrete
Such is the stuff of tyranny and selfishness

Today I am displaced
Today I am scorched,
Today I am cooked by the sun

Tomorrow
You will be
And the papers of your mathematics
The papers of your definitions, conventions and outrageous selfies with
Your celebrated deals and mis-agreements and net zero
Comes to zero
As you miss the net
And get hit by balls
Of fire



BUILDING WEBS OF RESISTANCE AND CHANGE

The environmental issues and challenges that the world battles with today are so complex that communities, groups and movements have to come together to form strong alliances so as to effectively resist the forces that are responsible for these issues and bring about a meaningful change. To champion this cause in 2021, Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF) is focused on building webs of resistance and change (alliance building). In order to strategise and plan to achieve this objective and other key organisational objectives, HOMEF brought together team members, board members, partners and volunteers at its team building and annual general meeting held in Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria, from 1st to 5th February 2021.

During the event, it was understood that building alliances and webs of resistance would necessitate strategic connectivity, strategic messaging, ethically-grounded activities, transforming narratives and putting the health of Mother Earth at the centre of all activities.

Strategic connectivity leads to alliance building without which strong resistance cannot be built to defend communities, promote climate resilience, support sustainable practices like agroecology and stand against ecocide, environmental racism, neocolonialism, inequalities, gender discrimination and destructive extraction of resources.

In a session on 'Advocacy: Building Resistance and Provoking Change,' activism and advocacy were described as connected and vital tools in Building Webs of Resistance and Change. Activists were defined as people working towards social change/ transformation; people asking questions that threaten the status quo; people trying to uncover the dynamics that make people unable to earn a living. The overarching target of an activist is to ensure that the conditions that put people in bad situations are changed.

During a session on 'Use of Research in Building Resistance and Provoking Change,' insights were shared on what makes up effective research for mounting resistance to injustice and instigating change. It was noted that such research would involve sourcing credible information from community people (whose testimonies are primary data), the internet, conversations of people on social media, local and national agencies, government public records, government legislations, non-governmental organisations/ civil society groups, exhibitions, conferences, news media and opinion polls.

Another session on 'Building and Sustaining the Team/ Network/Alliances' shared the fundamentals of alliance building and maintenance. It was noted that in forming alliances, the critical issues to consider include a) the commonality of the goal of every group in the alliance, including the funders; b) who would be representing one's organisation in the alliance; and c) the need to have groups from different fields, for example, economists, researchers, farmer associations, etc.

STRATEGIC CONNECTIVITY LEADS TO ALLIANCE BUILDING WITHOUT WHICH STRONG RESISTANCE CANNOT BE BUILT

The meeting provided space for strategising for HOMEF's work in the Oilwatch Network and for discussions on fossil and mining conflicts in Nigeria and Africa. The Oilwatch Network aims to resist fossil fuel activities in tropical countries in Africa and in the Global South. It does this by exposing the negative impacts of extractive activities and establishing a link between the destruction of biodiversity, climate change, human rights violations and the role of multilateral financial institutions.

It was noted that in some communities in Kogi and Benue States, the mining companies have some of the community members speaking for them. Those who stand against the companies are seen as anti-development. An example is Okwori Onaji, a community activist in Benue State who was framed and attacked in 2020 by some of his community members for trying to protest against the negative impacts of the Owukpa Consolidated Mining Company.

These conflicts, incidences of pollution from extractive activities and the use of dangerous technologies in agriculture, leading to the loss of biodiversity and many more ills, make 'building webs of resistance and change' an urgent issue.

Plans for all the activities under all of HOMEF's key work areas (Fossil Politics, Hunger Politics, Ikike and Alliance building) were discussed in detail; strategies were fine-tuned and recommendations made for better outcomes and outputs. One of the projects for the year 2021, titled Shifting the Power Lines, focuses on the sustainable energy path. It also aims at challenging current imaginaries on which exploitative, polluting, wasteful and unjust systems have been built and to unlock the world from the grip of fossil energy dependency. These can be achieved especially through building stories (participatory

grassroots stories), looking up from the past and looking back from the future.

Some of the project's objectives are to a) work with governments to commit to shifting power modes from fossil fuels to renewables with the aim of building a fossil-free future; b) amplify the actions of women and youths in the movement against energy colonialism; and c) promote participatory research work among activists and academics etc. This project will involve Oilwatch groups in Latin America and Southeast Asia.

Activities planned with other networks were also discussed. For example, there was space for brainstorming on the FishNet Alliance and the Ecological Defense Network. Also, some light was shed on the project 'Promoting Agroecology and its Inclusion in Nigeria's Climate Change Policies.' The project is planned in collaboration with the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa as well as farmers, CSOs, researchers and media practitioners in Nigeria. Resolutions from the session on the agroecology project include the need: to increase the number of farmers to be trained on agroecology, use strong media strategy to achieve the project's goals and to effectively engage with policymakers.

Other planned activities include biosafety conference and rally; conversations series on Thomas Sankara (which has already taken place), on ecocide, on Frantz Fanon and on AfriTAP; School of Ecology on various subject areas; stilt dialogues; and agroecology workshops with farmers, policymakers and other stakeholders, etc.

There were also discussions on content creation, documentaries and use of stories; project planning, implementation and reporting; effective social media use and communication/branding strategy; and ideas for effective administration and coordination within the team.

At the end of the meeting, team/board members, as well as other partners who participated, were energized as all had a strong understanding of HOMEF's focus and strategy for the year. The sessions were highly interactive and interesting, with exercises that promoted better understanding among team members and partners.

Participants joined the event in person from Benin City, Abuja, Lagos, Port Harcourt, Bayelsa and Asaba, while others joined via Zoom from Lagos, the Philippines and Brazil.

School of Ecology: HOMEF Partners with Ecole Urbaine de Lyon

ÉCOLE URBAINE DE LYON
Université de Lyon

Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF) partnered with Ecole Urbaine de Lyon in hosting her first School of Ecology (SoE) for 2021. This partnership was officially announced at a virtual press conference held on Friday 15 January 2021 to present the third edition of Ecole de l'Anthropocene (School of Anthropocene) 2021 organised by Ecole Urbaine de Lyon (Lyon Urban School) in France. The School of Anthropocene ran for one week, from 25th to 31st (Monday to Sunday) January 2021.

The SoE which formed one of the sessions of A l'Ecole de l'Anthropocene, examined the roots of resource exploitation with particular focus on food, extractivism and ecology. The SoE session which held from 26th to 28th January featured Mariam Mayet of African Centre for Biosafety, South Africa and Mamadou Goita of IRPAD, Mali, who spoke on "Who feeds the planet"; Firoze Manji of Daraja Press on "Plantation and Extractivism"; and Ikal Angelei of Friends of Lake Turkana, Kenya, who spoke on "Green Colonialism". Nnimmo Bassey, Director of HOMEF, co-moderated all the panels at the SoE.

Speaking at the virtual press conference, Nnimmo Bassey expressed his concerns about the current geological age called the Anthropocene. He explained that humans have assumed a certain measure of exploitative control over the environment and the earth's resources. To surmount challenges such as climate change, environmental degradation and pollution, which human activities are largely responsible for, terms such as sustainability have been coined. According to him, "sustainability has been on the card for decades, and everyone speaks about sustainable development. Yet the three circles of sustainability which include the economic, environmental and social — covering the 3Ps representing People, Planet and Profit — are not balanced in the scheme of corporate operations. Focus is mostly on the economic aspect of sustainability, leading to economic systems of exploitation, destruction, dispossession and extractivism."

