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ISSUE #36 - JUNE 2022

INSTIGATOR

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF HEALTH OF MOTHER EARTH FOUNDATION



Learning
for Change

Niger Delta, Neglect
and Divestment

Learning
from a King

Reject Seed
Colonialism in Africa

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Upcoming Activities

Home Run



Welcome to the 36th edition of our quarterly magazine – eco-Instigator. This is one of the vehicles by which HOMEf steers the wheels of change she seeks. This edition is packed with educative, informative and inspiring articles and reports that should instigate positive actions for the good of planet Earth and the wellbeing of peoples.

While there have been calls in Nigeria from concerned citizens and CSOs for a ban on genetic modification of crops, a different twist has just been added to the GMO equation: there are plans to send in genetically improved Tilapia fish (GIFT). We raise a warning that this could open the door for a full-scale invasion of the food system with species of doubtful value.

In this edition, we serve you a report from environmental monitoring training with frontline communities fighting against pollution by oil and gas companies, as well as a report from our exciting intergenerational dialogue – Learning from the Wise.

As more groups are exploring the power of storytelling through visual arts. We share a report from Fishers' Tale Exhibition held in South Africa to reflect the magnificent tales that fishers enjoy talking about their ocean adventures.

As usual, we bring you instigative and resonating poems and suggestions of good reads – the books you should read. And as you read this edition, remember to drop us a line or share feedback, stories, articles, poems, and photos at home@homef.org. We look forward to hearing from you.

Until Victory!
Nnimmo Bassey

NIGER DELTA, NEGLECT AND DIVESTMENT

NNIMMO BASSEY

The reason why persons or corporations make investments is dependent on the expected or desired outcomes. The same can be said of why investors divest. Investments are predominantly made for profit. For instance, a corporation would estimate how much profit would accrue, in financial terms or material gains, and over what period, for an investment that has been or will be made. In other instances, investments may be made for humanitarian, not-for-profit reasons or for desired social change. Whether for profit or for altruistic ends, investments are made with gains in mind.

Investments are not made carelessly or at whim. Investors carry out detailed studies or assessments of the objective conditions surrounding the issues at hand to put their resources in areas where they expect the best outcomes. Controls and regulations are established by governments or other relevant authorities to ensure that the pursuit of profit does not expose citizens and the environment to unacceptable levels of harm.

It is for this reason that the idea of sustainable development emerged to moderate the inclination of those pursuing the transformation of Nature for profit without consideration of long-term socio-ecological implications – in order to stop them from doing so. It is also for this reason that proponents of physical development projects are required to carry out environmental, social-economic, and other impact assessments before embarking on such projects.

Assessments or studies carried out before projects or investments are approved are site-specific, and studies done elsewhere cannot be applied in an entirely different location simply because investors or regulators assume there would be similar conditions or outcomes. The point to note here is that some tangible and intangible conditions could differ even where demographics and geographies appear similar. To ensure that such peculiarities are not blindsided, the people living in locations where investors, governments or institutions wish to carry out projects/activities must not only be consulted but must be part of the assessment processes. It is one way by which communities can provide informed consent for investment or development projects to be carried out in their territories.

The situation in the Niger Delta over the years has largely been one of wilful neglect and refusal to consult or engage the people in decision-making processes regarding investments, development, or even infrastructural projects. Projects are often thrown at communities even when they are not the priority needs of the people. Little wonder that the projects get abandoned during construction or are left to rot after completion.



Image by Kristina Kasputien// Pixabay

The most worrisome case is that of the extraction of resources from the Niger Delta. The concerns have remained the same from pre-colonial to colonial and present neocolonial eras. There are historic records of kings and leaders in the Niger Delta who were exiled or killed in the pre-colonial days for insisting on their right to have a say on trade, cultural observances or decision-making in their territories. The burning of Akassa in 1895 by the British Navy over the control of trade issues remains a clear example of such infractions.

Crude oil development and the installation of industrial infrastructure in the Niger Delta were carried out without consultations with the people. Community gatherings organized by the transnational oil companies and their colonial governments were mostly moments for selling dreams of developmental progress that would happen once the wells began to spurt. Some of such events saw the showing of moving pictures of shiny cars, houses, schools and hospitals and nothing of the environmental impacts that would occur in their communities. It did not take long

for the dreams to burst and for the gory realities that prevail to this date to manifest.

Efforts to bandage the massive harms inflicted on the Niger Delta have been carried out through various means, including the oil company-driven Memoranda of Understanding with communities, and various government interventions through agencies such as Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB) established in 1961, the Niger Delta Basin and Rural Development Authority (NDBRDA) established in 1976, the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) established in 1992, the Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF) in 1995, Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) established in 2000 and the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs created in 2008.

These bandages seek to cover up festering wounds, without dealing with the fundamental ailments that, over six decades of disastrous exploitation, have beleaguered the region.

At a global level, foils used by the fossil fuel industry to obscure the fact that they are the major drivers of climate change have now been torn to shreds. The world is on the brink of irreversible climatic chaos unless urgent shifts are made in investments in the fossil fuels sector. However, the industry has so captured government structures around the world that climate negotiations hardly refer to this prime cause of the threat, and governments tend to believe that more investments are needed in the sector to develop safer energy options. Such oxymoronic arguments are simply mind-boggling.

The crisis in the Niger Delta continues to build up. With the region's lands, water, and air polluted and the region ranking among the top ten most contaminated places on earth, these bandages no longer suffice to cover the ecological crimes. Making matters worse are the frequent oil spills that are futilely blamed on third party interferences even when the rotten state of the facilities and poor oil field practices are obvious. Recall the AITEO oil well blowout at Oil Mining Lease (OML) 29 that spewed hydrocarbons into the Santa Barbara River at Nembe over a period of six weeks starting from 1st November 2021.

Recall the decrepit Trinity Spirit FSP0 that recently burst into flames off the coast of Delta and Ondo States. Do not forget the oil well blowout and fire that has been raging at Ororo-1 oil field (OML 95) off the coast of Ondo State since May 2020 with no discernible efforts to stop the disaster. Between 2018 and 2019 the National Oil Spills Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA) of Nigeria recorded 1,300 oil spills, averaging 5 per day. Add to these, the unmitigated disaster related to bush refineries in the region – a clear outcome of regulatory failures by the state and a lack of duty of care by the corporations.

Today the Niger Delta has over 1,481 wells and 275 flow stations, over 7,000 kilometres length of oil/gas pipelines and over 120 gas flare furnaces. The Niger Delta is an exploding ecological bomb, and citizens and the environment have since been sacrificed. Years of agitation for legislations that speak to the problems of the petroleum sector, the environment and the communities eventually yielded the Petroleum Industry Act (2021) which still leaves the communities in the

lurch regarding economic benefits and environmental protection while pandering to the desires of oil corporations.

The current drive by oil companies such as Shell and ExxonMobil to divest from onshore and shallow-water oil fields or even to leave completely brings up very serious issues. If oil companies drilled the Niger Delta without consulting the people, leaving the region without as much as informing the communities, represents an unacceptable closing of the loop of utterly irresponsible exploitation. In the ongoing confusion over whether ExxonMobil's agreement to sell its assets /shares to Seplat stands or if the NNPC can take over those assets, there is no talk about what the communities think or desire.

“ The world is on the
brink of irreversible
climatic chaos
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investments in the
fossil fuels sector.”

Communities must rise to demand that oil companies be held to account for historical and present harms inflicted on the environment and the people. They equally must decommission their rotten installations, pay for health and ecological audits, and equally pay for the clean-up and re-mediation of the entire region.

This is the conversation we must have - now!

RESISTING GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOODS (GMOS) IN NIGERIA THROUGH THE COURT.

Dieworimene Koikoibo

As the world is allegedly faced with hunger, “developing” countries are increasingly faced with the pressure to resort to biotechnology for solutions.



This rapidly advancing science, which involves the wilful alteration of the genetic traits of a living element of the ecosystem and the relationship of living organisms that rely on each other for their survival, raises a tangle of ethical, environmental, social and health concerns. Thus, legislation on this area requires a careful working and strong, democratic foundation. Nigeria's principal legislation on the area, the National Biosafety Management Act (2015), has, however, been widely criticized, and resisted, even in court, for not having such a careful working or strong, democratic foundation.

This article attempts a review of the ruling in *HOMEF & 16 Ors. v. NBMA & 5 Ors* delivered on Wednesday, the 15th day of August 2018 before His Lordship, Hon. Justice A. R. Mohammed (Judge). The suit was instituted to resist some of the subsisting permits (about 19) for importation, processing, commercialization or field trial of various GMOs in Nigeria despite their scientific uncertainties and associated risks.

THE CASE OF HOMEF & 16 ORS. V. NBMA & 5 ORS.

This suit (Unreported Suit No: FHC/ABJ/C5/846/2017) was instituted as a public interest action by Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF) alongside 16 others to challenge the permits granted for the purpose of the commercial release of BT COTTON (MaN 15985) and for confined Field Trial with (1) NK603 and (2) MON89034 X NK603 maize in Nigeria. The Defendants (in the order in which they appear on the suit) were the National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA), the Hon. Minister of Environment, Monsanto Agricultural Nigeria Limited, National Biotechnology Development Agency (NBDA), the Attorney General of the Federation, and the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC).

