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eco~ INSTIGATOR

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF HEALTH OF MOTHER EARTH FOUNDATION

PUSHING AGROECOLOGY
FINANCING FOR CLIMATE
RESILIENCE AT COP27

OIL THEFT
POLLUTES
OUR NATION

A LOVE LETTER TO THE
PHILOSOPHER OF THE
COLOSSAL MASS

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HEALTH OF MOTHER EARTH FOUNDATION

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Brot
für die Welt

AFSA
ALLIANCE FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN AFRICA

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Nnimmo Bassey

Director, Helath of
Mother Earth
Foundation

Home Run

Welcome to the last edition of our quarterly magazine for the year 2022. As you already know, this is the 38th edition of the Eco-Instigator. We want to specially thank the contributors as well as the readers, for their inputs and feedbacks which have continuously helped us to improve on the contents of the magazine.

This edition is packed with interesting reads that not only appeal to reasoning but prompts for actions to protect the health of Mother Earth, and by extension, the wellbeing of beings. In this edition, we bring you our assessment of negotiations that took place at COP27 in Sharm El-Shiekh, Egypt.

Agroecology is a tested and viable agricultural practice that improves and promotes healthy soils and negates dependence on industrial agriculture that is heavily reliant on the massive use of dangerous inorganic fertilizers and fossil fuel. This edition brings you quite a number of reports and articles that reiterates the viability of agroecology.

As usual, we bring you instigative and resonating poems and suggestions of books you should read.

Enjoy the edition and remember to drop us a line or share feedback, stories, articles, poems or photos at editor@homef.org. We look forward to hearing from you.

Until Victory!

AGROECOLOGY, CLIMATE CHANGE AND COP 27

The world currently battles climate change. The battle has since seen a growing list of solutions such as carbon offsetting, carbon capture and storage, REDD+, carbon trading, genetic modification, etc. These solutions actually do nothing to solve the problem rather they have dire implications for local communities and ecosystem balance, thus, must be discouraged.

Studies have proven that agriculture and agrarian reforms rooted in agroecological practice and principles help to cool the planet and ensure climate resilience while guaranteeing food sovereignty. For millennia, small-scale farmers and food producers have been defending and calling for adoption of agroecological practices. Bad politics, poor policy implementation and followup are some of the factors standing in the way to a smooth transition to agroecology.

Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF) organised a capacity building workshop with CSOs on 30 August 2022. The purpose was to deepen understanding on Agroecology and its importance for climate change mitigation and adaptation and, define a CSOs' position for COP 27. The meeting had in attendance up to 20 representatives of CSOs working on climate change and food issues.

Presentations made were on: climate



change (its origin, how we got here, climate capitalism); major contributors to global warming (industrial agriculture, resource consumption; fossil fuels etc.); agroecology (background, principles, role in food sovereignty) and; false solutions versus agroecology for climate action.

It was stressed that the climate change disaster affecting Nigeria and the world is majorly caused by growing activities of industrial farming. Industrial agriculture generates around half of all anthropogenic methane (CH_4) emissions (which is 25 times more deadly than CO_2) and around three-quarters of anthropogenic Nitrous oxide (N_2O). In general, research has shown that when all impacts are considered from farm to plate to landfill, industrial agriculture is the major cause of anthropogenic climate change.

The session on the drivers of climate

change highlighted how human activities have badly damaged the environment and contributed to climate change. Beside industrial agriculture, a major cause of climate change is the GHG released in the exploration of fossil fuels. To mitigate climate change is to cut down emissions at source.

It was stated that countries that have been on the receiving end of climate change have to carefully examine the narratives driving the conversations and negotiations at the Conference of Parties (COP) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This is important because for years, the debates have regressed from demanding real actions to defending damaging lifestyles and dominant geopolitical power positions. Although the COP is presented as a democratic space, it has always been clear that it is actually a space for imperial and indeed colonial domination.

The session on false solutions vs. agroecology explained how solutions such as carbon offsetting, carbon capture and storage, REDD+, carbon trading, and genetic modification are false solutions. The drivers of these solutions are aware that the world as we know it, is heading to a major catastrophe of irreversible proportion. However, the solutions they propose mainly seek to maintain the current relations of production, extractivism and consumption. These solutions permit continuous emitting and polluting, while hoping that the problem will somehow disappear.