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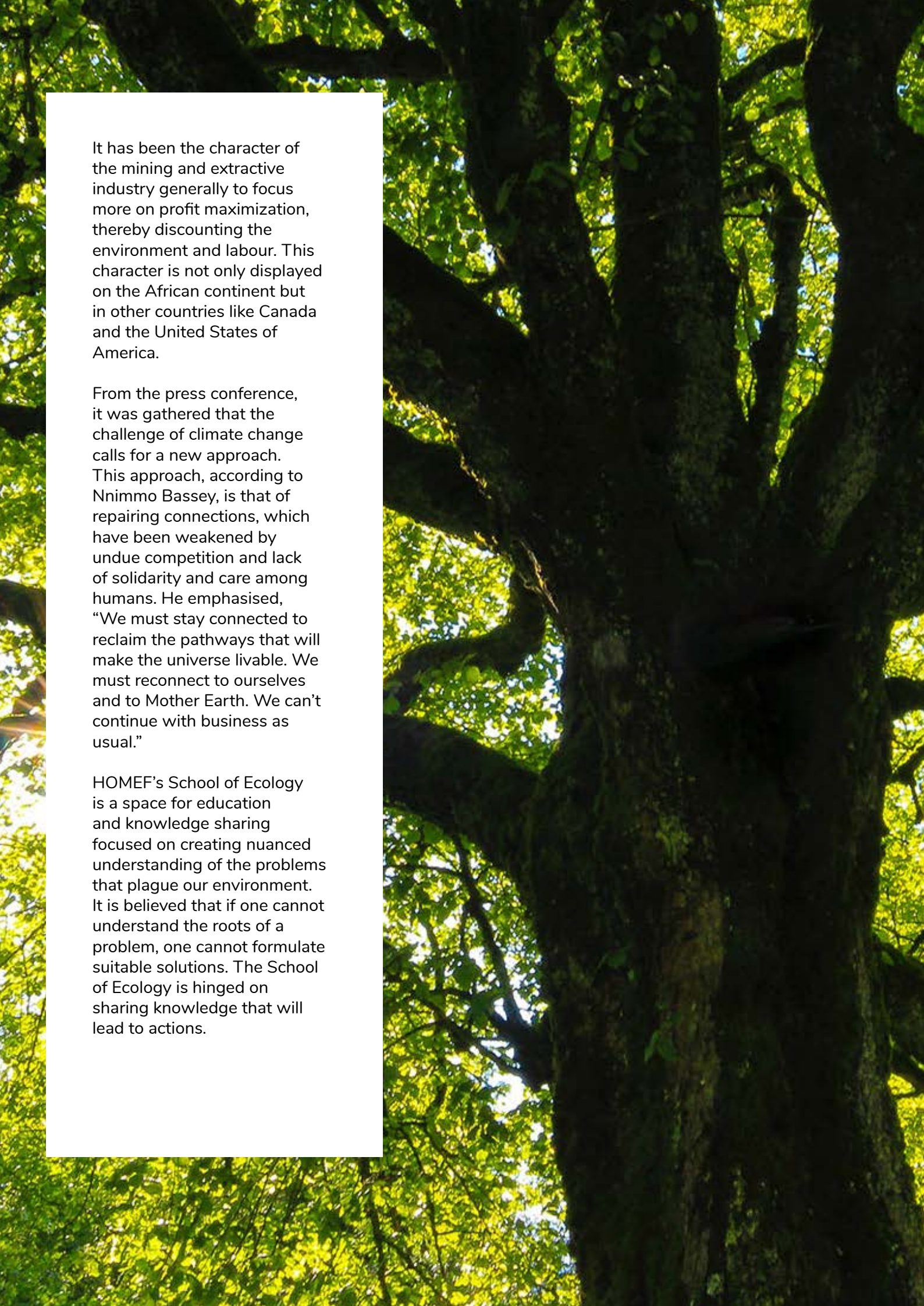

It has been the character of the mining and extractive industry generally to focus more on profit maximization, thereby discounting the environment and labour. This character is not only displayed on the African continent but in other countries like Canada and the United States of America.

From the press conference, it was gathered that the challenge of climate change calls for a new approach. This approach, according to Nnimmo Bassey, is that of repairing connections, which have been weakened by undue competition and lack of solidarity and care among humans. He emphasised, “We must stay connected to reclaim the pathways that will make the universe livable. We must reconnect to ourselves and to Mother Earth. We can’t continue with business as usual.”

HOMEF’s School of Ecology is a space for education and knowledge sharing focused on creating nuanced understanding of the problems that plague our environment. It is believed that if one cannot understand the roots of a problem, one cannot formulate suitable solutions. The School of Ecology is hinged on sharing knowledge that will lead to actions.

Examining the Anthropocene

BY MAGDALENE IDIANG

Our climate is changing. Sea levels are rising; glaciers are melting; and climate zones are shifting. According to scientists, the global average surface temperature of the earth has warmed to 1.02 °C (degree Celsius) as of the year 2020.[1] Scientists see this increasing warmth as an anomaly driving temperature extremes in different seasons and regions, intensifying heavy rainfall and so on. There appears to be a consensus that human activities are greatly responsible for this condition. This increase may not sound dramatic, but even small climate changes create enormous repercussions ranging from wildfires, floods, droughts, famine etc.

Increasing recognition of the causes and consequences of climate change has generated a great deal of doubt regarding the feasibility of simultaneously pursuing economic growth and preventing and/or mitigating climate change. Contemporary work in the broad area of assessing the anthropogenic impact on the planet suggests that several 'Planetary Boundaries' have been crossed.[2]

"We are no longer in the Holocene epoch – the past 12,000 years of stable climate in which agriculture, settled communities and great civilizations first appeared but in the Anthropocene," stated Paul Crutzen, a Dutch atmospheric scientist and the 1995 winner of the Noble Prize Laureate in chemistry. The Anthropocene epoch characterizes the human race as a geological force influencing fauna, flora and the climate. Human activities have become so pervasive and profound that they rival the great forces of Nature. Humans have bored 50m kilometres of holes in search of oil. Mountain tops are removed to get coal.

[1] https://climate.nasa.gov/vital-signs/global-temperature/
[2] Ward, et al. 2016 article at https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0164733

The oceans dance with billions of tiny plastic beads. Weaponry tests have dispersed artificial radionuclides globally. The burning of rainforests for monoculture production sends out lethal smog-palls that settle into the sediment across entire countries. Humans move around an unbelievable amount of rock every year, profoundly reshaping the world. Each year, more than 100 times as much Carbon dioxide (CO2) as volcanoes emit is spewed into the air. Humans are currently overseeing the most significant disruption to the planet's nitrogen cycle in 2.5 billion years. All around the world, industrial areas, highways, towns, housing estates, as well as artificial pasturelands and planted forests are being constructed. While these artificialised natural areas represented only 5% of the earth's surface in 1750, in this era, they represent almost one-third of the earth's surface.[3]

Scientists believe that due to the rapid changes in recent times, especially since the industrial revolution in Britain from about 1760 to about 1840, the earth system is moving away from the relative equilibrium it had known since the beginning of the Holocene (11,700 years ago). Such an extensive impact marks the beginning of the *Anthropocene*. [4]

Anthropocene, as the name implies, suggests changes brought about by human activities, especially those pertaining to the exploitation of natural resources and the methods of energy generation, transportation, industrial agriculture as well as other production activities. The name assigns the debacle, which is the outcome of the above activities to humans without distinction. This means that all humans are equally guilty of generating the complex climate/ environmental crises ravaging the world irrespective of whether they are in the Global North or South, irrespective of whether they are rich or poor, whether they are the oppressors or the oppressed and whether they have technological power or not.

The term Anthropocene is a sweeping grouping of all humanity as being guilty of ecocide. However, the

Anthropocene, as the name implies, suggests changes brought about by human activities, especially those pertaining to the exploitation of natural resources

changes, whether in terms of the environment as a whole or of climate, all point to the 'rapacious capitalist activities'- the predatory system of extraction, destruction, dispossession and accumulation. These are the drivers of the environmental and climate catastrophes that all humans now suffer. It is these drivers that need a label.

[3] https://www.researchgate.net/publication/51996792_Global_Change_and_the_Earth_System_A_Planet_Under_Pressure
[4] https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/chemistry/1995/crutzen/biographical/

Are we all to blame?

It is important to realize that the idea of the Anthropocene is actually causing more harm than good in efforts to address the menace of climate change. Avoiding hasty generalisations, hence not looking for a catchword that can encapsulate everything, is what is super important. With a terminology like the Anthropocene, the "human race" is overall responsible for climate change and all environmental disasters.

The Anthropocene is defined in terms of a generalised 'we' that obscures important differences. The 'we' is the issue because it is generalizing and not specifying. It does not take into account that American, Chinese and British banks are the frontrunners in highly polluting investments. Nor does it consider that an average America consumes 32 times more resources and energy than an average Kenyan or Nigerian. Pointing the finger at an entire human race is a non-subtle way of allowing perpetrators to evade responsibility. Yet responsibility needs to be assumed if something must be done about the current miserable state of the world.

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) includes the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities." This principle has been widely used to determine differential national responsibilities for climate change mitigation efforts. But the principle of differentiated responsibilities can also be applied to allocating responsibility for climate change itself and damages related to it. This should be based on the fact that countries which have contributed more to global emissions are more responsible for related problems than those that have contributed less.