The Plaintiff asked for five (5) reliefs. First, "a declaration that the 1st Defendant did not comply with the provisions of the National Biosafety Management Agency Act in granting the permits". Second, "a declaration that the issuance of the said permits on the 1st of May 2016 which happens to be a public holiday being Sunday and Workers Day is illegal, null and void". Third, "a declaration that the procedure and issuance of the permits constitutes a breach of and a threat to the fundamental human rights of the general public as enshrined in Section 33, 34, 36 and 39 of the 1999 Constitution of Nigerian as amended 2011". Fourth, "an Order of perpetual injunction restraining the 3rd Defendant and 4th Defendant by themselves, their agents, servants, workmen or otherwise whatsoever from carrying out any activity or further activities pursuant to the permits granted by the 1st Defendant" and lastly, "an order revoking the permits granted by the 1st Defendant to the 3rd and 4th Defendants/Respondents".

Unfortunately, the court, upon preliminary objection urged upon it by the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Defendants, held that the suit was statute-barred by section 2(a) of the Public Officers Protection Act, which is intended to shield public officers from litigation beyond three months of the occurrence of the cause of action, as long as the wrong was committed in the course of performing official functions. Section 2(a) of the Public Officers Protection Act provides that:

The action, prosecution or proceeding shall not lie or be instituted unless it is commenced within three months next after the acts, neglect, or default complained of, or in case of continuance of damage or injury, within three months next after the ceasing thereof.

This was despite that the Plaintiffs' counsel in his reply to the argument on limitation statute had cited the provision of Order 3 of the Fundamental Rights Enforcement Procedure Rules, 2009, where it is provided that Fundamental Right application shall not be affected by limitation statute, and urged the court to hold that the suit was not statute-barred. For the benefit of the doubt, the said Order 3 provides that: "An Application for the enforcement of Fundamental Rights shall not be affected by ANY limitation Statute whatsoever." This provision is as clear as the waters of the Niger Delta before they became oil-polluted that the suit was struck out in error. Surprisingly, the court discountenanced this argument, stating that:

As submitted rightly in my view by the learned senior counsel for the 3rd Defendant, order 3 of the Fundamental Rights Enforcement Procedure Rules, 2009 will apply only when it is an application for enforcement of fundamental rights initiated pursuant to or under the Fundamental Rights Enforcement Procedure Rules, 2009. I find the provision of Order 1 Rule 2 of the Fundamental Rights Enforcement Procedure Rules, 2009 very instructive on the point (Per Justice A. R. Mohammed, at p. 27, Certified True Copy (CTC) of the Ruling).

COMMENTS ON THE RULING

With deference to superior argument, I disagree with the above views of the court on the question of the applicability of Order 3 of the Rules to this case. It is submitted that by virtue of Order 1(2) of the Fundamental Rights Enforcement Procedure Rules, 2009, an application means, "An application brought pursuant to these Rules by or on behalf of any person to enforce or secure the enforcement of his

fundamental rights". Also, Fundamental Right means, "Any of the Rights provided for in Chapter IV of the Constitution and includes any of the rights stipulated in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Ratification and Enforcement) Act" under the Rules. More importantly, Order 2(2) unambiguously provides that "An application for the enforcement of the Fundamental Right may be made by any originating process accepted by the Court, which shall, subject to the provision of these Rules, lie without leave of Court."

As stated from the outset, the present suit under review was brought via an Originating Summons; an originating process acceptable to Nigerian courts, and sought for, amongst others, the enforcement of the fundamental human rights of the general public as enshrined in Section 33, 34, 36 and 39 of the 1999 Constitution of Nigerian as amended 2011. This clearly brings it within the ambit and in compliance with Order 1 and 2(2) of the Fundamental Rights Enforcement Procedure Rules, 2009 and, therefore, ought to have enjoyed the benefit under Order 3 of the same Rules. In the light of the above, it is rather difficult to decipher what exactly his lordship meant by "Order 3 of the Fundamental Rights Enforcement Procedure Rules, 2009 will apply only when it is an application for enforcement of fundamental rights initiated pursuant to or under the Fundamental Rights Enforcement Procedure Rules, 2009". However, the court in striking out the suit also stated thus:

The Plaintiff's action was instituted more than a year after the cause of action accrued and in clear violation of the Public Officers Protection Act. Having so found, my hands are tied and cannot therefore countenance the principal reliefs of the Plaintiffs, that is, reliefs one and two. As a corollary to the above, since I cannot countenance the principal reliefs by virtue of being statute barred, I equally cannot entertain reliefs three to five, which are ancillary to and revolve around the principal reliefs (At p.27, CTC of the Ruling).

It is from the above dictum that it is discovered that the court prevented itself from assuming jurisdiction by avoidably tying its hands with what E.S. Nwauche had termed



“the dubious distinction between principal and accessory claims”. The principle which states that the Nigerian courts will not entertain an action for the enforcement of a fundamental human right contained in chapter 4 of the 1999 Constitution through the Fundamental Human Rights (Enforcement Procedure) Rules unless it is the principal claim, arises from a continual misconstruction of the decision in *Tukur v Government of Gongola State (Tukur I)* (1989) 4 NWLR (pt 117) 517, which is by now a rather long line of cases.

The fact that the Supreme Court in *Tukur I* did not establish a distinction between principal and accessory claims was succinctly captured in the dictum of Oputa JSC in that case:

... the complaint of the appellant is that he was deposed as an Emir without first hearing him. No one doubts that given those facts he cannot sue for the reliefs he is now claiming. His only hurdle is that his deposition as an Emir is a Chieftaincy Question. And such questions do not pertain to the revenue of the Federal Government or to taxation, customs and excise, banking or foreign exchange - being issues over which the Federal High Court was granted civil jurisdiction by section 7 of Act No 13 of 1973 (*Tukur I*, at p.564).

In the case under review, the underlying issue was not whether the Federal High Court was the right forum to institute matters on the administration of the National Biosafety Management Agency Act and the enforcement of Fundamental Rights of the Plaintiffs against the Defendants. If this was the question and the court had found that the Federal High Court was not the appropriate forum, the appropriate but discretionary order would have been to transfer the case to a State High Court or the Division of the Federal High Court administratively responsible for the State where the breach may have occurred, was occurring or was likely to occur. See Section 22 of the Federal High Court Act; see also Order II Rule 1 of the FREP Rules 2009.

Also, in the author’s humble opinion, there is no real distinction between reliefs 1 and 2 and reliefs 3 to 5. There is no way one can successfully complain of his Fundamental Right being threatened without citing the circumstances in which the right is being threatened, and vice versa, especially considering that an application for the enforcement of fundamental rights may be made under the Rules even where the said right is only likely to be violated. See Section 46 (1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic as amended 2011.

In this case, the Plaintiff alleged that the Fundamental Rights of the general public were under threat by the 1st Defendant's arbitrary act of granting permits for the controversial GMOs. The issues are interrelated.

In another breath, the court should have considered the seriousness of the issue and the judicial trends of the world. To cite an instance, in the Filipino case of *Greenpeace Southeast Asia (Philippines) v. Environmental Management Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources* (CA-G.R. SP NO. 00013 (May 17, 2013)), the petitioners alleged that government ministries violated biosafety protocols, particularly Administrative Order 8 and the National Biosafety Framework of the Philippines in that they failed to conduct any valid risk assessment for field trials and feasibility studies of genetically modified organisms, specifically talong (eggplant) before issuing the Biosafety Permit for Field Trials. In addition, the petitioners claimed that such failure was a violation of their constitutional and environmental right, as well as of the Filipino people, to a balanced and healthful ecology, as well as a violation of the precautionary principle. In considering the questions, the Filipino court explained:

In the instant case, the field trials of bt talong involve the willful and deliberate alteration of the genetic traits of a living element of the ecosystem and the relationship of living organisms that rely on each other for their survival. Consequently, the field trials of bt talong could not be declared by this Court as safe to human health and to our ecology, with full scientific certainty, being an alteration of an otherwise natural state of affairs in our ecology (At 22-23 of the Certified True Copy (CTC) of the Decision)

Thus, the Court directed the respondents to: 1) permanently cease and desist from further conducting bt talong field trials; and 2) protect, preserve, rehabilitate and restore the environment. In fact, in a latter case, *International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Bio-tech Applications, Inc. v. Greenpeace Southeast Asia (Philippines)* (G.R. Nos. 209271, 209276, 209301 &

209430 (December 8, 2015)), the Supreme Court of the Philippines applied the precautionary principle and permanently banned field trials of genetically modified crops, including bt talong (eggplant) until a new administrative order on biosafety is adopted.

Although the procedural questions in the Filipino case cited above were not on all fours with HOMEF's case, it is the author's humble view that, if the judge in the present case under review had considered the questions and reliefs with an inclusive and liberal approach, such as was done by the Filipino courts, he would have found it easy to assume jurisdiction, especially since, as argued above, Order 3 of the Fundamental Rights Enforcement Procedure Rules, being an enactment with a constitutional flavour (for example, *Abia State University v. Anyaibe* (1996) 3 NWLR (Pt. 439) 646) supersedes the limitation contained in section 2(a) of the Public Officers Protection Act. But it has gone as the court pleases. It is comforting and reassuring to learn that HOMEF has since filed another action challenging the granting of the permits.

In summary, Nigeria's National Biosafety Management Act, 2015 is anti-people and has a general tenor of GMO permissiveness. Thus, we have a disappointing situation where the Nigerian Government is permitting GMOs despite that their scientific uncertainties and risks overwhelm their touted gains, and without affording the Nigerian people ample opportunity to have a say in the acceptance of a particular GMO through wide public participation. This confirms that the Act was drafted in a hurry and without careful work.

Considering Nigeria's socio-economic system, where a huge percentage of the population remain illiterate or do not bother to read labels on food items (where there are labels), people may have consumed toxic GMOs without even knowing it.

More heartbreakingly, the court, which is regarded as the hope of common Nigerians and could prevent the arbitrary administration of the NBMA Act, would rather prevent itself from saving the day in the name of an illusory distinction between principal and ancillary claims. Even though the above Filipino cases are merely persuasive before our courts, it is urged that Nigerian courts borrow a leaf from them.