For example, carbon trading allows for the buying and selling of permits and credits to emit carbon dioxide. It is a market and trade scheme supposedly for limiting emissions. The scheme's governing body sets a cap on allowable emissions. Member firms that do not have enough allowances to cover their emissions must either make reductions or buy another firm's spare credits for emissions. Members with extra allowances can sell them or bank them for future use. Carbon trading creates a market for pollution by granting permits for pollution and fixes

Agroecology helps to build healthy soils while industrial agriculture that depends on inorganic fertilizers and pesticides actually destroys the soil.

nothing. It diminishes sanctions or incentives for real climate action.

It was opined that the focus at the COP 27 should be on how to transition to agriculture and energy systems that are not dependent on fossil fuels—an agriculture system that cushions against the impacts of climate change; one that helps to mitigate instead of compounding the climate catastrophe.

Agroecology helps to build healthy soils while industrial agriculture that depends on inorganic fertilizers and pesticides actually destroys the soil. The healthy soil is more able to retain carbon. There is over three times more carbon stored in soils than in the atmosphere. Carbon is lost when soils are tilled. Scientists estimate that tilling and destruction of soil life have caused a 30 to 75% loss of soil carbon globally. A portion of this goes into the atmosphere as carbon dioxide, contributing to climate change. This process can be reversed through agro-ecological farming practices. It is estimated that 25% of the excess carbon causing climate change could be returned to soils, providing one of the cheapest and most beneficial ways to reduce climate emissions.

Agroecology's biggest mitigation potential relates to the practice of conserving and

building soils. It is devoid of chemical fertilisers, thus, avoids the enormous energy consumed in the high pressure process involved in making ammonia. Instead, agroecology returns organic wastes into the soil as compost. This also protects against land-filling, where a lack of oxygen creates methane as organic wastes decompose. It was noted that Methane and Nitrous oxide have much greater impact on the climate than carbon dioxide.

After the presentations, there was a group discussion session where participants highlighted policy entry points for Agroecology, that is, the key recommendations to government on inclusion of agroecology as a climate change solution, and what should be priority in the deliberations at COP 27.

The following were agreed on as the CSOs' position on COP 27:

- 1) The gathering must agree that investments should go into agroecology with support for the majority of farmers, rather than industrial, colonial or plantation agriculture that depends on fossil fuels, promotes risky technologies, continues to devastate the environment, displace communities and feed climate change.
- 2) Countries should recognise agroecology as a real solution to climate change and reflect same in their national adaption plans and mitigation strategies.
- 3) Those who are most affected by climate change (farmers, fishers, coastline communities, women, etc.) should be given space at the negotiation tables, and not be prevented from defending their lands, forests and oceans on which their livelihoods depend.
- 4) COP 27 must not be a platform for avoidance of actions or the

appropriation of ideas and ideals of indigenous peoples of the world fighting for the respect of the rights of Mother Earth with clear understanding that to do otherwise spells doom for humans and other species.

- 5) African leaders and others from vulnerable, exploited and exposed regions must demand for climate justice and insist on the payment of climate debt for historical and current harms.
- 6) The marketisation of Nature, including through diverse forms of carbon trading must be denounced and rejected.
- 7) Binding emissions cuts should be returned to the negotiations and polluting nations must agree to do their fair share on the basis of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR). This is against the so-called Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) that so far have not dented more than 2 gigatonnes of the 27 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent needed to keep temperature increase at not more than 1.5°C above preindustrial levels as the Paris Agreement of 2015 stipulates.
- 8) The Paris Agreement should be overturned and a new upper temperature target of well below 1.5°C set with the understanding that 1.5°C global average means 2.2°C for Africa and that such a temperature scenario will utterly cook the continent.

As a senior researcher and agroclimatologist at the Federal College of Land Resources Technology in Owerri, Imo State, Mckelvin Agunloye (one of the participants), had rightly said, climate change as a global challenge needs critical and urgent action.



Photo by Babawale Obayanju

COP27, THE LOSS AND THE DAMAGE AT INJURY TIME

Nnimmo Bassey

The recently concluded 27th Conference of Parties (COP27) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) at Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, went in the way of rituals and did not rise beyond the low bars set by previous editions. Well, maybe it rose above the bar in one aspect which could be considered, more or less, the brightest glimmer of hope, appearing in the extended time of the conference.