According to Jason Hickle's article on quantifying national responsibility for climate breakdown, the Global North has contributed 92% of emissions in excess of the planetary boundary, while the Global South has contributed only 8%.[5] High-income countries have a substantially higher degree of responsibility for climate damages than one might expect by looking simply at current or cumulative national-territorial emissions. Hickle's findings further provide guidance for conceptualising and quantifying liability for ecological, social and economic damages. This is of particular importance to lower-income countries that suffer disproportionately from climate damages despite not having contributed to excess emissions.

This is an era in which decaying capitalism is destroying Mother Earth's life-support systems. The language of the Anthropocene should, therefore, focus on capitalism's responsibility for the global climate crisis. This is to say that the language of the Anthropocene is in need of serious scrutiny and modification or a complete overhaul.

Pointing the finger at an entire human race is a non-subtle way of allowing perpetrators to evade responsibility. Yet responsibility needs to be assumed if something must be done about the current miserable state of the world.

[5] https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196(20)30196-0/fulltext

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Accountability and Transparency in the South Sudan Oil Industry

BY BIOR KWER BIOR

Introduction

Extraction of natural resources without a well-thought-out resources revenue sharing mechanism has been shown to lead to discontentment. Usually, the discontent leads to an upsurge in political and military violence. This is the case in resource-rich countries where the leaders have not instituted transparent models of resource revenue sharing between the national government and the natural resources-producing communities or regions.

With the presence of abundant natural resources, noticeably petroleum, gold and other mineral deposits, South Sudan is not immune to the impacts of the "resource curse" phenomenon. To avoid this looming danger, the Republic of South Sudan enacted the South Sudan Petroleum Revenue Management Act (PRMA) of 2013. The Act allocates 2% and 3% of the petroleum net revenues to the oil-producing states and communities respectively. This resource-revenue sharing model is also built into the 2011 South Sudan Transitional Constitution. However, it is not clear if the Act has been implemented in letter and spirit inasmuch as the allocation and transfer of the 2% and 3% quarters to the oil-producing states and communities are concerned.

This study, therefore, sought to determine if these particular stipulations of the PRMA 2013 have been fully implemented. The study relied heavily on interviews with fifty (50) key informants from South Sudan Parliament, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Ministry of Petroleum, selected local government, and the oil companies. The respondents were purposively selected based on their in-depth knowledge of the Act (PRMA 2013), other petroleum regulatory regimes in South Sudan, and the oil economy in the country. The study interview schedule focused on the following issues:

- Whether the three per cent (3%) and two per cent (2%) of the petroleum revenues have been transparently allocated and transferred to the oil-producing communities as stipulated in the Act read together with the South Sudan Transitional Constitution of 2011.
- Whether these allocations and transfers have been

transparently disclosed to the public as stipulated in the Act.
- If the relevant government institutions needed to manage these funds have been instituted as stipulated in the Act.

Implementation status of the PRMA 2013

The petroleum industry in South Sudan is governed by a number of regulatory regimes which have been instituted over the last fifteen years. These regulatory regimes include the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA 2005), the Sudan Interim Constitution (2005), the Southern Sudan Interim Constitution (2005), and the Local Government Act (2009). The CPA mandated the allocation of 2% of the net petroleum revenue to the oil-producing regions in Southern Sudan. This percentage was successfully allocated and transferred to the beneficiary regions during the implementation phase of the CPA. However, information is sketchy on how these funds were utilized during the CPA implementation period.

To ensure that the net petroleum revenue is equitably shared between the national government and the oil-producing states and areas, the PRMA 2013 Act provides for the establishment of a number of administrative structures such as the Community Development Committee (CDC) and the CDC's Coordination Forum (CDCCF). While the CDC is supposed to supervise how the funds are being utilized at the community level, the CDCCF was set up to provide oversights for the work of the CDC (for details, see here)[6]. According to the Local Government Act 2009, the CDC is supposed to be established by the County Legislative Council. This body is supposed to approve plans presented by the CDC and supervise its functions at the community level.

Based on the interviews with fifty (50) purposively selected respondents, the report presents the findings on (1) allocations of the 2% and 3% to the oil-producing states and areas as stipulated in the PRMA 2013 and the Transitional Constitution of South Sudan 2011 (as amended); (2) Establishment of the relevant institutions needed to implement the provisions of the Act; and (3) the transparency of the transfer and spending of the revenue both at the national and state levels.

It was found that the transfer of the 3% to the counties leaves so much to be desired inasmuch as the provisions of the Act are concerned. An analysis done by David Reng and Nhial Tit-Mamer shows that there have been no allocation and transfers of the 2% and 3% to the oil-producing communities and states respectively since 2011 while the government budgets show a combined line for the oil-producing states and counties transfers (see here)[7].

Additionally, the 2% of the net petroleum revenue has not been properly transferred to the oil-producing states as provided for in both the CPA 2005 and PRMA 2013 read together with the South Sudan Transitional Constitution 2011 (as amended). Again, Reng and Tit-Mamer's analysis indicates that only 1.6% of what was required by the Act was transferred to the oil-producing counties and the states.

However, it was surprising that no money was ever received by the oil-producing states, according to interviews with various members of the parliament and the community members from the oil-producing states and areas. This shows that the budgetary allocations, transfers and spending are not in line with what was provided by the laws cited earlier. These improper allocations of the petroleum net revenue are not only affecting the communities, according to the interviewees, but it is also affecting states in which oil is being extracted in all the Greater Upper Nile Region.

The findings also show that the CDC, CDCCF and the County Legislative Council, which were mandated by the Act to implement its various provisions with respect to the net revenue allocations and transfers, have not been instituted. Without these institutions,

[6] https://www.suddinstitute.org/assets/Publications/572b7eb49cda4_SouthSudansPetroleumRevenueManagementAct_Full.pdf
[7] http://www.jstor.com/stable/resrep20116

the provisions of the Act would not be implemented as justly and transparently as provided by the law. It was also found that there has been no public disclosure of the key information regarding the allocation and transfer of the 2% and 3% of the net petroleum revenue.

Because of this lack of transparency, the communities and the states are left without adequate information on the benefits of oil extraction in their areas. All the community members we interviewed are convinced that the money might have been embezzled in Juba, while informants from the relevant government institutions who were interviewed were reserved on the suspicion that the money for the states and counties might have been embezzled in Juba.

Key Policy Recommendations

Based on the results presented and discussed above, the report makes the following key policy recommendations to the Government of the Republic of South Sudan and various stakeholders:

- There is an urgent need for the government of South Sudan to reach out to the oil-producing communities and clarify why the money allocated to them as stipulated in the Act has not been transferred to them.
- The oil-producing communities and the states in conjunction with the national government need to expeditiously establish the relevant institutions needed to implement the provisions of the Act as stipulated.
- There is a need for transparent disclosure of the key information regarding the implementation status of the PRMA 2013 to the public.
- The Ministry of Finance should make sure that 3% and 2% of net petroleum revenue are transferred to the beneficiaries as stipulated in the Act (PRMA 2013).

Bior Kwer Bior is the Executive Director (ED) of the Nile Initiative for Health and Environment (NIHE) located in Juba, Republic of South Sudan

At HOME - The Move

BY OGECHI OKANYA COOKEY

Merrily the documentations of Mother Earth moved

Furniture, vents of cooling man-forged air moved

The delightsomeness, the hominess of Mother Earth called

Come.... Come.... Come....

Mother Earth benefactors edged

Closer...Closer and Closer

Hastily and joyously they moved

Hands graced with powdery droplets from Mother Earth

Salted steam dripping from their faces

All eyes and hearts were At HOME

And all hands on deck

Moving carriages knew also and were eager to offload At HOME

Finally HOME was in sight

Handymen properly dressed in earth's powdery droplets hastened

Mother Earth from her sitting space peeked and sighed with relief

Good company was At HOME

She knew about the documentations of her

She knew about the Struggles

She would share her sitting place with her benefactors

It was all planned out

Her flying beauties did not mind

They would seat on their designed couch

And watch conversations and dialogues with Mother Earth

There should be a Memorandum of Understanding

And it must exclude caveats stopping the flying and other beauties

Of course from taking a leak on two-legged, erect benefactors

No disrespect intended

The ogbono trees were theirs as much as it was the erect beings'

When Mother Earth waved at the ogbono tree

It waved back and benefactors got ogbono seeds, no stress

There must be a relationship of mutual respect and benefit

The hairy little fast-paced spruces agreed

No room for naysayers

At HOME all felt At HOME

OUTCOMES FROM THE POLLUTERS' JUDGMENT ROUNDTABLE

The Polluters' Judgment Roundtable was held at Oronto Douglas Conference Hall, HOMEF's International Headquarters in Benin City on 23 February 2021

Over the last six decades, the Niger Delta region of Nigeria has been immersed in extensive environmental pollution from the activities of oil and gas corporations. These pollutions have resulted in severe damage to communities, livelihoods and raised health challenges that have plunged life expectancy to a horrifying 41 years.