“

WE WILL LEARN HOW TO ASK QUESTIONS AND FIND ANSWERS. IT IS ALSO AN AVENUE TO ESTABLISH RELATIONSHIPS AND NETWORKS FOR RESISTANCE. OUR STRUGGLE IS CONNECTED—WE FACE THE SAME PROBLEMS WITH RESPECT TO THE EFFECTS OF OIL AND GAS EXPLOITATION. SO, WE WANT TO TRAIN OURSELVES ON HOW TO ‘SHINE OUR EYES’ AND LEARN, WITH WHAT AND HOW BEST TO CONFRONT THE POLLUTERS.”

COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING TRAINING

IWHEREKAN AND EKPETIAMA

Health of Mother Earth Foundation organized yet another Community Environmental Monitoring Training event for the grassroots and resourced communities, with a view to equipping community folks with the much-needed skills on environmental monitoring and on community action. The event saw the attendance of over a hundred people, including farmers and fishers from Iwherekan community in Delta and Ekpetiama Kingdom in Bayelsa State.

In his brief but weighty remarks, Nnimmo Bassey iterated that the event was organized because there is a critical need to produce eco-defenders: community people who are convinced that our lives are tied to the environment just like our culture. “This is important because if someone is attacking your environment, he is directly attacking you,” he said.

“We will learn how to ask questions and find answers. It is also an avenue to establish relationships and networks for resistance. Our struggle is connected—we face the same problems with respect to the effects of oil and gas exploitation. So, we want to train ourselves on how to ‘shine our eyes’ and learn, with what and how best to confront the polluters.”

Morris Alagoa, the ace field monitor with Environmental Rights Action (ERA—Friends of the Earth, Nigeria), in his charge to the participants,



reminded the community folks that they have the right to a healthy and satisfactory environment, which was affirmed in Gbemre’s case against Shell. He said this while referring to section 24 of the African Charter. “Since we have the right to a satisfactory environment, why should we stand by and let outsiders come to pollute our environment? It is for the purpose of defending [our environment] that groups are coming together and have been putting up programs like this to build networks to resist [the invaders],” he said.

He also said, “Facts are sacred. And

our activism is evidence-based. Don’t tell us lies when acting as a monitor. We ask others to confirm and also listen to the environment.

“Don’t lie and spoil a good case for us. The more you develop an interest in it, the more your body will establish a bond with the environment. Don’t exaggerate. Know the facts, only then can you speak boldly,” he concluded.

Ken Henshaw, an astute environmental justice campaigner, remarked that in the course of his visits to and research on several host communities across the Niger Delta, he found these communities were unanimous on the impacts of oil exploration.



“Your opponents are the same just as your challenges are. So why shouldn’t your fight be the same since your challenges are the same?” he asked rhetorically.

He then went on to speak on the Petroleum Industry Act, highlighting its red flags with regard to host

communities, as well as commenting on the ongoing divestment drive of oil companies such as Shell and Exxon.

Noting that it amounts to sheer wickedness for these companies to leave their mess behind. He argued that they must first cleanup and restore the degraded communities and ecosystems.

Thereafter, Cadmus Atake, HOMEf's Fossil Politics project lead, set the tone for the training to begin. He spoke on Monitoring the Environment. "Monitoring exposes environmental harm and dangers.



We are all environmental monitors; we just haven't been doing it. Except you cry out and report them, they [the polluters and the government] will not respond. The essence of reporting is to call attention to your observation. Gather facts. Your information must be authentic," he said.

He noted that there was a need for the monitor to have baseline information upon which to build. "If you observe changes in the environment, ask "what is the cause?" Where did it happen? Who is affected? Who is profiting?" he told the participants, and cited canoe/boat, notebook and pen,

camera, and GPS as some of the tools needed by an environmental monitor in gathering data.

When asked if oil exploration is the only cause of environmental change, Mr Atake said that there are natural causes of change but the most lethal ones are the ones caused by the fossil fuel industry and they are more permanent.



Stephen Oduware of Alliance Network and HOMEf then drilled the participants on advocacy. The environmental advocate stated that being an advocate begins from a place of dissatisfaction with the state of things. He took the participants through HOMEf's Guide to Community Environmental Monitoring and Community Action.

The training ended with the community folks dramatizing all that they were taught; some playing the role of oil companies and the government, while others playing the role of resourced and host communities, portraying the motifs

of the oil and gas equation in the Niger Delta.

After the dramatization, Nnimmo Bassey gave his closing remarks. According to him,

"From the dramatization, it is clear that most of you have learnt something and that makes us happy. We are willing to provide materials with which you can train more people in your communities. The small video you made can change the world.

A lot of people don't know what is going on. People don't believe it until they see it. That is why, when you see something, say something so that something can be done to help."

Full of gratitude and zest, participants expressed willingness to henceforth monitor their environment more keenly and also train other community folks on environmental monitoring and community action.

" when you see something, say something so that something can be done to help."



LEARNING FOR CHANGE

NNIMMO BASSEY

“

**THE WISE IS A
KNOWLEDGE HOLDER AND KEEPER.**”

Learning is a lifelong process. In other words, we never graduate from the schools of life as long as we are still on planet earth. We learn to walk, to speak intelligibly, and we learn to be part of our communities. Many factors affect our learning and some of these are personal, others are social, cultural, and economic. In this information age, we need guidance to navigate the rapidly changing situations with virtually everything around us.

There must be only few things (if at all) that are not in flux around us. We struggle to keep up with changes in our culture, social norms, environment, politics, education, the arts and even spirituality. Amid these stormy changes, we note that the changes are propelled by humans and human institutions, including corporations. Wisdom requires a rethink of current modes of production, reproduction, and consumption. Consciously retaining an understanding of our being, as humans, in the community of other beings is essential in an age such as we are in.

To do otherwise is to become beings that have lost both memory and mind. We need information and

we are having more than we can analyze and sift for our purposes. This state of things requires that we pause, sit, evaluate, and learn. We need to learn from the wise, the proverbial sitting elders who see far beyond what the youths cannot see standing on top of palm trees.

Although the wise do have information, on its own information is not wisdom.

Information is like tools in a box. Anyone could own or access the toolbox, but only the trained or initiated would know what tools to use and for what purpose. Having a pouch filled with information does not make anyone wise. Knowing what to do with the information one has gathered per time is what makes one wise.

Our elders and initiates into diverse age groups hold a vast array of knowledge about our forests, oceans, and biodiversity generally. As we know, some dimensions of their knowledge are not accessible to all and could get lost if the holders are not available or willing to share such.

“Although the wise do have information, on its own information is not wisdom... it is like tools in a box. Anyone could own or access the toolbox, but only the trained or initiated would know what tools to use and for what purpose.”

Why sit at the feet of the wise and the knowledge holders in natural and less formal settings? We do this with the aim of bridging the gap and building relationships between the learner and the teacher. It is essential to build relationships of trust to facilitate knowledge sharing, interrogation and understanding.

Through our Learning from the Wise (LftW) programme, we hope to tap into the reservoir of the abundant knowledge of our people from especially knowledgeable and respected individuals.

What are the questions plaguing the youths? How are they interpreting the objective conditions around them? What is their reading of the state of the environment and energy systems? We don't just want our youths to know the solutions, we want them to know how to find solutions to known problems and even to those yet to occur.

Our hope is that our youths will not only be recipients but agents and broadcasters of knowledge and wisdom using contemporary tools such as those available on social media platforms and which are readily utilized by them.

It is our desire that the youths bear in mind that, as is the case with all teachers, knowledge holders are often not self-taught. They learn from other knowledge holders and understand that they hold the knowledge as a sacred trust, as something to be shared with others. The knowledge cuts across all spectrums of knowing, including those on the environment, traditional medicine, varieties of

crops and animals, value systems, ceremonials, social and cultural values, and languages.

Our knowledge keepers are custodians of our tangible and intangible cultural heritage embodied and manifested in our knowledge system, including fishing and farming systems, customs, poetry, songs, architecture, and other art forms. The fact that the tangible and intangible are closely intertwined as a multilayered tapestry of life urges us to fundamentally look at our learning processes and spaces.

What are the available spaces for learning? Universities? Why not multiversities? How come our polytechnics are more like monotchnics? What are our youths educated for? Are they educated for a life steeped in solidarity, dignity, and respect, or are they trained to be mere economic beings, sold and bought by the highest bidder? Can such narrow educational pathways prepare a people for the increasingly complex challenges they must face?

LftW is a platform for the active acquisition of hitherto neglected knowledge, bearing in mind the urgent need to propel changes in our society, the kind of change we desire and need. The change that is for and from the people.



Prohibit GM BEANS NOW

HOMEF Warns

A roundtable conference hosted by Health of Mother Earth Foundation held in Abuja beamed a spotlight on genetically engineered cowpea, Bt Cowpea (*Vigna Unguiculata*) popularly known as beans.

This cowpea is one of Africa's largest indigenous food crops and a major source of protein for the Nigerian populace where it is prepared and eaten in various forms such as ewa agoin, akara and moi moi. It is a staple food crop and an important source of income.

Nigeria has had a yearly average production of about 2.7 million metric tons over the last ten years. Nigeria is also regarded as a centre of origin of cowpea and a major producer of cowpea in the world. Ironically, Nigeria is also the largest importer of cowpea in Africa.

Nnimmo Bassey in his opening remarks reminded participants that the GM beans variety has already been given to farmers across Nigeria who have planted, harvested, and eaten them. As revealed in an investigation by Premium Times, the promoters of this variety did not tell the farmers that they were being given GM beans to plant. The excuse given by a top official of the National Biotechnology Development Agency (NABDA) is that they could not explain what GMOs are to poor farmers. They merely told the farmers that they were being given improved varieties. Deception is not a scientific tool for disseminating or promoting any product.