For those who were keeping vigil on the deliberations, it was a roller coaster session. Hope glimmered when many nations unexpectedly rose to say that what is needed is for fossil fuels, all of them, to be phased out, not just the phasing down of unabated coal as was cockily suggested at Glasgow. Recall that Glasgow only talked of phasing down (not phasing out) of unabated coal (not all coal).

Observers gasped and yelped as some nations, notorious for blocking any attempt to name fossil fuels as the driver of global heating in the official

negotiations, shifted positions. However, the flickering candle was snuffed and smashed at the final plenary. So, it came to pass, that a handful of nations, including Saudi Arabia and China, threatened to scuttle the entire COP if fossil fuels were called out and their obituary announced.

Why is the COP playing the ostrich and burying its head in the sand by being unwilling to accept that fossil fuels are literally burning the planet and that the real climate action is to phase out the polluters?

How come everyone knows that up to 89 percent of the greenhouse gases in the atmosphere emerged from the burning of fossil fuels but the COP chooses to ignore this truth?

How come even the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which is the COP's thinking hat says that fossil fuels must be addressed, yet the COP plays deaf?

The simple answer is that the swarm of over 600 fossil fuel lobbyists at the COP, with some on official national delegations, simply would not allow reason to triumph over profit.

And as expected, African nations asserted their right to use fossil fuels as the means towards developing their nations even if the dangerously

polluting pathways that the industrialised nations used brought the world to where we are now. That argument sounds more like the swan song of a fossil fuel industry desperate to keep itself on life support. And of course, there is no shared understanding of what the development the African leaders speak of looks like. Some of us expect leaders in the Global South to demand payment of the climate debt and stop accumulating further debt by halting dependence on fossil fuels.

The jinx and allure of the fossil age must be broken. It is time to quit denial and accept that fossil fuels must be fossilized. African nations are right to be concerned about poor levels of energy penetration on the continent. However, it is essential to point out that this cannot be solved by allowing fossil fuel corporations to get away with murder, ecocide, and human rights abuses just so that you have fossil fuels to export.

Do the leaders not realise that 89 percent of fossil fuels infrastructure in Africa serve export purposes and that Africa's extractive sector employs less than 1 percent of Africa's workforce?

Moreover, only 5 percent of the investment in the sector is done in Africa. Testimonies from oilfield or minefield communities are tales of woes, pains, poverty, and death. With the scramble for

new fossil fuels development on the coastline of the continent and virtually all the deltas, Africa is now the last ditch stand by for the fossil fuels speculators and companies.

Assault on the Deltas

The deltas under assault in Africa include the Zambezi Delta in Sofala and Zambézia Provinces of Mozambique; the notoriously ruined Niger Delta in Nigeria; Okavango Delta in Namibia/Botswana and the Saloum Delta in Sénégal. Add to that the lakes and rivers in the Albertine Rift Valley and the Virunga Park, and the continent and the world are set to lose major biodiversity hotspots, protected areas and UNESCO world heritage sites.

The resistance by communities, fishers and knowledge holders in South Africa and elsewhere clearly show that the industry is unwanted by the people and that their persistence is nothing but a waging of war against the people and planet. We should add, too, that militarization, violence, and conflicts are the templates on which the industry constructs its ever-rising inordinate profits.

Considering the above, it should be clear that fossil fuel extraction in Africa has little to do with employment, energy supply or boosting local economies. It is all about meeting the appetite for inordinate profits and of



Photo by David Tong

fossil fuels addicts. It is time to rethink the hard-headed marriage with the polluters.

A Harsh Reality

Just before COP27, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) issued an Emissions Gap report that aggregated the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) that countries have made under the Paris Agreement and concluded that the puny pledges would do nothing to ward off impending catastrophic global heating.

In fact, the report highlighted that the world should prepare for a temperature rise as high as 2.8 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels by the close of this century.

The report emphasised that the window to avert climate catastrophe was rapidly

closing and that the world needs urgent transformation and deep actions to cut emissions by at least 45 percent by 2030.