The people of the region have responded in a number of ways, notably through recourse to the law courts in Nigeria and beyond. One amongst such is the case where four farmers and fishers from Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa and Rivers States, in partnership with Friends of the Earth Netherlands, took Shell to a Dutch court.

Brief chronicle of the case

The case was filed by four Nigerian farmers in 2008, who alleged that widespread pollution on their land was caused by leaks from Shell's oil infrastructure due to a lack of repair and maintenance.

The case went a step further, above the judgement that was given by a lower court in Nigeria on 30 January 2013, when Shell was held liable for the pollution at Ikot Ada Udoh. The current case that led to the victory held Shell liable for all the environmental pollution and degradation in Oruma, Goi and Ikot Ada communities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

The decision on the oil spills in Oruma and Goi declared that Shell Petroleum Development

> The case was filed by four Nigerian farmers in 2008, who alleged that widespread pollution on their land was caused by leaks from Shell's oil infrastructure due to a lack of repair and maintenance.

Company of Nigeria (SPDC) vis-à-vis Oguru, Efanga and the other residents for whom Milleudefensie (MD) is representing, is held liable for (i) the damage resulting from the leakage at Oruma on 26 June 2005 and (ii) acting unlawfully by not acting before that date to install an (adequate) Leak Detection System (LDS) on the Oruma pipeline. It orders SPDC to compensate Oguru and Efanga for the damage resulting from (i) and (ii), to be prepared by the state and be settled according to the law. The decision:

- orders SPDC to provide the Oruma I and the Oruma II pipelines (and to keep it fitted as long as these pipelines are in use as main or backup pipeline) with a Leak Detection System (LDS) within one year of notification of this judgment and orders Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria (SPDC) to jointly pay MD et al. a penalty of € 100,000 for each day (part of a day counted as a day) that it does not comply with this order.
- orders Royal Dutch Shell (RDS) to ensure that within one year of notification of this judgment, the Oruma I and the Oruma II pipelines are provided (and remain equipped as long as these pipelines are in use as main or backup pipeline) with a Leak Detection System (LDS) as referred to in para. 6.43, and orders RDS to jointly pay MD et al. a penalty of € 100,000 for each day (part of a day counted as one day) that it does not comply with this order;
- rejects the additional or otherwise claimed;
- compensates for the costs of the proceedings in the first instance, so that everyone bears his own costs;
- rejects more or different claim (for the first time on appeal);
- compensates the costs of the proceedings on appeal, so that everyone bears his own costs
- determines that SPDC will bear the costs of the experts attributable to Case B amounting to € 22,420.09 and £ 8,500.00; and
- declares the judgment as enforceable as far as possible.

Thirteen years had passed by the time the Appeal Court on the 29th of January 2021 ruled in favour of three out of the four Nigerian farmers holding that Shell must compensate them for the damages caused by the oil spill pollution. The Court also held that Shell International has "duty of care" to ensure that their Nigerian subsidiary behaves responsibly in its operations. In the case of Ikot Ada Udoh, the Court asked for more details to figure out the extent of the pollution there.

The farmers involved, that is, Chief Fidelis Oguru and Mr Alali Efanga (plaintiffs/appellants in Cases A and B) are from Oruma, a village in Bayelsa State, Nigeria; Chief Barizaa Dooh (plaintiff/appellant in Cases C and D) is from Goi, a village in Rivers State while Elder Friday Alfred Akpan (plaintiff/appellant in Cases E and F) is from Ikot Ada Udo, a village in Akwa Ibom State, all in Nigeria. In a similar vein, on 12th February 2021, another lawsuit also brought against Shell was won by two other communities in Nigeria who were given the right to sue Shell in the United Kingdom for the environmental atrocities committed in the communities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF), on 23rd February 2021, hosted a Roundtable to unpack the implications of the judgements for the quest for environmental justice by the people of the Niger Delta. The meeting had participants including lawyers, law students, youths, members of Civil Society Organisations, representatives from host communities' network and the media.

The participants interrogated the judgements based on presentations by Barr Chima Williams (one of the lawyers for the four farmers/fishers), Comrade Celestine Akpobari (a frontline Ogoni environmentalist), and discussions lead by Rev David Ugolor with Emem Okon, a frontline environmental advocate in Niger Delta, as moderator.

The Roundtable observed that:

1. International Oil Companies (IOCs) use divide and rule tactics to cause crises in host communities while continuing to carry out their polluting extractive activities.
2. The judgements clarified that parent companies can be held accountable for ecological crimes committed by their subsidiaries - this which has restored hope to the communities.
3. The forum observed that IOCs have a general duty of care which mandates them to prevent further leaks as much as possible and limit the damage as a result of leaks from their facilities.
4. The unending pollution in the Niger Delta can be summed as blatant ecological and economic corruption, which leads to ecocide.
5. The United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) report has created a baseline for the environmental assessment of the entire Niger Delta region.
6. The judgement reflects the power of solidarity across communities in the Global South, highlighting the power of people united for a common cause.
7. No more hiding place for Shell and, by extension, other environment destroyers.
8. The forum further observed that international companies control the oil fields; thus, the majority shareholding by the Federal Government of Nigeria does not protect the people.

Following the observations, the following demands were made by the participants:

1. The Nigerian judiciary should strictly hold polluters to account on all rulings made with regard to socioeconomic and ecological harms in the Niger Delta.
2. Cases should be dispensed swiftly to ensure that plaintiffs see justice in their lifetime.
3. Oil companies should stop polluting the Niger Delta and should take immediate steps to clean up current and historical pollutions in the region.
4. The IOCs should adequately compensate individuals and communities affected by their environmental harm.
5. Shell should ensure that the four farmers' compensations are urgently negotiated and paid, and their environment properly cleaned up.
6. The government and Chevron should, as a matter of urgency, put out the rig fire burning at Ororo well 1, Oil Mining Lease (OML) 95 off the shores of Ondo State, which has been on for 9 months now.
7. There should be a meeting with the leadership of the National Assembly in order to analyze the details of the judgements and draw some strategic lessons from them.
8. Shell must install the leak detection system (LDS) to forestall further leakages into the environment.

The demands from the roundtable were signed by:

- African Network for Economic and Environmental Justice (ANEEJ)
- Environmental Rights Action /Friends of the Earth Nigeria
- Oilwatch International /OWN
- Ogoni Solidarity Network
- Host Community Network of Nigeria (HoCON)
- Kebtkache Women Development and Resource Centre
- Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF)

Ororo-1 Well Fire Continues Months After

Fire is still raging on the Ororo-1 Well, in shallow water Oil Mining Lease (OML) 95 in Ondo State, eight full months after a blowout occurred on 15 May 2020, on the Hydraulic Workover rig Grace-1 HWU contracted by Guarantee Petroleum (GP). According to an account from Africa Oil+Gas Report, the rig was involved in re-entry operations on the Ororo-1 Well, which GP had received a licence to operate in 2003. The re-entry operation began in October 2019. In the middle of the re-entry, between 6 and 7 April 2020, the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR), which is responsible for ensuring that the Oil and Gas sector comply with petroleum laws and regulations, was reported to have revoked GP's licence. Comments made by DPR to Africa Oil+Gas Report show that the Ororo-1 Well had challenges and that GP did not receive any consent from the Department for the re-entry operations.

DPR claims to have revoked the licence on 30 April 2019, while GP claims to have begun the re-entry processes in October 2019 and received a revocation order from DPR during the process. GP blamed the fire outbreak on the revocation order coupled with control challenges experienced in the rig in April 2020. "On hearing about the revocation order, specialists on well pressure amelioration and other service providers were discouraged from continuing their work in the well", GP had claimed.

Before the fire outbreak, the wellhead suddenly began to release a rush of hydrocarbon fluids from over-pressured reservoirs to the surface through a malfunctioning Blow Out Preventer (BOP) on the rig. But by 22 April 2020, the situation was reported to have stabilised as gas flow/leak was under control. GP claimed to have later written to DPR on 23 April 2020 to get approval to control the gas flow and fluid droplets from the wellhead but got no response. The DPR denied receiving any such letter.