Bassey stated that GM beans will impoverish Nigerian farmers, erode our biodiversity, and pollute neighbouring countries: “We are calling for the prohibition of GM seeds in Nigeria. We need to stop the spread of these seeds because Africa must not be turned into a dumping ground for risky technologies. We applaud the [Nigerian] Senate for commencing the review of the Biosafety Act, especially for planning to close gaps that have made the existing regime ineffective.” He further noted that these seeds decrease soil fertility and promote land grab for monocultures



Mariann Bassey-Orovwuje who is the coordinator of the Food Sovereignty programme at Friends of the Earth Nigeria/Africa has warned that giving GMOs to farmers without their consent is illegal. She wondered why Nigeria would approve a GM cowpea that South Africa had rejected and why the country should adopt a GM cotton that had failed woefully in Burkina Faso.

She added, “The introduction of genetically engineered cowpea is a great cause for concern for farmers,

consumers, and civil society organizations across the continent. While the technology is said to be provided royalty-free, the long-term implications of transforming the environment, farmers’ varieties, and production practices will trap farmers into unsustainable, unsuitable, and unaffordable farming practices, and deepen the threat to food and nutritional security. We call for a total ban on GMOs as a mark of respect for our small-scale farmers/producers. Respect for their rights, for what they produce and how they want to produce it”. She further reiterated that food sovereignty should be respected. This is the “right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. There is an urgent need for our governments to strengthen our biosafety legislation in line with the precautionary principles which advise caution where there is no certainty of environmental and health safety.”

Dr Ifeanyi Casmir, a lecturer at the University of Abuja, spoke on the science of genetic engineering and the inherent risks in the processes. He stressed that inadequate risk assessments were carried out on the Bt Cowpea before they were approved and there is no guarantee that the GM beans are not injurious to human or environmental health. The academic further stated that the federal government should unburden NAFDAC by reducing the scope of their work to ensure efficiency. He said this because the work overload has led to the penetration of pesticides and other chemicals that have been banned elsewhere.

The roundtable agreed that Nigeria is exposed to untold risks through an opaque system of approval and dissemination of GMOs. Getting poor farmers to plant GM crops and consumers to unknowingly eat such products must be seen as unethical and a crass infringement of the human right of the people to safe foods. The fact that the promoters of the varieties are unable, or are unwilling, to explain the varieties to farmers and Nigerians is a clear confirmation that the country is not ready for GMOs.

At the end of the roundtable, participants agreed that Nigeria should place at least a 20-year moratorium on agricultural genetic engineering.



From this relict fishing port
I recall the fogged days of yore;
then when a crowd of buyers
did sit by the riverside
looking to fishermen's canoes
dancing together with the sunny tide

Then, in unison, we fetched paddles
and fish-filled baskets when ashore
and that evening,
pockets and pots got almighty.

Then we lived
fit in unadulterated potency.

Now? the River frowns,
an oily torrent,
and the crowd is no longer lured
to welcome the fish.

Now the fisher's basket
barely fetches his own bitty dish
untouched if his fellows
capsize under the current

Now the fishers' interest
is in the worship of public knaves
living by the ends,
Christianizing means.
We have deserted the rivers and the shores
with paddles angled, idle behind doors.

Nostalgia of the Fisherman

By Dieworimene Koikoibo



FISHERS' TALES EXHIBITION

By Cassandra Schnoor



stories and accompanying artwork highlighted the similarities and differences in fishers' engagements with the ocean from subsistence to recreational, provoking reflection, empathy, and dialogue. In this sense, the project built both awareness and solidarity with subsistence and small-scale fishers, who have enormous knowledge and care for the ocean, which sustain them. The history of fishing in KwaZulu-Natal is where this project originates.

Looking into the history of the diverse people who live along this coastal province, the daily moments captured by the artists offer meaningful insights into these experiences of connecting with the ocean, and the complex permitting regulations that impact negatively on the livelihoods of fishers and their ability to practice fishing as part of their cultural heritage. The exhibition highlighted how climate change has affected marine life in the ocean and how that has negatively impacted the lives of small-scale and subsistence fisherfolk. Increasingly fishers along our coastlines are joining the struggle to maintain ocean wellbeing.



The Fishers' Tales Exhibition was held at the KZNSA Gallery in Durban, South Africa over a period of one month between 2 March and 3 April 2022. This was an arts-based storytelling project that collects the wondrous tales that fishers enjoy talking about their ocean adventures. This project explored fishers' connections and emotional bonds with the ocean using a visual storytelling approach. Each story was accompanied by a unique artwork.

The Fishers' Tales Exhibition also provided a platform to showcase the work done by young and emerging artists in Durban, as the project is specifically aimed at supporting creative students studying in the city. The

The project contributed towards a bigger One Ocean Hub project for inclusive and transformative approaches to ocean governance. The project was managed by the Urban

Futures Centre in partnership with the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA), and was funded through the Deep Emotional Engagement Programme (DEEP) Fund (administered by the One Ocean Hub programme).

History of fishing in Kwazulu-Natal

The history of fishing in KwaZulu-Natal, where this project originates, is a history of the diverse people who live in this coastal province. During colonial and apartheid administration, fishers who were racialized as Black, Coloured and Indian faced discriminatory and unjust regulations. These regulations privileged both fishers racialized as White and the commercial fishing industry over subsistence and small-scale fishing. There are many harrowing accounts of fishers up and down the KwaZulu-Natal coast being violently harassed by law enforcement and conservation authorities.



These oppressive experiences are shared with many fishers in other coastal provinces in South Africa. Under apartheid, many coastal communities were forcibly moved away from the coast to make space for tourism and leisure activities, coastal mining, and wildlife conservation. These coastal histories need to be remembered if we are to ensure a more just and inclusive ocean governance.

Neelan Govender and Viroshen Chetty's *Legends of the Tide*: roots of the Durban fishing industry give an excellent history of some of these oppressions in Durban, and clearly document how much the fishing industry owes to the indentured labourers who arrived here from India in the 1800s.

Their knowledge of the sea and seine-netting is still used today in Durban's famous annual sardine run. While racist legislation and regulations have been overturned and more democratic policy frameworks passed in South Africa post-1994, many subsistence and small-scale fishers remain vulnerable and continue to face complex permitting regulations that impact negatively on their livelihoods and on their ability to practise fishing as part of their cultural heritage. These fishers continue to negotiate with the current South African government to advocate their inclusion, not only in the fisheries policies but in broader ocean governance forums such as the Ocean Economy master Plan and Marine Spatial Planning.

Increasingly, fisher's organisations along the country's coast are pushing back against environmentally harmful oil and gas drilling of the seabed, and against pollutants that harm marine life. Fishers, as the stories here illustrate, are acutely aware of the climate crisis affecting our oceans.

Fisherfolk in Durban and elsewhere have staged protests and marches against companies that pollute our oceans, and against both national and international oil and gas companies looking to prospect and drill the ocean bed.

If you are interested in finding out more about fishing in South Africa, or how our cultural heritage links to the oceans or marine conservation, then there is no better group to ask than the people who spend their lives on the shoreline and at sea. Many fishers, if approached with respect and genuine interest, can share the most incredible tales of their adventures with the sea, fishers' tales.

Please visit the Fishers' Tales website for more about this project to read a few of our fishers' tales: www.fisherstales.org

THE UNWANTED GIFT

FishNet Alliance Decries the Introduction of Genetically Improved Tilapia into Nigeria

Nigerians may be unaware, but genetically improved tilapias are on the way to the country and should arrive in May 2022, the Fishnet Alliance has warned.

According to a report from the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission, the improved tilapia is to be introduced following “an inclusive legal agreement” between WorldFish and Premium Aquaculture Limited through a programme on genetically improved farmed Tilapia (GIFT).

“This agreement will augur the establishment of a GIFT-based aquaculture industry in Nigeria. Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) are collaborating with WorldFish and PAL on this endeavour with the aim of having WorldFish/PAL GIFT tilapia in Nigerian fish markets by late 2023,” it states.

The genes used to improve the tilapia could have come from a variety of organisms, including other fish, coral, mice, bacteria, or even humans. They are basically produced to suit industrial aquaculture models with doubtful regard for possible ecological and environmental concerns.

FishNet Alliance, a network of fishers in several African countries, said it was concerned that apart from the environmental and health challenges, it is

unclear which agencies of government had a hand in this transaction.

“Improved Tilapia will not tackle the root cause of challenges in the fisheries sector in Nigeria. Neither will it solve the hunger and malnutrition problems in the country,” stated Stephen Oduware, coordinator of the FishNet Alliance. “The issues affecting the Nigerian fisheries sector namely: pollution due to oil and gas and other minerals exploration and exploitation; insecurity and piracy; illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing activities of national and international trawlers – leading to overfishing of both target and non-target species of fish; destruction of the mangrove forests amongst other issues – are matters that the government should focus attention on.”

Fish farming in Nigeria is done mostly close to the river or in the creeks and there are fears that there could be interactions between the “genetically improved” fish and fishes in the wild. If such fish were genetically engineered, research has shown that releasing as little as sixty fish into a wild population of 60,000 would lead to the extinction of the wild population in less than 40 fish generations. The implication of having genetically improved Tilapia released into the wild is not known.

A new study has found that genetically engineered (genetically modified or GM) zebrafish (*Danio rerio*) have escaped from fish farms in Brazil and are multiplying in nearby creeks. Researchers say that their results “confirm that escapes from aquaculture facilities are common and could bring severe consequences to local fish populations including endemic, rare, and threatened species.” They conclude that the production of non-native species should be avoided and that transgenic fish should be banned.