The first jolt of COP27 was the release of a concept note on carbon removal activities under the Article 6.4 of the Paris Agreement.

That document defined carbon removals thus: Carbon dioxide removal (CDR) refers to anthropogenic activities that remove carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere and ensure its long-term storage in terrestrial, geological, or ocean reservoirs, or in long-lasting products. Carbon capture and storage (CCS) and carbon capture and utilisation (CCU) can be part of CDR methods if the CO₂ has been captured from the atmosphere, either indirectly in the form of biomass or directly from ambient air, and stored over

the long term in geological reservoirs or long-lasting products.

Two things among others in the concept note raised concern. First, the reference to storage in ocean reservoirs. While it is not clear what these reservoirs would be, it signals a huge threat to ocean ecosystems. This was roundly denounced by groups such as the FishNet Alliance because using the ocean as carbon reservoirs or for any other geoengineering experimentation could sound the death knell for their livelihoods, cultures and spirituality.

The notion of long-term storage suggests that there will be a terminal point or a time when the storage would cease to work. That means that the proponents of such measures are laying a load of trouble on future

generations.

Second, carbon capture and utilisation and indeed the entire paragraph reads like something lifted from the playbook of the fossil fuels industry. Before geoengineering entered the climate debate, oil companies had been capturing carbon and reinjecting into wells to push out more crude oil for burning and releasing of yet more carbon. If this specious definition is accepted, fossil fuel companies would be earning credits for committing more climate crimes by pumping more and more carbon into the atmosphere.

It would again illustrate the hypocrisy of the carbon trading non-solutions and the net zero propositions, keep dirty fuels in business and allow the planet to hurtle to cataclysmic climate impacts.

For many nations, the fossil fuels lobby COP27 was a huge carbon trade fair. However, for civil society groups, indigenous groups, youths, women, and people of faith, it was a great space for interactions, networking, learning and actions. Real and actionable climate solutions were offered while the negotiators were largely busy wordsmithing and birthing non-solutions.

Lost and Damaged

The shining light of COP27 was the decision to have Loss and Damage.

The Parties decided “to

establish new funding arrangements for assisting developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, in responding to loss and damage, including with a focus on addressing loss and damage by providing and assisting in mobilizing new and additional resources, and that these new arrangements complement and include sources, funds, processes and initiatives under and outside the Convention and the Paris Agreement.”

The COP came to this decision after acknowledging “the urgent and immediate need for new, additional, predictable and adequate financial resources to assist developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change in responding to economic and non-economic loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change, including extreme weather events and slow onset events, especially in the context of ongoing and ex post (including rehabilitation, recovery and reconstruction) action.”

Having Loss and Damage is indeed historic. However, the nitty gritty of the mechanisms to bring it to life is yet to be negotiated.

Already there are signals that the USA and some others do not see the decision to have Loss and Damage as having anything to do with reparations or liability. What this portends is that unless those who have already been damaged by global warming

speak up and insist that the unfolding crisis has both historical and systemic roots, this may be another tiresome ritual of quirky charity.

Another bone that will have to be picked, will be how this relates to the already existing Green Climate Fund and how rich nations who have not met pledges made since COP15 will cross the hurdle to Loss and Damage.

This may well be the pivotal time to go beyond celebrating the possibility of payments for loss and damage and demand the payment of a Climate Debt accumulated over centuries of exploitation, despoliation, imperial and colonial plunder. Loss and Damage cannot be charity.

An African COP?

Some had called COP27 the Africa COP but that was mere wishful thinking. Although the COP was held in Africa it did nothing to assure that temperature increases will not burn or cook the continent. Except for the acceptance of Loss and Damage, there is no hope that more financial flows will come to the region.

With our leaders insisting on digging up more fossil fuels, the hope of rescuing our environment continues to dim.

The answer to the question as to what was gained at Sharm El Sheikh is, thus, blowing in the wind.