After the fire outbreak on 15 May 2020, GP reported writing to the DPR for permission to use dispersants and other materials around the well and the environment to forestall loss of lives and increased pollution. GP also claims to have contacted Chevron (the operator of the OML 95) and Halliburton for assistance.

The DPR stated in Africa Oil+Gas Report that it did not deem it fit to respond to GP's request because the well which was awarded to it (i.e., GP) in 2003 had been

revoked since April 30 2019, which marked the expiration date of the granted extension for the commencement of field development and full production in the well.

GP in partnership with Owena won the Ororo field in the marginal field round of 2002/2003. However, they did not operate the field (for 17 years) until October 2019, when GP said it commenced re-entry. Prior to the re-entry, GP was listed among the marginal field operators who had failed in developing their fields years after they received the licence to operate the fields. The DPR planned to revoke GP's licence along with those of similar operators on 31 March 2015, but decided to give them more time, according to Africa Oil+Gas Report.

The Ororo Oil Field is one of the marginal oil fields awarded to interested and qualified oil and gas investors in the 2002/2003 marginal field round in Nigeria. Marginal oil fields are fields that were discovered by oil multinationals in the course of oil exploration on larger acreages in Nigeria. They are fields that the multinationals are not interested in bringing into production because they are considered uneconomic. The DPR defines them as fields that have remained undeveloped for more than 10 years but have reserves booked and reported to the Department yearly. The regulation of marginal fields in Nigeria comes under the Petroleum Amendment Act of 1996, which introduced paragraph 16A into the First Schedule to the Petroleum Act. According to paragraph 16A (1), "The holder of an oil mining lease may, with the consent of and on such terms and conditions as may be approved by the President, farm-out any marginal field which lies within it."

The term Farm-out explains an agreement between the holder of an oil mining lease and a third party which permits the third party to explore, prospect, win, work and carry away any petroleum encountered in a specified area within the time frame of the lease.

After the fire outbreak on 15 May 2020, GP reported writing to the DPR for permission to use dispersants and other materials around the well and the environment to forestall loss of lives and increased pollution

In another instance, paragraph 16A. (2) states that: "The President may cause the farm-out of a marginal field if the field has been left unattended for a period of not less than 10 years from the date of the first discovery of the marginal field."

Sometimes the ownership of marginal oil fields is in doubt, making it possible for responsibility to be attributed to different sources when an incident such as the Ororo-1 Well fire occurs. The ownership of marginal fields has been likened to a sub-lease having a head lease between the government as lessor and the OML holder as lessee on the one hand and a sub-lease between the OML holder as farmor and a marginal field holder as the farmee on the other hand. A lease is defined as a contract between parties which allows a party to hold possession of a land or part of it for a specified number of years. A sublease also grants an interest in land in accordance with the terms of the head lease. Also, in paragraph 16 of the First Schedule to the Petroleum Act, it is stated that: "As between the farmor and farmee, the farmor shall retain all ownership rights to the OML, and the rights, title and interest or estate of the Farmee shall be equivalent to those of a sub-lessee in accordance with the terms of this Agreement." If a field has been removed from the original OML, then the ownership of a marginal field may be vested in the farmee (see: details at https://www.mondaq.com/nigeria/oil-gas-electricity/591234/marginal-fileds-in-nigeria-who-owns-the-field).

In the case of Ororo-1 Well, the Nigerian Government, through the DPR, awarded GP the licence to operate the well. The DPR may then be seen as the lessor and GP as the lessee. However, since GP's licence to Ororo-1 Well has been revoked, the Nigerian Government becomes the

owner. This is why the DPR has taken the responsibility of handling the Ororo-1 Well fire.

The DPR, in May 2020, told Africa Oil+Gas Report that it would do all it could to extinguish the fire, including possibly drilling a relief well and engaging a Halliburton owned firm of well control specialists to put out the fire.

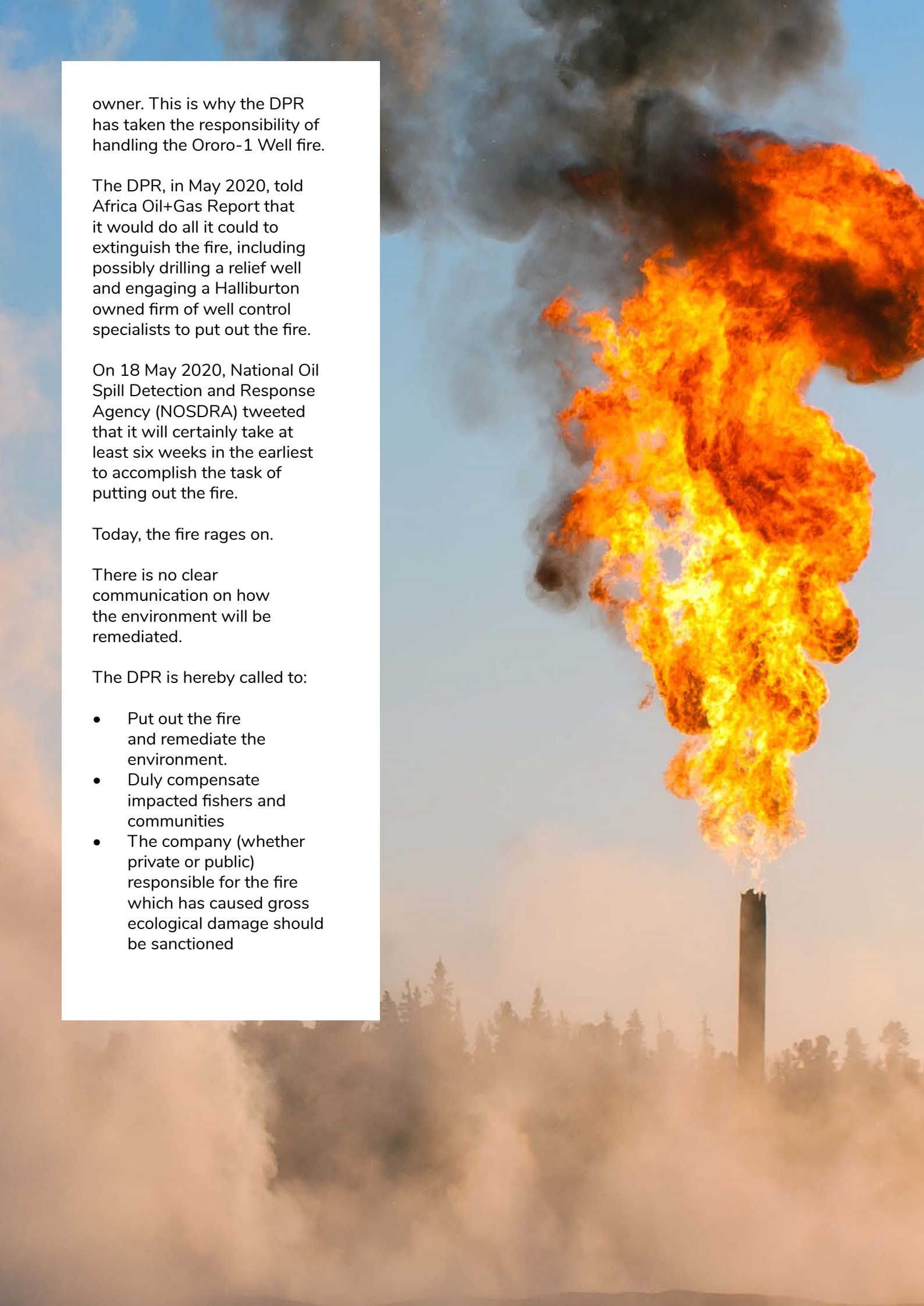
On 18 May 2020, National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA) tweeted that it will certainly take at least six weeks in the earliest to accomplish the task of putting out the fire.

Today, the fire rages on.

There is no clear communication on how the environment will be remediated.

The DPR is hereby called to:

- Put out the fire and remediate the environment.
- Duly compensate impacted fishers and communities
- The company (whether private or public) responsible for the fire which has caused gross ecological damage should be sanctioned



Floating Dead Fish in Odual Communities

Location: Ogboloma Community, Abual/Odual Local Government Area, Rivers State
A HOMEF Field Report: 18th December 2020

Over the past six decades, oil exploration in the Niger Delta has left community people in the region impoverished. This activity has rendered several Niger Delta people homeless, degraded their environment and deprived them of sources of livelihood. All these are due to massive levels of pollution emanating from oil spills, gas explosions, the release of harmful gases into the environment and the emptying of industrial wastewater into streams and rivers. These have resulted in the massive death of fish and aquatic organisms in coastal communities.