“The escape of GM fish from Brazil should be a big wake-up call for our Nigerian regulators and the government,” says Mariann Bassey-Orovwuje, coordinator of the Food Sovereignty Program with Friends of the Earth Nigeria and Africa. In 2020, Friends of the Earth USA released an updated list of 80 grocery retailers, seafood companies, food service companies and restaurants with more than 18,000 locations nationwide that have stated that they will not sell genetically engineered salmon, demonstrating a widespread market rejection of the first commercial offerings of the first genetically engineered animal approved for human consumption in the U.S.

“AS STAKEHOLDERS CONCERNED WITH THE WELLBEING OF OUR AQUATIC ECOSYSTEMS, WE SEE THE SO-CALLED GIFT OF GENETICALLY IMPROVED TILAPIA AS POTENTIALLY HAVING ADVERSE EFFECTS ON OUR FOOD SYSTEM AND ON THE LIVELIHOODS OF MILLIONS OF FISHERFOLKS AND PROCESSORS.

Groups such as HOMEf and ERA/FoEN, and GM Free Nigeria that are concerned about genetically engineered organisms in the country have consistently complained about the weak nature of the biosafety regulatory framework in the country. They have also called for increased transparency,

accountability and public engagement before considering approving new life forms into our environment and biodiversity.

Reacting to the news of genetically improved tilapia on the way to Nigeria, the director of Health of Mother Earth Foundation, Nnimmo Bassey, cautioned that “The Nigerian environment is already bedevilled with many genetically engineered crops and products of which farmers and consumers are not aware of. We are concerned that the introduction of genetically improved tilapia may be a step towards the introduction of genetically engineered fish into the country. Moreover, we are not aware that there was any consultation with the majority of fishers and consumers in the country before the so-called inclusive agreement that opened the door for this tilapia species was signed.

“As stakeholders concerned with the wellbeing of our aquatic ecosystems, we see the so-called gift of genetically improved tilapia as potentially having adverse effects on our food system and on the livelihoods of millions of fisherfolks and processors. We also call on our government to put a stop to approvals of genetically modified fish, animals, or plants in Nigeria until the biosafety regulatory system is strengthened and tightened. We also demand that in all cases public participation should be mandatory to ensure that transparency and the Precautionary Principle are strictly adhered to in all cases.

“FishNet Alliance calls on the Nigerian government to provide resources to public fisheries and oceanography institutions for the healthy management of our aquatic ecosystems and resources rather than opening the gates for novel varieties, coming under the guise of philanthropy that may negatively affect our food systems. We hope that the genetically improved tilapia will not be used as an opening to sneak in genetically engineered fish into our environment and dining tables.”

AGAINST CHEMICAL FERTILIZERS

-FARMERS PLEDGE TO GO
ORGANIC

In a two-day training for farmers and CSOs on agroecology held in Abuja, farmers and civil society groups concluded that the solution to food crises and the availability of quality food production is agroecology. Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF) organized practical agroecological training sessions for over eighty farmers and CSOs on how to improve the quality of their farmlands and have a healthy farming system using the organic method. The training brought together farmers and civil society groups to learn more about the spread of GMOs and their harmful impact on the soil, and the need to hear from members of other countries who have conquered the use of GMOs in their agricultural systems and to resist the indiscriminate use of inorganic chemicals on farms while championing agroecology as a viable solution to food crises.

Chemical-intensive agriculture is not only harmful to the soil but it also contributes to climate change and endangers the health of farmers and the environment. In the quest to increase soil fertility and boost yields with the use of chemicals, farmers unknowingly endanger their economic future and further sign into a lifetime of health problems. Frequent exposure to chemical pesticides can cause cancer and other health-related diseases.



Image by Stephen Oduware // HOMEF

In his presentation, Dr Ifeanyi Casmir (a lecturer at the University of Abuja) stated that there are implications of GMOs on our Food System, Health and Environment contrary to the claims that Genetically Modified crops are extensions of natural breeding and do not pose different risks from naturally bred crops. “Scientists are inserting alien genes into beans the same way they genetically engineered maize crops to make them resistant to chemical weed killers or insects. The safety of the consumption of the Bt cowpea remains unclear and the results of its health risk assessment are inconclusive.

Therefore, bt cowpea when cultivated will cause a decrease in soil fertility and an increase in immune response after the consumption of cowpea. However, evidence that links GMOs to a range of health issues, such as environmental damage, food system and even violations of consumers’ and farmers’ rights abounds”. He further explained the case study to note that safely and effectively generating crops with complex desirable properties such as higher yield, drought tolerance, and disease resistance is through natural breeding, conventional breeding combined with agroecological farming methods that can fulfil all our current and future food needs”.

During the practical session, farmers were trained on the production of organic fertilizers and how to improve soil fertility for optimum productivity. They also learned farming practices that would reduce erosion and leaching and increase the nutrient holding capacity of the soil. Farmers were taught to differentiate between the different types of organic fertilizers: manure, compost, rock phosphate, and chicken droppings, and the role each could play on their farmlands.

Some farmers shared stories of having short-term and chronic sicknesses arising from the use of chemicals on their farmlands. The farmers also spoke about how they are impacted by changing climatic conditions which reduce their capacity to cater for their families. Some of the farmers shared experiences they have had in the past with the use of chemicals and some natural methods.

Bulus Nwayan, one of the farmers expressed his confusion over the direction of our food system: “We are confused about what these GMOs are all about.

We do not know the direction in which the seeds are coming from, and we cannot differentiate between them and the natural seeds. We want the government to support our local farmers and protect our interests and our health; all the chemicals will not help us”.

Ado Nasir encouraged his colleagues to imbibe all they have learnt from the training: “We need to protect our seeds, we should not promote the seeds given to us, we also need to stop spraying our seeds with chemicals for fast yields because the residues from chemicals remain in the crops and we equally end up eating them, which is extremely dangerous to our health”.

The farmers urged the government to support farmers by providing them with indigenous seeds rather than contaminated GMOs and chemicals that would destroy their soils and harm their economies. They also asked for the improvement of rural infrastructure which will enable their products to get to final consumers and also improve their farm gate prices.

The training also addressed the issue of climate change, land degradation and conservation of our ecological systems. Ecological farming alternatives were shown to be money-saving, simple to implement and simple to share generated knowledge. Some of these alternatives include the Preparation of Organic Fertilizer using Neem Leaves/Seed as fertilizer; Preparation of Organic Pesticide using Neem Leaves Oil; Preparation of Garlic, Onion and Chilli Pepper Pesticide; and the Preparation of Organic Fertilizer and Compost.



infinite Vow

by Rowan Kilduff

Though I can't know what it is
to be you,
I vow to know you
though wild brothers and
sisters have languages
so numerous, so pure,
I vow that we will talk together

Though we think we are special,
I vow that we will be part of
all 'self-complete and brave',
full expressions of life alongside
us
though there are borders,
I vow to take them all down
though I can't see mountains
move,
I vow to listen

Though dreams are fleet-
footed, I vow to ground them
in the physical
though we don't really know
what peace might be, I vow
that peace will be the air,
solid bedrock, bright fire
though we run towards
freedoms,
I vow to be free before I start
running

Though forests have been cut, I
vow to replant them
though the sky and rivers are
damaged, I vow to repair them
though in some places water is
not free, I vow to call the rains

Though fuel exploration
continues to shatter the earth, I
vow her body will heal
though the cycles are
accelerating, I vow to
align my heart, body,
and mind though
now we are fighting,
because we can live in a world
without armies our kids will be
safe from danger
though refugees of
desertification walk in search
- I vow that they will find,
and we all will find a place —
'in the white truce of noon'

Though we are all refugees of
PURE NATURE, I vow to find
a home anywhere under the sky
though I can't know what it is, I
vow to be ready to die

though all our ancestors are
long gone, I vow to keep them
alive - the colours of their eyes,
the colours of their voices
though the coming generations
are not here yet, I vow to
celebrate them today

Though people are sleeping
long — I vow this will be a time
of waking
though I am bound by the
elements, I vow to transcend

them
Though the spark of life is
disappearing, I vow to shelter it
Though there are so many
songs — each life — I vow to
sing them

though we put names, I vow
that I will learn all the true
names
though there are so
many names — 'too
many and too swift;
how many you would not
believe without seeing', I vow to
remember them

though I will see just so many
new suns, I vow to feel the
future golden light on my face
though injustices are many, I
vow to end them all

though there are billions
of alternative realities,
streams collapsing into one —
some point in the future where
we will meet
it is a real place

I vow to look with new strength
though wonder is infinite —
though there are infinite vows, I
continue to expand my heart.

Cut & Run



by Ken Henshaw

Image by toa heftiba on unsplash

Pollute, don't pay. Big Oil Companies have perfected their playbook in the Niger Delta and are now looking to walk away!

The two largest transnational oil companies operating in Nigeria's Niger Delta, Shell and ExxonMobil, are packing up and leaving.

Both companies have announced separate plans to sell off their assets as soon as they find buyers and to leave the Niger Delta, where they have extracted crude oil and gas for over half a century. For communities living in the region, the news is a cause for bewilderment and uncertainty – the fear that after the devastating impacts of oil extraction they have suffered, their quest for ecological justice may never be realized.

Counting the cost

The Niger Delta region consists of nine states in Nigeria, bordered to the south by the Atlantic Ocean and to the east by Cameroon. It occupies 112,000 square kilometres, roughly 12 per cent of Nigeria. Over 40 ethnic groups and nationalities speaking hundreds of languages and dialects are indigenous to the region.