A HEISTED INTERNET



*Robber barons of social
media
Born of the belief of their
divine rights
Are the spectre of feudal
overlords
Stalking humanity today.*

*Astride the high horse
Of unbridled arrogance
Modern day missionary
zealots
Inspired by their ancestral
plunder and genocide
Now build a matrixed reality
Of modern day slavery.*

*Aah internet my dear friend
The potentiality
Of the great levellor
Now lifeless
In a plague of fear and
coercion
Of a grubby dollorised future
Enriching the few
Assassinating optimism.*

*Pray these demonic Azuras
of Ignorance
Neutering consciousness
Hijacking the unborn
birthrights
At the altar of cesspooled
profit.
Are defeated by courage and*

honour.

*These new
missionaries of gated
development
Censor dissonance
Commodifying.
Financialising
Every blessing of Great
Mother.
Nothing is sacred.
Even God is traded as a
profit centre
Of rampant consumerism.*

*We are at a tipping point.
The terrifying stridence of
war
Drumming it's purgatory of
violence
Needs no human with
intelligence
Or ethics of custodianship.
But a bionic stunted version
Of the complaint
In this grandiose reset of our
world.*

*Every cell in my body rejects
this
Blighted version of the world.
A tyranny that not even
Orwell foresaw.
We are data.
Profiled. Mined. Exploited.*

*We stumble blindly
A drugged existence
Fed on a diet of superficiality
A three minute attention
span.
And 180 characters.*

*My hope is that ancestral
memory
Will reignite our distant
spirituality
Inspiring a new pathway
To the Supramental evolution
And embolden us to reclaim
Our Sovereignty
Over our Bodies. Minds.
Spirit.*

*Democratising our Internet
Bounded by shared
commons
Of open sourced compassion
That serves All Life.
Not the cuckolds
Of mercenary profiteering.*

JAY NAIDOO



Pushing Agroecology Financing for Climate Resilience at COP27

AFSA, representing more than 200 million farmers, calls for increased financing for agroecology and engagement with smallholder farmers in climate adaptation negotiations at Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt on 7 November 2022.

As the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) returns to Africa after six years, the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) is calling international support for sustainable, locally-driven agriculture solutions to address the climate crisis. AFSA, Africa's largest civil society organisation representing more than 200 million farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolks, indigenous peoples, women and youth movements, and faith groups across the continent, will attend COP27 to ensure negotiations strengthen Africa's resilience to the climate crisis by integrating agroecology into regional and national climate policy spaces.

The delegation will build up from AFSA's ongoing advocacy and resolution, at the meeting held in Addis Ababa in September, to demand that COP27 put agroecology at the centre of Africa's climate adaptation.

This would create resilience for Africa's small-scale farmers, fishers, pastoralists, and indigenous communities and their food systems.

Ahead of the COP, AFSA has submitted a position paper, *Adaptation, Resilience and Mitigation Through Agroecology*, that outlines a clear path for leaders and policymakers to prioritise climate adaptation through agroecology. In the paper, AFSA outlines five key demands under five priority areas, summarised thus: Agriculture: Prioritise agroecology by including it in COP27 climate decisions and institutionalising it within the UNFCCC.

Climate adaptation: Centre on and meaningfully engage small-scale food producers on climate adaptation, and include the utilisation of indigenous knowledge.

Climate action on land: Focus on the protection of land from degradation due to large-scale agriculture and establish/restore community-based natural resources management..

Finance: Direct new and accessible climate financing to small-scale farmers, in the form of grants rather than loans.

Gender: Operationalise the UNFCCC's Gender Action Plan to enable women and girls to make the best economic decisions to sustainably protect their lands.

"Ignoring agroecology is ignoring Africa's farmers and sidelining the planet's most vulnerable people who are being hit first and worst by the climate crisis" Dr. Million Belay, AFSA General Coordinator and Panel Expert with IPES-Food, cautions. He emphasised that "Africa could feed itself many times over. But agroecology cannot and must not be overlooked by decision-makers as the most effective means to build resilience and enable small-scale farmers, pastoralists, and fishers to adapt to climate change."

AFSA also hosts an exhibit, *Opportunities for Directing Climate Finance towards Resilient & Agroecological Food Systems*, at COP27 on November 14.

There, they present data conveying the urgent need for governments' investment in agroecology and food system efforts. The presentation is to be followed by a panel, with speakers from the African Development Bank, Green Climate Fund, AFSA, representatives from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

"Africa is enduring the effects

of the climate emergency every day—the climate crisis doesn't wait and neither can our people," said Bridget Mugambe, AFSA Program Coordinator. She calls on leaders in Africa and across the globe to give ear to the demands and "...prioritise agroecology as an African-led solution to feed our communities while also adapting to the climate emergency."