In recent times, there have been recurring reports of massive death of fish in coastal communities across Nigeria. In the first few months of 2020, massive deaths of fish were recorded in about four coastal states in Nigeria, namely, Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa Ibom and Delta. Although the causes of the deaths remain generally unknown, constant monitoring and investigations in the affected areas suggest that these deaths might be as a result of heavy pollutions from continuous oil extraction activities across the Niger Delta region. In December 2020, another incidence of the floating of dead fish on rivers was reported in Odual communities, a group of six coastal communities in Rivers State. This is similar to the dead fish incident which occurred in April 2020 in Bonny and Andoni Local Government Areas of Rivers State. Responding to the incident, the Commissioner for Environment, Egbis Tamuno, advised residents not to eat the dead fish to avoid poisoning.

Odual communities are in Abua/Odual LGA of Rivers State. The communities share a boundary with Bayelsa State. Although located in Rivers State, the only access road to the communities is through the neighbouring Bayelsa State, while the Abua axis of the LGA is accessible from Ahaoda just off the East-West road.

Ogboloma community is one of several coastal communities, like Adada, Ayun, Emelego, Okolomade and Akani, sharing the Saka creek, which empties into the Atlantic Ocean.

Floating Dead Fish in Ogboloma

Ogboloma is a relatively small community of about 2,000 people who are mostly farmers and fishers. A few of them are civil servants. The community, along with its neighbours, raised an alarm about dead fish floating on their creek. HOMEF monitors got information about the incident and paid the community a visit. The communities fear a possible outbreak of disease as most inhabitants rely on the water from the river for their daily needs. According to community members, different species of fish like the governor fish (Aghurugh), mudfish (obolo), floating fish (Oriim) and catfish (Obarh) were affected.

Testimonies

Omololi Amamine, a fisher and retired civil servant, narrated his ordeal: "for over 12 years since I returned to the community, I have been depending on the Ogboloma creek to take care of myself and family. I have never seen such a thing like this before."

He explained that they first noticed signs of dead fish before the flood that affected a greater part of their communities but felt it was just a case of a dead fish.

The fisher connected the death of the fish to the activities of the several oil companies on their waterways. According to him, the species of fish found dead include mudfish and catfish. "When we catch such fish, we cannot eat them as most of them are already rotten. Most of what we noticed about the fish is that many of them are either injured in their fins, head or tail. The flesh of the fish becomes hard." This incidence has really taken a toll on us as a fishing community, and we are calling on the government for immediate remediation," Amamine pleaded.

> **"I started seeing this dead fish floating for about two months now, and honestly, we have never seen anything like this before. In the past, I make money from my catch. Now, with this type that I have caught today, I can't make anything out of it; I have to throw them away."**

King Micah Igonieghel (the Paramount Ruler of Ogboloma Community) expressed shock at the dead fish incident. According to him, "I really don't understand what is happening on our waters. Since I got wind of this phenomenon, I have been thinking about what will be the likely cause of the marine pollution that is affecting fish in our rivers. My mind flashed back to before the floods. And I'm thinking that it could be due to the continuous oil explorations that have been carried out over the years by Shell's operations in OML 22. There is a possibility that in the cause of all that exploration over time, some form of radioactive/toxic substances would have washed into the rivers."

He stressed the possibility of the flood carrying the chemicals and mixing them up with the river water and of the chemical affecting the fish. The paramount ruler also observed that almost all communities where such oil exploration activities took place have also seen dead fish floating on their rivers. He explained that in the history of this kingdom, such incidence has never happened.

"I strongly believe that the radioactive/toxic materials are the source. I might be wrong, but it is important to note that such activity is dangerous to our environment. I am looking at the situation where we can get the water from the creek tested, and a sample of the dead fish checked to know the type of toxins that are in them. My people depend on the marine ecosystem for sustenance. The fish we catch there are for our consumption and also for business," King Micah stressed.

He added that some community people have trained their children to school from the Ogboloma creeks. The paramount ruler, however, expressed sadness because some of

his people, who are unaware of the looming health hazards, have been consuming the fish. "We just hope that this does not turn out to be an epidemic because the outcome will be too disastrous," King Igonieghel feared.

The fishers in the community are the ones that are mostly impacted as the fish are their main source of livelihood in the community. Explaining the impact of the incident, King Igonieghel stated that "We will now have to depend on imported fish (Iced Fish), and it's very expensive. While we are trying to do some investigation to unravel what has happened, we have told our people not to eat any of the fish for now until we are confident that it is safe enough for consumption.

Howbeit, our fishermen will now have to start looking for alternative sources of livelihood because for now, their sources of livelihood have been destroyed."

Mr Jimmy Orukari, another fisher from Odau who resides in Ogboloma community, narrated his experience: "I went out to fish today, but many of the fish that got into my net seem to have some ailment that I can't explain. I was able to get Akpanam (catfish), but it was already dead, and it's not looking healthy at all, so I'm not going to eat it. Initially, I had thought that if the fish was still a little alive when I get home, I could still dry it and use it. But now I can't use it because I don't know what killed the fish I caught without the use of chemical but with just my net."

"I started seeing this dead fish floating for about two months now, and honestly, we have never seen anything like this before. In the past, I make money from my catch. Now, with this type that I have caught today, I can't make anything out of it; I have to throw them away."

Conclusion

Coastal communities in the Niger Delta, despite their massive wealth in abundant natural resources, still depend on fishing and farming for their livelihoods. It is gradually becoming a regular occurrence in the Niger Delta to see dead fish floating on the waterways. In early 2020, a large number of dead fish were seen washed ashore on the coastline of the Niger Delta region. Obviously, the food chain of the majority of the dependants of the water is threatened as there is no clear understanding of the cause of this incidence. With such occurrences of dead fish becoming regular, a well-coordinated official investigation is needed urgently to ascertain the immediate and remote causes of the death of the identified species of fish to prevent reoccurrence.

Recommendations

1. The government should initiate an investigation into the incident as a major ecological disaster and ensure that the public is duly alerted on the found cause(s)
2. There should be adequate sensitization to raise the awareness of people, especially in the coastal communities, to ensure that the dead fish are not consumed or sold in view of possible health implications.
3. The true cause of the incidence should not be concealed but be revealed and addressed, and the perpetrators duly held liable for the ecological crime.
4. The government should urgently carry out health audit in affected coastline communities to ensure their health status and offer treatment as necessary in order to prevent an epidemic.
5. Fishers and community folks should promptly report future occurrences of similar incidents to relevant authorities and stakeholders.
6. The government should begin an immediate diversification of its resource and reduce its dependence on fossil fuel as it has been identified as a major cause of the deaths.

AGIP's Gas Pipeline Leaks in Emuoha, Rivers State

Location: Elibrada Community, Emohua LGA, Rivers State, Nigeria
Date of Visit: 08 January 2021
Report By: Ogechi Okanya Cookey and Tammy Cookey

It is very common to hear about oil spills, gas leaks or explosions and several kinds of environment-degrading incidents emanating from oil and gas installations in communities in the Niger Delta. There are scores of oil and gas pipelines, some underneath the lands and waters or on the lands where community people farm, fish and carry out other activities. Several of these pipelines are putrefied from old age and exposure to high humidity due to contact with mud and water.

More often than not, spills and leaks are left unattended until communities rise up. They are left to destroy farmlands, the aquatic ecosystem, drinking water, and so on.

When communities become aggrieved and act out, they are often repressed with officers of the Nigerian Armed Forces. Responses from oil and gas companies in the Niger Delta regarding incidences of gas and oil leaks have been anything but satisfactory. It has been a circle of delayed, inadequate and insincere responses, denial and shifting of blame from the oil and gas firms, which all claim to be practising sustainability.
Oil spills and gas leaks have continued unabated for over 50 years in the Niger Delta, and in 2021 they began quite early. On Wednesday, 6 January 2021, Elibrada, a community in Rivers State, experienced a gas leak that killed the vegetation around the area.

Elibrada Gas Leak
Elibrada is one of the eight communities in Emohua clan in Rivers State, Nigeria. On Wednesday, 6 January 2021, Elibrada experienced a gas leak from a pipeline belonging to a multinational oil and gas company. The incident, fortunately, did not lead to any death but has raised environmental concerns.
"Some community people own farmlands around the area of the gas leak," a member of the community complained.
The gas leak happened in the early hours of the morning, between 3 and 4am. While some community members believe that the leaking gas pipeline belonged to the Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas company (NLNG), others

believe that it belonged to Nigeria Agip Oil Company (NAOC). This confusion came up as both oil multinationals have their pipelines running on the same line. Dr Vincent Weli, an air pollution meteorologist and senior lecturer in the Department of Geography and Environmental Management, University of Port Harcourt, stated that "it was later discovered that the leaking pipe belonged to Agip."