Crude oil has been extracted in commercial quantities from the Niger Delta since 1956, expanding from a few viable oil wells to over 900 active wells today. Together with thousands of other oil facilities, these oil wells have turned the Delta into one massive oil and gas field, producing up to 2.5 million barrels of crude oil every day.

The production of oil and gas in the region has been responsible for a big chunk of Nigeria's income for several decades, driving an oil dependency that has exposed its economy to intense volatilities. As of 2019, oil and gas made up 84 per cent of government export earnings.

However, the reality for the people who 'host' all the oil activities is far from rosy. Despite the massive hydrocarbon profits, living conditions in areas where extraction takes place are unbelievably horrible. The over 30 million people who live here have not benefitted in any significant way from the resources pumped from beneath their lands, rivers and swamps. Poor healthcare and education, insecurity and poverty are widespread. Mismanagement, corruption and elite capture of wealth and resources with oil company complicity have made these communities rank among the least developed and most impoverished and most polluted regions of the country.



Image by josh appel on unsplash

The larger Nigerian nation has also not made any progress using its oil wealth. Instead, it has overtaken India as the world's poverty capital – with 94 million Nigerians living in extreme poverty. Again, the narrative for the Niger Delta is worse still – oil extraction makes traditional sources of livelihood unproductive without providing any alternatives, while also compromising health.

Thousands of kilometres of crude oil pipes are buried beneath the land, swamps and rivers of the Niger Delta, sometimes right in people's farmlands and backyards. They regularly rupture, releasing oil that contaminates farms and rivers, leaving a trail of ecosystem destruction.

It is estimated that more than 2 billion litres of crude oil have been spilt in the Niger Delta over the last 50 years. According to the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency, there were 'around 370 publicly available oil spill records in 2020' alone. And to imagine that oil spillage is underreported is to show the magnitude of the tragedy.

The effects of spills are immediate and devastating. Even small-scale spillage in a river can cause mass fish die-off, pushing thousands of fisherfolk towards starvation and destitution. Mangroves, which are the breeding ground of fish and other aquatic species, wither and perish. Rivers become lifeless. Similar livelihood losses occur on farmlands, too. Each year companies flare \$2.5 billion worth of gas – creating more emissions than the transport and electricity usage of all Nigerians

Then there is the worrying reminder that flaring causes heart and respiratory illnesses. Alternative ways of managing this gas are available but the oil companies find wasteful flaring cheaper and more convenient. Deadlines to end flaring have been repeatedly put back – from 1979 to 2030. In 2011, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) released an assessment report of polluted sites in Ogoniland, the oil-rich territory of the Delta's Ogoni people, from whose lands and rivers Shell extracted 28,000 barrels of crude oil daily between 1958 and 1992. It detailed the ravages of oil pollution, contaminated water sources and helpless

communities exposed to severe health risks. For instance, life expectancy in the Delta has fallen to under 43 years.

UNEP estimated that the clean-up of Ogoniland alone would take 25-30 years and proposed an initial investment of \$1 billion. The report exposed the repeated failures of the oil companies to clean up spills – sites supposedly remediated by Shell were found to still be heavily contaminated. Meanwhile, a Nigerian study found that cleaning up the entire Niger Delta region would cost more than \$50 billion and take at least 50 years.

Getting out

It's no wonder that affected communities take a dim view of the new wave of oil company 'divestment', seeing it as an opportunity for the companies to cut and run after years of environmental pollution in the Niger Delta.

Shell's chief executive officer, Ben van Beurden, claims the company cannot 'solve community problems in the Niger Delta' and that it has concluded that 'this is an exposure that doesn't fit with our risk appetite anymore'.

Indeed, the last decade has seen a resurgence of community resilience and environmental justice campaigns fuelled by recently discovered opportunities for holding transnational companies to account in European courts. The 'exposure' Shell is suddenly shy about is exposure to accountability for rights abuses and ecological destruction.

As Shell and ExxonMobil sell off their assets to local players, there are uncertainties about who exactly will be responsible for assessing the enormous damage caused by pollution and cleaning up the mess. When Shell talks of making a 'clean break' from Niger Delta assets, the possibility of accountability becomes ever more remote. Tijah Bolton, who works with communities heavily impacted by the activities of ExxonMobil in Akwa Ibom State, says that divestment is 'an attempt to abdicate responsibility... After over 50 years of extracting oil, you just sneak away without informing



Nembe, Bayelsa by Temilade Adelaja/Reuters featured on www.aljazeera.com/

your host.’ In 2021, the state-owned Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, which has joint ventures with most oil majors, committed to developing a divestment policy to safeguard the country’s interests. This has yet to materialize and the time before transnationals leave is running out.

Operating with impunity

When affected communities have tried to hold transnational companies to account, they have rarely received the support of the Nigerian government. From the beginning the business of oil extraction in Nigeria operated along the patterns of commerce established by Western traders and colonial powers – as a deadly mix of corporate profiteering facilitated by state-backed repression.

In 1990, the people of Umuechem, a community just north of Port Harcourt, the Delta’s largest city, went on a peaceful march to demand that Shell deliver on its promises to the community. When the company arrived in the community 32 years earlier, they had pledged roads, hospitals, schools, electricity and job opportunities. Instead, the farming and fishing

community was exposed to pollution, land grabs and loss of livelihoods.

Peaceful protests felt like the only option left as they gathered at a crossroads several kilometres away from any Shell facility, where they sang and danced. In response to the affront, Shell called in tactical units of the Nigerian police who burnt several buildings and shot at the peaceful protesters indiscriminately, killing 80 people, according to Amnesty International. To this day, no-one has been held accountable.

A better-known story is the case of Ogoniland, where protests against Shell triggered a prolonged siege by the Nigerian army, during which several community members were murdered, raped, beaten, detained and exiled.

The leaders of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, including writer Ken Saro-Wiwa, were executed in 1995 after a stage-managed trial. Shell had repeatedly raised the Ogoni ‘problem’ with then dictator General Sani Abacha, as recorded by Amnesty International and other global bodies.

Resistance has stopped all extraction by Shell in Ogoniland since 1993, although new spills from pipelines that criss-cross the territory continue.

In other communities where the people have attempted to hold the transnationals to account, the repression has followed a similar pattern. Seeking redress from Nigerian courts has not always been an option – they are firmly in the grip of the government and the chances of communities getting positive outcomes are slim.

One rare exception came in 2005 when a court declared in favour of the Iwerekhan community that flaring violated the constitutional rights to life and dignity, including the right to a ‘clean, poison-free, pollution-free, healthy environment’. Alas, by the time the court met to determine whether Shell had complied with the order for an immediate halt, the presiding judge had been moved elsewhere, and the court file could not be traced. Gas flaring continues in Iwerekhan to this day.

Kentebe Ebirador, who works with the NGO Environmental Rights Action, believes it is the failure of the Nigerian courts to provide justice that led locals to arm themselves and resist the oil companies in the late 1990s.

‘How do you take a people’s resource, destroy their fishponds, their farmlands and turn their children into beggars, and when they demand justice, you invite the police and army to kill them?’ he asks.

With each flood fishers and farmers are forced to survive without income for months, engendering a new wave of poverty, insecurity and forced migration

A rising tide

Many oil-producing areas lie along coastal plains, in close proximity to the Atlantic Ocean and other water bodies, and communities located there are experiencing regular floods as a result of climate change.

In 2012, many community lands including entire villages were submerged under two metres of water, an entire farming season was lost, and countless people were forced to migrate to higher grounds. Since then, floods have regularly invaded many coastal communities. Each time, community members, predominantly fishers and farmers, are forced to survive without income for months, engendering a

new wave of poverty, insecurity and forced migration.

Many of these people are yet to come to terms with the fact that the oil and gas extracted from their lands are responsible for the climate change impacts that now threaten their existence.

For the ecologically devastated communities of the Niger Delta, no hurried divestment by transnational oil companies will be tolerated without the restoration of their environment and livelihoods.

For them, the definition of just transition has to include repairing the damage occasioned by oil pollution, an audit of the health of the people and a plan to respond to the threats posed by climate change. A just transition must also provide justice for the countless victims of oil company-inspired and state-sanctioned abuses, and reparations to the people of the Niger Delta for decades of expropriation. Anything short of these is injustice and must be resisted!

Ken Henshaw works at the Niger Delta organization We the People, supporting communities whose lives have been devastated by crude oil extraction, and who are facing new climate change challenges, supporting them to demand ecological justice.

Reject Seed Colonialism in Africa

“ GM variety will utterly contaminate natural varieties through cross-pollination.”



Image by rajesh saminathan on unsplash

It has often been said that one of the ways to colonize a people is by dismantling or subverting their culture.

This pathway is also effective for building dependency and disrupting the systems that organically secure the health of the populations. In terms of agricultural and food systems, the disruption is most effective when staple crops are targeted, appropriated through patenting and presented as mere merchandise. Food is fast becoming an instrument of control and power. Science has been used as a cloak for the introduction of foods of dubious value and quality.

The quest to solve perceived

problems through artificial means introduces new problems, some of which can be intractable. Today we see unrelenting forces seeking to control our food and agricultural systems with attendant disregard for indigenous knowledge, natural cycles, biodiversity, and livelihoods of communities.

We are concerned that food is being seen as a mere commodity or a mechanical or chemical product from a factory or laboratory. Truth is that eating is beyond swallowing food to satiate hunger; food has deep cultural and spiritual anchors with special significance in many religious observances.

Food supply across Africa depends largely on the maintenance of healthy and thriving biodiversity. Our farmers save, reproduce, and share seeds, understanding that these seeds encapsulate life.