"Ignoring agroecology is ignoring Africa's farmers and sidelining the planet's most vulnerable people who are being hit first and worst by the climate crisis"

Sena Alouka, Executive Director of Togo's Young Volunteers for the Environment and Chair of AFSA's Climate and Agroecology Working Group, emphasized the same point: "Leaders at COP27 must prioritize food systems in Africa's climate adaptation plans and integrate agroecology into UNFCCC climate negotiations. We don't have time to fritter away.

The United Nations Conference on Climate Change (COP 27) provides a global opportunity to begin a just transition away from high-emitting industrial agriculture, corporate food system monopolies, and false climate solutions and



Photo by francesco-gallarotti // unsplash

toward agroecology, food sovereignty, and self-sufficiency.”

As part of their efforts at COP27, AFSA is launching a week-long social media campaign to promote agroecology as Africa’s solution to the climate crisis. Using the hashtag #Agroecology4Climate, AFSA invites the global community to join their campaign and follow along with the week’s events.

Culled from: [AFSA at COP27 to Demand Investment in Agroecology as Locally-Driven Solution to Climate Crisis – AFSA \(afsafrica.org\)](#)

AFSA is the biggest continental voice for food sovereignty and agroecology in Africa. It is the largest network of networks in Africa, with more than 30 network members with a combined potential reach of 200 million Africans. Its membership embraces farmers, indigenous communities, pastoralists, hunters and gatherers, fisherfolk, consumer networks, women and youth networks, faith-based organisations, and civil society organisations (CSOs).



Frantz Fanon: A Love Letter to the Philosopher of the Colossal Mass

Alieu Bah

A tribute and reminder on the imperative need to study and internalise the analysis Fanon shared with the oppressed majority of the earth.

It's the tail end of March 2022, yet the wretched of the earth, the damned of humanity are still here; a social, economic and political anathema writ large at this late hour of history.

It was the hope that this engineered African misery present at independence will give way to a radiant self determined, developed and in the fullness of time a federated socialist African Nation. But the nobodies caught as it were in the nation state, inaugurated by the National Liberation Struggle are still here, trapped in a thousand many battles with themselves and the world built to keep them in their place. An unforgiving, schizophrenic world whose morbidity racks the body of both state and person in continuous succession—a never-ending necropolitics.

Their fate signed, sealed, and packaged for the consumption of the rich and wealthy few of the earth. Buffets, where the flesh, blood and tears of the poor served to a greedy, barbaric, capitalist horde are ever more sumptuous. In this neocolonial dystopia, the rich are not ever eaten as per the dream of a revolutionary project taking over the spoils of profit and surplus; instead they are the ones that feast on the carrion of the nobodies in wild abandon. Their feasting, this satiated few, is the stuff of legend and in their belch a recognition of a satisfied bunch of mobsters who rejoice more in their heist as an art form, a birthright even, than any sort of hopeful self reckoning that will make them stop in their track or ever learn to take stock. The proverbial cocktail party list that was supposed to be forcefully changed at the dawn of decolonisation remains the same even as it is inherited

and one or few families holds the reins in a vicious circle of privileged bequest.

(Un)fortunately your book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, is still material to us. It was supposed to be an artefact of history, forever to rest in the museums of liberated territories. But fact is, it remains a living document and manifesto to the colonised of the earth. At once a painful reminder and a paean to new worlds being ushered in through direct confrontation with the unrighteous scourge. From the favelas of Brazil, the hood-lands of America, the jungles of Chiapas, from the townships of Johannesburg to the slums of Nairobi, this masterpiece continues to shine the eyes of a new generation. These children, seedlings of the wretched, in beginning to see the reality that you spoke of in your works are rising, honing might and intellect and demanding a refund for their parents who were sold nothing but mere fickle dreams.

A Fanonian dialectic now ensues as the neocolony haunts the metropole once again at this dawn of our impending liberation as a people.

The shantytown, the medina and the slum still persist. The compartmentalisation of the world continues unabated. However, the divide gets lethal and more cancerous.