An elder from the community, Ben Igbere, narrated his experience: "Around 3:56am on Wednesday, we heard a loud sound like a cannon gun, a deafening noise. The sound woke people from their sleep. People began to run helter-skelter as the noise continued. It was quite unusual."

A group of youths who shared their experience said that they heard a hissing noise at about 3am on Wednesday and that the noise was so piercing that they thought it was coming from right inside their residential area. The hissing noise is usually considered to be the sign of a major and severe gas leak. Apparently, this was the first time Elibrada community was encountering a gas leak from an oil and gas facility.

"Around 3:56am on Wednesday, we heard a loud sound like a cannon gun, a deafening noise. The sound woke people from their sleep. People began to run helter-skelter as the noise continued. It was quite unusual."

Clement Okogbule, an okada rider, in Elibrada informed that "The leak continued from the early hours of Wednesday morning till around 5-6pm before company officials came in to stop it."

Government and company officials reportedly visited the site on 7 and 8 January along with the community chief and youth chairman who joined the officials in the site inspection. Details of their visit are not yet known to members of the community. At the time of this report, no information about the gas leak had been placed on NLNG's website to let the public know whether or not the pipeline in question is theres.

A disturbing scenario surrounding the incident was narrated by Dr. Weli who expressed great concern. According to him, "A television broadcast of the incident was showing a trench that was dug together with a generator, suggesting sabotage. I tell you the truth, that pipe ruptured without anybody touching it. When I wanted to start taking measurements to do my report and get power of attorney from my community, I was also informed that (on the site of the pipeline) there was a trench that was dug with what looked like equipment that was used to rupture the pipe and that phones and other things were found. This got me confused. It was later I got information that this was what the companies do when such things happen. They want to create a scene of sabotage."
It is no longer news that sabotage is the best plea and play of oil and gas multinationals, especially those operating in the Niger Delta, against the environmental havoc caused by their operations.

The gas leak incident has left Elibrada community members with a sense of insecurity as they are reminded of the constant danger that host communities to oil and gas installations are exposed to on a daily basis. According to Ben Igbere, "this is why it is good for communities that are close to gas pipelines to always be a concern [be cared for] to government as well as oil and gas companies. This will enable the government and company to think out compensation plans." "Nobody knew that such an incident would happen," he concluded.

The exact cause of the gas leak is not yet known. Some recorded causes of a gas leak include faulty equipment and wells that are poorly prepared. It is the hope of the

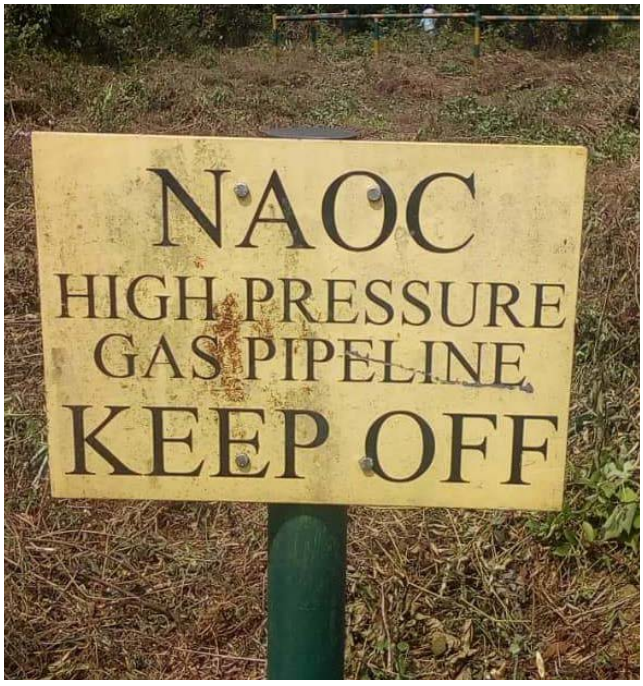
community members that efforts will be made to prevent a repeat of the incident.

The presence of several flammable and toxic gases make gas leak in the facility of an oil and gas company dangerous. Some of these gases include methane and Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC), which are detrimental to the atmosphere and exacerbate climate change. According to research, those around a gas leak site may experience illnesses with physical symptoms such as breathing problems, dizziness, headaches, feelings of nausea, light-headedness and fatigue. The possibility of community members experiencing these symptoms cannot be ruled out as, even after the leak, some community people were not scared of going into the area of the leak without protective coverings.

Recommendations

1. Investigations should be carried out to ascertain the exact cause(s) of the gas leak and adequate actions taken to ensure non-reoccurrence.
2. Community members should be given adequate education concerning safety measures that must be adhered to when gas leaks and related incidents occur.
3. Adequate compensations should be paid to community members whose farmlands were affected by the gas leaks, and procedures should be put in place to ensure that their farmlands remain fertile.

The exact cause of the gas leak is not yet known. Some recorded causes of a gas leak include faulty equipment and wells that are poorly prepared. It is the hope of the community members that efforts will be made to prevent a repeat of the incident.



Extinction Rebellion and Fridays for Future: New Entrants in the Climate Movement

BY SONALI NARANG

Photo: Markus Spiske.

The climate movement is the collection of non-governmental organisations engaged in activism related to the issues of climate change. It is a subset of the broader environmental movement, but some regard it as a new social movement given its scope, strength and activities. The 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, was the first United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) summit in which the climate movement started showing its mobilization power on a large scale. Between 40,000 to 100,000 people attended a march in Copenhagen on 12 December 2009, calling for a global agreement on climate.

The activism went beyond Copenhagen, with more than 5,400 rallies and demonstrations taking place around the world simultaneously. The climate movement convened its largest single event on 21 September 2014, when it mobilized 400,000 activists in New York (plus several thousands more in other cities) during the People's Climate March. The March was organised by the People's Climate Movement to demand climate action from the global leaders gathered for the 2014 UN Climate Summit. The climate movement is closely connected to other parts of the environmental movement, in particular groups aiming for a sustainable society and sustainable energy. With this movement, new youth international organisations have emerged to join the climate change movement, such as Extinction Rebellion and Fridays for Future.

Extinction Rebellion

Extinction Rebellion (XR) is a global environmental movement with the aim of using nonviolent civil disobedience to compel government action to avoid tipping points in the climate system, biodiversity loss, and the risk of social and ecological collapse. Extinction Rebellion was officially established in the United Kingdom in May 2018, with about one hundred academics signing a call to action in its support in October 2018. It aims to persuade governments to act justly and expeditiously on the climate and ecological emergency. It had then declared that we only have 12 years to stop catastrophic climate change and our understanding that we have entered the 6th mass extinction event.

The movement now has a presence in 75 countries, including India. The group has “three core demands” for governments around the world. It wants governments to “Tell the Truth”, to “Act Now”, and to “Go Beyond Politics” in order to confront the climate and ecological emergency that the world is faced with. It wants governments to communicate the urgency to bring change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net-zero by 2025. XR seeks to “rebel” and asks groups to “self-organise” without anyone’s permission and to come up with collective action plans as long as they adhere to the group’s core principles and values.

Fridays for Future

The school strike for climate, also variously known as Fridays for Future (FFF), Youth for Climate, Climate Strike or Youth Strike for Climate, is an international movement of school students who skip Friday classes. They do this so as to participate in demonstrations to demand that political leaders take urgent action to prevent climate change and for the fossil fuel industry to transition to renewable energy. From Jakarta to New York City, children and teenagers are walking out of class and marching in the streets to demand action on climate change. And the world is taking notice. Communications experts say these young climate activists are using their moral authority as children, and their social media savviness, to surf a rising tide of adult concern. An estimated 1.6 million kids in 125 countries hit the streets during a protest in mid-March 2019. And a youth-led demonstration planned worldwide for 20 September 2019 was the largest climate protest ever. Dana Fisher, a sociologist at the University of Maryland in College Park who studies activism, said that young people have been talking about climate change for decades, but the latest generation of protestors is louder and more coordinated than its predecessors. She further added that “Young people are getting so much attention that it draws more young people into the movement.”

> If elected officials fail to act, we can expect these young people to adopt more disruptive tactics and do the work on the ground to elect new leaders. Even if they cannot yet vote themselves, there are many ways they can—and will continue to—shape our politics and our future.