These communities engage in mixed cropping and harvest a mix of fruits, tubers and vegetables that yield foods that are rich and healthy, providing needed nutrition and building defences against illnesses. They have a strong link to what is presented as food and harvests are never mechanical exercises. Moreover, many of our farmers do not see food production as mere business or for profit.



These sustainable practices are being threatened by the genetic modification of seeds, particularly those that make up our staple foods.

Today we are speaking of the genetically engineered cowpea, popularly known as beans in Nigeria, and drawing attention to the fact that the insecticidal beans can also kill non-target organisms and that even the target pests can develop resistance. In the same vein, when crops are genetically engineered to withstand herbicides, we cannot ignore the fact that they kill other plants and microbial life and not only the so-called weeds. These modifications interfere with the webs of life in ecosystems, which come with intergenerational consequences. Although the promoters of the Bt cowpea claim that it will translate into improved food security in Nigeria due to the availability of much higher amounts of cowpea, one concern that cannot be overlooked is that this GM variety will utterly contaminate natural varieties through cross-pollination.

This means that even where a farmer chooses not to grow the GM variety, the preferred natural variety might be contaminated. Thus, rather than promote food security, Nigeria/Africa is stepping into an era of uncertainty, of gross unpredictability and instability of food supply and resultant food insecurity. The unfortunate angle to this is that most of these GMOs are sold to us by the West when many of them have rejected them. The genetically engineered beans (recently approved for commercial release in Nigeria despite objections by HOMEF and several other stakeholders) are modified with the transgene Cry1Ab which has not been approved anywhere else in the world. Most of these genetically engineered events are prepared overseas and brought for testing in Africa and yet we boast that we are adequately equipped and innovative.

The genetically engineered cowpea is originally a Monsanto product brought to Africa on supposedly humanitarian grounds. We insist that Africa must not be used as a testing ground for novel and

Image : <https://naijagists.com/>

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risky technologies.

Promoters of these risky technologies fight against strict liability clauses in national Biosafety laws. This has been experienced in Nigeria, Zambia, Uganda and so on. In Uganda, a clause in their genetic engineering regulatory law was inserted to ensure that producers of GMOs will be held accountable for any harm that may come from the cultivation or consumption of their products at any time, even if such effects manifest years later. Since then, GMO promoters, producers and some unethical scientists have branded President Museveni and the Ugandan parliament as being anti-science.

There are attempts to overlook the Precautionary Principle which is the bedrock of biosafety regulation.

Simply put, the Precautionary Principle advises that where there are doubts regarding human, animal or environmental safety, we should hold the breaks. Good genetic engineering science must not leave room for doubt and when harms manifest, the producers should be held strictly liable.

The speed with which Nigeria is permitting GMOs is highly suspicious and alarming, and offers no assurance that the government is concerned about food safety, the preservation of our biodiversity or the rights of our indigenous peoples. Neighbouring and other African countries should beware.

The meeting provided a platform for exposing the grave risks our food and agricultural systems face through the introduction of genetically modified beans.

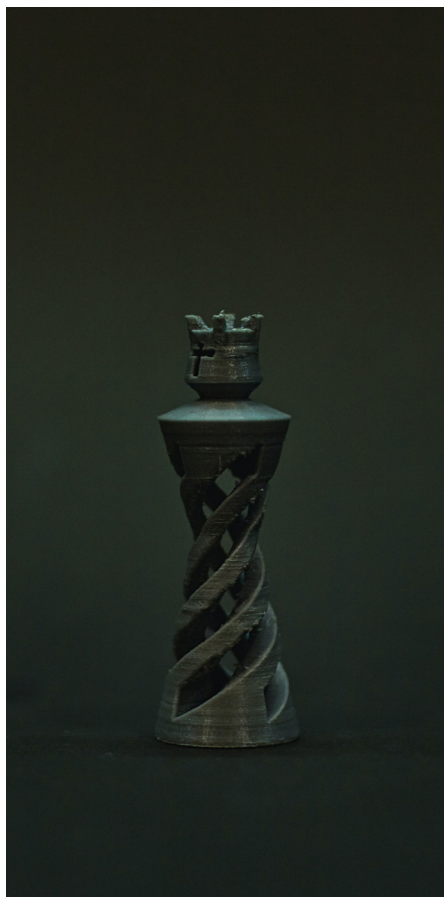
Besides the environmental and health risks, our people's right to choose what variety to plant and what food to eat is absolutely breached by the introduction of genetically engineered beans, a staple and critical source of protein for most Nigerians. The right of choice is eliminated because our food systems do not allow for labelling. This right is fundamental, and our people should not be ambushed to eat any risky material. We call on farmers to reject Bt Cowpea seeds and continue to protect our food system.

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”

LEARNING FROM A



King

The sound of the king's bugle announced the majestic entrance of His Royal Majesty, King Bubaraye Dakolo (Agada IV), the philosopher king, ex-soldier, author, and environmental activist into our Learning from the Wise event. King Dakolo also triples as the traditional ruler of Ekpetiama Kingdom in Bayelsa State, the Chairman of the Traditional Rulers Council in Bayelsa State, and the head of the World Elders' Forum, among others. On his entrance, the guests, comprising of youths and HOMEF team members, remained standing till the king had sat down.

The first session of this episode of the Learning from the Wise started with introductions and the usual palace formalities. The king, through his palace spokesman, offered thanksgiving and welcomed the entourage, albeit in Izon language, true to the custom of the palace. But the palace rites easily passed as they were greased with Izon proverbs and courtesy, exchanged between the palace and the visitors, through an interpreter; and those who were witnessing the exchange (Izon speakers and non-Izon speakers alike), both first-timers and



Image by Ukpono Bassey

frequenters, watched on in both awe and admiration. It was only on the passionate appeal that the king permitted the use of English in the conversation.

Nnimmo Bassey, Director of the ecological think tank, HOMEf, introduced the team and informed the palace of the purpose of their visit. In his remarks, the architect, poet, and environmentalist said, “One thing we have learnt is that no matter how much info we pack, it’s all useless if we do not know what information is important and how to use it.”

He further said that HOMEf had come with the youths to the king because it was important for the youth to not only note but also interpret, and take action on, the issues plaguing the region.

“Education in the present is being shared in hostile environments and about the wrong things. We need diverse spaces. We should be talking of multiversities, not universities, or polytechnics. This is why we are here, to tap from your knowledge, wisdom and your ambient environment,” he said.

When the king spoke, it was with grace and humour. The king flexed his royal knowledge of the history, people, seasons and festivals of Ekpetiama in particular and Izo in general, alluding to how they had always been a part of history—from slave trade to palm oil trade and the coming of the missionaries, appetizing his visitors and causing them to salivate for the session proper. In his words, Ekpetiama

Kingdom was located within the radius of Agadagbabou, the last point of dispersal for the Izo clans into the hinterlands of the delta. He also did not fail to mention how the presence of the oil and gas industry in Gbarantoru, one of the communities in Ekpetiama, has adversely affected the environment, lives and livelihoods of his people.

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Ekpetiama, Gbarantoru in particular, co-hosts the CPF for oil and gas, aimed at producing gas for the Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) plants at Bonny. Shell runs this facility on behalf of NNPC, Shell and other Joint Venture partners. It is also the most valuable Shell-run onshore facility in Africa and costs billions of dollars. It produces about 6, 000 barrels of crude oil equivalent of gas daily, which amounts to well over one billion naira. Ekpetiama is sitting on one of the largest gas fields in Africa.

The people of Ekpetiama, he said, had, however, tried to conserve these important aspects of the people's lives through customary rules and, particularly, through the Okolode festival which holds every June 5th in celebration of their major crop, water yam.

"Water yam is medicinal," the king said, "and a natural bane to diabetes. Diabetes was uncommon and only a recent phenomenon in Ekpetiama community due largely to what we eat nowadays."

The king also told his guests that fish catch in Ekpetiama had gone low because of the activities of the oil and gas industry. According to the king, as a means of adaptation, community folks were allowed to fish in sections of their water bodies only on June 5th annually — that's during their annual water yam festival. This was so that the fishes would be allowed to regenerate and replenish before the next fishing season. But even at that, the fish

catch remains low. "Fishes used to nibble at people who go to bathe in the river. Nowadays it's different," he said on a rather sad note.

He then thanked HOMEF for the efforts at transferring knowledge from the older generation to the younger and excused himself to prepare for the session proper.

This episode of Learning from the Wise was held in the garden of His Royal Majesty, within the secured royal gates of the Gbarantoru palace.

The team was set up under the ambient shades of the guava trees and palm trees that dotted the compound and created the right atmosphere, and it was under these shades that the youths sat on mats, clutched their writing materials, and waited for king Dakolo to reappear. The participants included youths from local communities across Bayelsa State.

When he returned, the king started to spew knowledge and wisdom without much ado. His Royal Majesty mentioned that it was apt that young people begin to pay attention to what is happening around them.

"If we have stupid old people, then we will have stupid young people. A wise elder is the one that made a wise decision at his/her young age. Today, enthusiastic, smart, young people are in the minority. You may be cutting your feet without even knowing it if you do not cherish knowledge," he began.

"In the 70s, 80s and even 90s, what we had as school those days were far better than what is obtainable these days! How are the young ones growing?"

"To begin to talk about the issues in Nigeria we must add the oil and gas equation! In whatever you do today, you must factor in the oil and gas equation. We are all affected by it—deny it all you want. This is a major factor in the way people behave themselves these days. For example, why do you scream at your mother today? Even the Civil War was practically a battle for control of oil fields.

"Our communities have ceased to be communities. Our structures have been eroded—gone. Young people have become not just young people but criminal (and all the other negative adjectives that young people are associated with) due directly or indirectly to the fossil industry in our terrain. Oil has destroyed the fabric of our society.