“A Fanonian dialectic now ensues as the neocolony haunts the metropole once again at this dawn of our impending liberation as a people”

The line, the border isn't in the same town or neighbourhood anymore, but between the terrain of the oppressed—the third world, a regional slum and the centre of the oppressor, the colonist. With the ever-increasing globalised configuration of capital, the choke hold of a staggering market, to the expansion of “soft” imperialism in the form of intergovernmental organisations and NGOs from the coloniser, the metropolis has exceeded all expectations of a shared analysis between our generations; the chasm continues to deepen since the die got cast at that ancient unequal Afro-European encounter.

It has gotten graver since you succumbed to the white claws of death in that hospital in Maryland. The rich neighbourhood and the slums today are mostly populated by the same faces, the same race of men and women, those who were once envious of the coloniser, have finally taken their place and now inflicts the old pain on their own people. When I was in Nairobi sometime ago, it reminded me so much of your analysis on the divided, psychotic colonial society. On one side of town is the glimmer and shine of the modern project; on the other side a perverted anatomy of death, a geography of anguish.

In more ways than one, it's as if your take was about the neocolonial state's continuous life cycle in those illuminating first chapters of *The Wretched of the Earth*. The naked violence of it and the wanton disregard for human life makes you a prophetic figure with both rare insight and keen

knowing of our unaccounted tomorrows yet to come. But the more searing and penetrating of your analysis is to do with the westernised scholars and intellectuals who keep coming home after years of imbibing the “nuances” of the colonial ivory tower.

They're here after all this time, still concerned with particulars, irrelevant intricacies and false Eurocentric moralisms just as you predicted. They do all kinds of gymnastics with the minds of the masses to divert them from the struggle for land, bread, and water.

They are being found out, though. Young and old progressive Africans have started studying and propagating your works and see their (colonised intellectuals') likeness once again. The objective conditions are also giving rise to a newer, more uncompromising context that defies the gravitational pull of bourgeois intellection grown from those barren western soils. These new rebels, ghetto-grown intellectuals, unknown revolutionaries, are at once denouncing these puppets and concretely building again the old-but-known mass organisational model that led to our liberation in times gone by from the clutches of classic colonialism. They have failed many times but their sheer determination to grind the machine to a halt is astounding. I met many of them across the continent. Their win is inevitable. It might take a long time, but when there arc finally bends, I know it will angle towards a free continent that has finally come into its own.

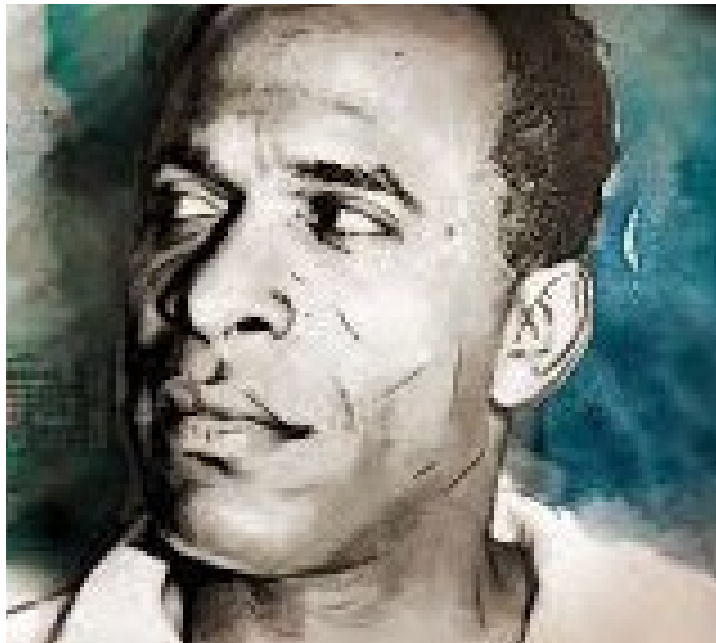
Your name, as always, continues to raise colonial anxiety. It continues to sound like metal dropping on the soothing

silence of the corporate world; a jolt, a scary unwelcome thrust. From Pretoria to Panama, it continues to liberate, to agitate, even, as it brings a tremble and cold shiver to those atrocious men sitting atop the bones and skeletons of the nobodies.