Photo: https://fridaysforfuture.org

#NoMoreEmptyPromises

In the first month of 2021, strikes, demonstrations and protests continued across the globe, with protesters demanding more decisive actions to tackle climate change. Activists and concerned citizens continue online campaigns and protests on the streets while keeping physical distant due to the coronavirus pandemic. Fridays for Future on 13 January 2021 announced the upcoming Global Climate Strike for March 19, 2021. Youth organisers from Fridays for Future chapters all across the world will be planning local marches for that day and, presumably,

some digital strikes, as well. #NoMoreEmptyPromises is the theme/hashtag for the upcoming strike. “Those in power continue to only deliver vague and empty promises for far off dates that are much too late,” reads a statement on Fridays for Future’s website.

According to the organisation, the goal of the planned strike is to demand world leaders to swiftly implement science-based, short-term climate targets that address justice and equity as part of the climate crisis. Part of what they want to highlight in the coming strike is the urgency of immediate action in the face of the weather- and climate-related disasters that have devastated various countries last year - from the wildfires that afflicted parts of Australia, North America and Latin America, to the droughts in Africa, to the storms that devastated Central America and Southeast Asia. The climate strikes are an example of youth becoming more politically alert, rejecting adult inaction and demanding more from governments.

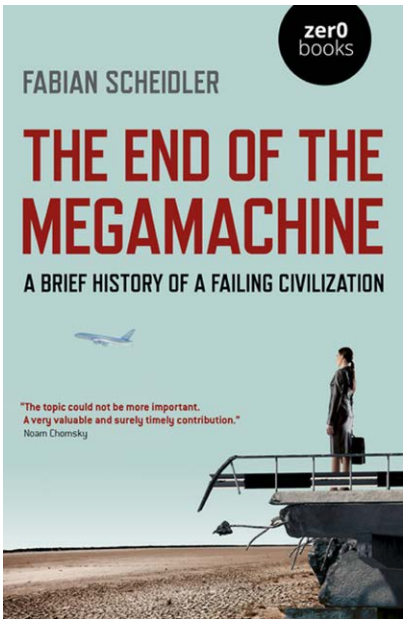
Conclusion

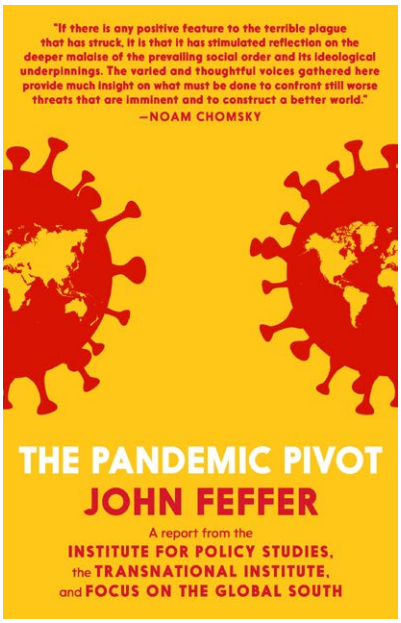
Climate activists, environmental protesters and concerned citizens raise awareness on issues related to climate change and the environment on social media and around the world. For over two years now, youth climate activists from around the world have been striking and taking to the streets to demand climate justice. Now, with the COVID-19 pandemic, the actions will be taking on different forms in different places, but their call for #NoMoreEmptyPromises is uniting people beyond borders under the same goal of immediate climate change resistance movement. Mitzi Jonelle Tan from the Philippines is of the view that if we do not act now, we will not even have the chance to deliver on those 2030, 2050 targets that world leaders keep on talking about. “What we need now are not empty promises, but annual binding carbon targets and immediate cuts in emissions in all sectors of our economy,” Tan implores. When governments resist reasonable requests, decades of social movements teach us that the number of activists escalates. We can look at the histories of the HIV/AIDS movement, the Civil Rights movement, African liberation struggles and “poor people’s movements,” which show us that when people get driven up the wall, they turn up the pressure. If elected officials fail to act, we can expect these young people to adopt more disruptive tactics and do the work on the ground to elect new leaders. Even if they cannot yet vote themselves, there are many ways they can—and will continue to—shape our politics and our future.

Photo: https://fridaysforfuture.org

Dr Sonali Narang is a climate change researcher in India (Email snarang68@gmail.com).

Books You Should Read





The End of the Megamachine: A Brief History of a Failing Civilization

by Fabian Scheidler

The book The End of the Megamachine: A Brief History of a Failing Civilization by Fabian Scheidler is a loud alarm that must not be ignored. It offers great insights into the growing instability and looming collapse of the Megamachine in the 21st century, showcasing the dangers as well as new possibilities for systemic change that open up. The book exposes the roots of the destructive forces threatening the future of humankind today. The first part of the book tells the origins of economic, military and ideological power 5000 years ago. The second and key part of the book retraces the formation and expansion of the modern world system over the last 500 years. The author dismantles Western progress mythologies and shows how the logic of endless capital accumulation has devastated both human societies and ecosystems from the outset. The book is a paradigm shift from a history of the winners to a people's history. It is a must-read for any people-oriented person and change agent.

The Pandemic Pivot

by John Feffer

The Pandemic Pivot is a report from the Institute for Policy Studies, the Transnational Institute, and Focus on the Global South written by John Feffer. It is both a sobering analysis of the present moment and a hopeful cry on behalf of the power inherent in a global, people-oriented response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the societal breakdown that led to it. The report offers insights into and an actionable frame¬work for a just transition to a regen¬erative, anti-racist, feminist economy. It demonstrates that equity and cooperation are not merely nice principles but survival strategies. Reading The Pandemic Pivot will propel a return to sanity and humane gov¬ernance, and illuminate the way forward that is still possible if we begin soon.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Food Policy Dialogue /Advocacy

Abuja, 24 March 2021

School of Ecology - Environmental Justice

6-7 April 2021

Biosafety Conference and Rally

Abuja, 13-14 April 2021

Dialogue with Students

Abakaliki, 21 April 2021

Community/Stilt Roots Dialogues

Uyo & Bundu, Port Harcourt - 20-24 April 2021

Conversations on Ecocide

25 May 2021

Always visit **www.homef.org** for upcoming events and how to participate.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

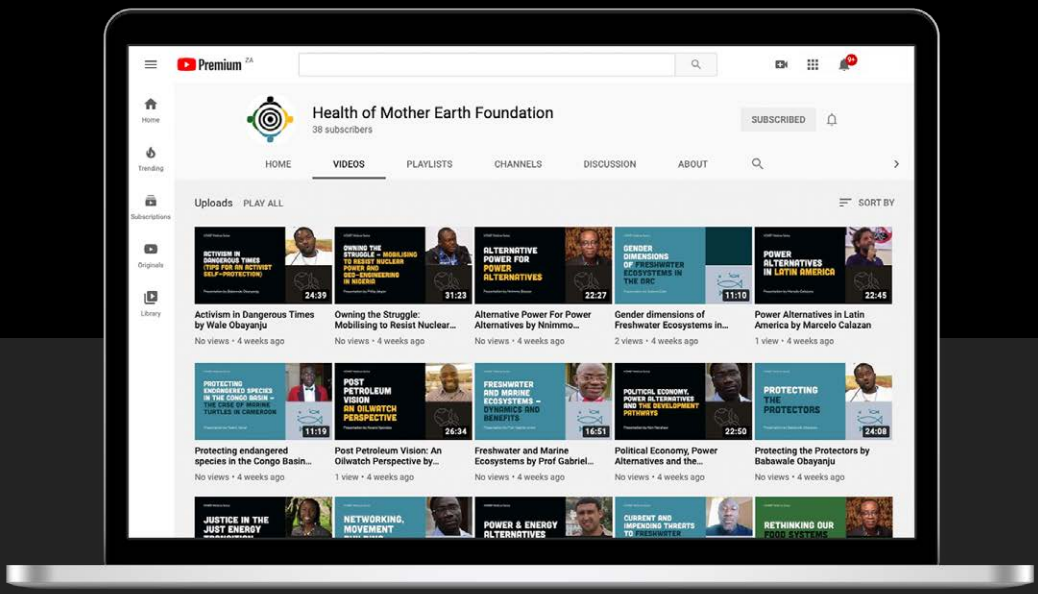
LOOKING TO HELP?

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

volunteers@homef.org

HOMEF CONVERSATIONS

The HOMEF Webinar series explores the areas of Climate Change, Food Systems, Fresh Water Ecosystem and other Socio-Ecological issues.



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