"They took our communities and turned them into other people's oil fields. For example, Ekpetiama is administered under OML 28; and it seems that the only way you could qualify to get a license was that you were not from here or you were paddy-paddy [friendly] with the powers that be.

"The destiny of the youth was stolen in every coup that took place in Nigeria. From 1967 to date, this place has been militarised. Our attitudes have been shaped

by the high level of militarisation. Here you have to shout or fight to get anything done for you. It means that you have to consciously demilitarize yourselves or you will blow up.”

His Majesty also mentioned how various community youth movements were formed in the Niger Delta, particularly the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) which was conceived at No. 13 Agudama Street in Port Harcourt and birthed in Kaiama, present-day Bayelsa, and how these were replicated elsewhere in Nigeria.

“The Niger Delta communities, apart from being at the receiving end, have also been at the begging end,” he said. The king, in illustrating this, cited the example of the oil spill at Nembe, which lasted for 38 days. Several months have passed, and nothing has happened in terms of clean-up and liability for the spill despite the ongoing harm on and pleas from the people.

“Thus, if your enemy is behaving like the enemy they are, you have to behave in a way that the enemy will be useless to you; develop yourselves, form groups, be proactive, and operate in a manner that you send the message—be yourself because the enemy will always be himself—an enemy. Put your oppressors on the defensive!

“Culture is dynamic, built in a way that helps to find ways around challenges. No matter how loose it may have become, there are always the residual sprouts—we can always reweave it, we just have to be willing.

“If nonsense is going on around you, and you are not part of it, speak up — or else, it will be taken that you are part of the problem.”

The young learners were then allowed a short interlude to enable them to masticate and ruminate on the many foods for thought and those for the stomach that had been dished to them in the magnanimity of His Majesty,

before returning for the final lap—more of questions and answers. Kekefiyai (KKF), the traditionally made plantain dish of the Ijons, was served, to facilitate the digestion of the foods for thought, and the formulation of questions. The participants interacted among themselves while munching the palace food till the short recess was declared over and the meeting reconvened with His Majesty back on his stool. Some of the questions and the responses were as follows:

With the example of the ENDSARS protest, does violence succeed? How can we achieve the hopes and aspirations of the youth without violence?

“Firstly, you need to understand that violence takes different forms and is not necessarily the use of firearms. The way the soldier would react to a situation would not be the way a writer would react, although they both may cause violence to their object of focus. We have to be creative, calculative, subtle, organized, reasonable, and progressive, you don’t act on impulse,” the king advised.

What is to be done, and what should be the demand presently?

If HOMEF were to be around when oil exploration started, perhaps we may have convinced the government and IOCs to keep the oil in the soil, even though it is not too late to do so now.



Image by Ukpomo Bassey

Would it not be counterproductive to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, such as the eradication of poverty, if we stopped dependence on oil which is the mainstay of the economy?

“The oil economy is in fact a hurdle to the achievement of the SDGs. Oil pollution takes away people’s livelihoods and pollutes their waters. As long as it is oil, the other sectors of the economy suffer neglect and destruction. So not, it will not be counterproductive.”

What role can you, in your position as a king and the Chairman of the Bayelsa State Traditional Rulers’ Council, play in creating more learning spaces, such as this, for young people and members of local communities who are willing to be exposed to this sort of knowledge but are unable?

“If there is a willing student, there will be a willing teacher. If there are not enough spaces, you can create more. That is not my exclusive responsibility as Chairman of the Bayelsa State Traditional Rulers Council,” the king said.

Your Majesty, you said that your kingdom has rules with regards to fishing. Does this customary rule apply to all communities in Bayelsa State?

“I know of my kingdom. I also know that most African societies had such customary rules that preserved and improved nature in the form of sacred forests, water bodies, fishes and so on.”

The session came to a conclusion with the king reading from his book, *The Riddle of the Oil Thief*: “...soon the truth will be revealed.

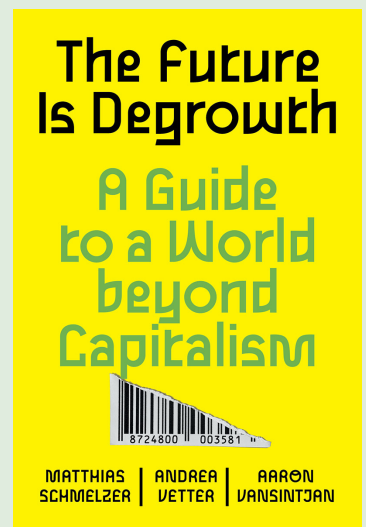
In Africa, there is a common saying that the worst place to mess up is underwater. With water everywhere in the Niger Delta environment, up thrust would always bring messes to the surface.”

THE FUTURE IS DEGROWTH: A GUIDE TO A WORLD BEYOND CAPITALISM

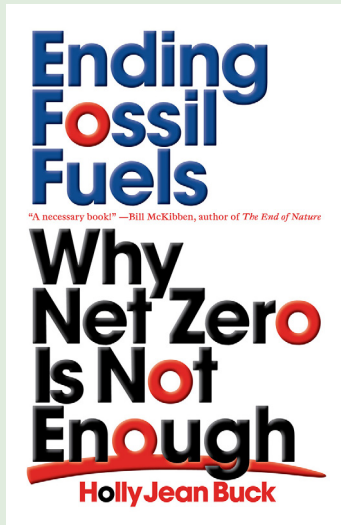
by Mathias Schmelzer,
Andrea Vetter and Aaron
Vansintjan

If you really want to understand the pivot on which the current mode(l) of development is hinged, then, this is a MUST-read book for you. As chronicled in Verso Books, We need to break free from the capitalist economy. Degrowth gives us the tools to bend its bars. Economic growth isn’t working, and it cannot be made to work. Offering a counter-history of how economic growth emerged in the context of colonialism, fossil-fuel industrialization, and capitalist modernity, *The Future Is Degrowth* argues that the ideology of growth conceals the rising inequalities and ecological destructions associated with capitalism, and points to desirable alternatives to it.

Not only in society at large but also on the left, we are held captive by the hegemony of growth. Even proposals for emancipatory Green New Deals or post capitalism base their utopian hopes on the development of productive forces, on redistributing the fruits of economic growth and technological progress. Yet growing evidence shows that continued economic growth cannot be made compatible with sustaining life and is not necessary for a good life for all. This book provides a vision for post capitalism beyond growth. Building on a vibrant field of research, it discusses the political economy and the politics of a non-growing economy. It charts a path forward through policies that democratise the economy, “now-topias” that create free spaces for experimentation, and counter-hegemonic movements that make it possible to break with the logic of growth. Degrowth perspectives offer a way to step off the treadmill of an alienating, expansionist, and hierarchical system. A handbook and a manifesto, *The Future Is Degrowth* is a must-read for all interested in charting a way beyond the current crises.



BOOKS YOU SHOULD READ



ENDING FOSSIL FUELS: WHY NET ZERO IS NOT ENOUGH

by Holly Jean Buck

In the wake of the climate crises, fossil fuel and allied industry players have continually looked for ways to meander and propose solutions that guarantee(d) business as usual. They have tried to silence CO₂ emissions by substitution methods, whereas, in the real sense, we should be talking about the root problems to shut them up.

According to a review done by Sibo Chen, the author of the book asked a very apt question: Will net zero be sufficient to avert the impending climatic catastrophe?

This is the central question that Holly Jean Buck examines in her new book, *Ending Fossil Fuels: Why Net Zero is Not Enough*. Buck argues that the net zero framework's concentration on emissions diverts public and policy attention away from the more fundamental issue: effective and lasting climate change mitigation requires an unwavering end to the fossil fuel sector.

The book discusses the importance of initiating a planned phaseout of fossil fuels in three parts. Part One, 'The Cruel Optimism of Net Zero', elaborates on the appeals and drawbacks of net zero.

Part Two, 'Five Ways of Looking at Fossil Fuel Phaseout', evaluates five approaches for initiating a planned decline of fossil fuels, an extremely difficult undertaking that will require close coordination across all sectors of society.

Part Three, 'A Phaseout Toolbox for the 2020s', presents a checklist of actions Buck believes are critical for achieving net zero emissions by 2050.

Ending Fossil Fuels offers many refreshing perspectives on climate politics. It makes a strong case that the inherent ambiguity of net zero may result in a world where fossil capital continues to exert its enormous economic and political power over our daily lives. For me, the book provokes thinking about what could be achieved at the upcoming COP27 Summit and why grassroots political power needs to play an essential role in finding climate mitigation strategies that would benefit communities currently under the unsustainable exploitation of fossil capital.

Another merit of the book is its optimism: despite outlining various difficulties confronting the road to net zero, the book presents emerging evidence in Part Three that it is still possible to launch a controlled demolition of the use of fossil fuels over the next decades. To conclude, *Ending Fossil Fuels* is a thought-provoking analysis of barriers to decarbonisation, a fascinating read for anyone concerned about the looming climate catastrophe.

Upcoming Activities

- **THE NIGER DELTA ALTERNATIVE CONVERGENCE**
- **SOE SESSIONS ON:**
 - **PROPELLING THE TRANSITION (DEBATING ALTERNATIVES)**
 - **ENDING THE FOSSIL AGE – DIVESTMENT**
- **OILFIELDS AND FISHNET DIALOGUES**
- **COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING TRAINING**
- **AGROECOLOGY TRAINING FOR FARMERS IN KANO**
- **ROUNDTABLE MEETING FOR STAKEHOLDERS FROM THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT**
- **AGROECOLOGY TRAINING FOR JOURNALISTS**

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If you will like to join our team of volunteers.

Kindly visit www.homef.org/volunteer

For More updates on upcoming events visit www.homef.org