You stay plaguing the Towers of Babel even after all this time! It reminds one of the old biblical aphorism that wickedness tarries but a little while, but the works of the righteous lives on forevermore. Your lives and afterlives have clearly shown the truth and precision of that good old saying.

Year after year, you resurface in the most unlikely of places, but unbeknownst to bourgeois historians, so long as oppression exists and there is a demand for the abject concrete conditions to change, you, the philosopher of the colossal mass, will show face, heart, and mind, and guide the movement even from the grave. But there is trouble now, a slight one, but trouble nonetheless. It's the scholar once again.

Your name and your work continues to be appropriated by academe. You've become a career for the well-to-do, the ones who erase. They have complicated your legacy. The colonised intellectual you so much detest has come to be the so-called custodian of your name. I hope you come in the whirlwind and destroy it all. I hope you come into the thunder, into the tsunami, as a cataclysmic force of nature. But in the end, I guess that's our battle. You have done your part in all



fullness and glory. It's now our turn to honour your name by bringing it home to the oppressed and the wretched of the earth. To reclaim and recenter it in the annals of an ever dynamic liberatory movement. May it be so.

There is so much to enrich this letter with, but so little time and space.

However, we who inherited the disinherited, we who took the pledge to raise a billion-strong army, we who know liberation and freedom is a birthright, we who want to end the compartmentalisation of the world—the Manichaeism of the land—we are still here honouring your call to: "shake off the great mantle of night which has enveloped us, and reach for the light.

The new day which is dawning must find us determined, enlightened and resolute. We must abandon our dreams and say farewell to our old beliefs and former friendships. Let us not lose time in useless laments or sickening mimicry".



Building Hope through Solidarity and Mass Action

The poorest and most vulnerable people living in Africa are largely being impacted by climate change. A sober analysis of the historic impact of climate change in Africa according to a publication by Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF), reveal that the continent is one of the world's most vulnerable to climate change impacts including in energy sustainability, agriculture and other livelihoods, health, water, sanitation, security, ecosystem resilience, migrations and population shifts, etc.

The scale and scope of the ecological devastation wrought on our common human habitat, Earth, by the conscienceless, rapacious and profit-driven activities of the transnational companies across the continent

have reached an unacceptable level.

This calls for urgent measures of intervention to stop and reverse the trend.

Thinking of Africa's physical environment, does it conjure up a picture of a happy environment, a complete package of a good and comfortable environment full of wealth, historical creativity, and abundance of water bodies—lush, leafy, dense forest with animals, lowlands and greens, wave swept beaches and lochs? It probably does. But those are the pictures of the pre-petroleum era that we ought to be promoting to the outside world.

But think again, especially for countries where oil is being extracted, the Niger Delta in Nigeria for example: Can you picture land contaminated by oil spills and ugly scars, water pollution, piles of rotting vegetation in landfill, corrosive buildings, heated up and smoky environment due to gas flares, the child reaching for an inhaler as air pollution exceeds safer levels? This is the Africa's Environment of today. We are faced with stepped-up logging in the national forests, persistent chemical assaults on the health and safety of millions of people, the collapse of coastal fisheries, and the refusal of corporations and governments alike to take meaningful steps against global climate change. Songbirds are not as abundant as they were in our earliest memories. For some years, there seems to be almost no monarch butterflies in the fields and forests, in the parks or above the rooftops. Every year the weather seems just a little more out of balance. Damaging floods follow periods of persistent drought.

Where we once had large expanses of intact original forests, they are now empty hillsides, stripped bare of nearly all their trees.

For too many decades, human interventions in the environment—the rapid rise of manmade structures in nature, unsustainable planning of habitats and work places—have resulted in severe damage to the ecosystem. Life and health of species are threatened. Viability of air, soil and water is uncertain. Nature, of which we are but a part, has been damaged terribly, and the time is all too close when current accelerating damages will end life as we know it.

For the over 22% of human beings who live in the Niger Delta of Nigeria, the outlook is considerably bleaker. The air is unhealthy to breathe, sometimes for weeks at a time. Children are hospitalised with extreme cases of asthma, bronchitis, and highly resistant forms of tuberculosis. Incessant floods, erosion, whirlwinds and other violent storms arrive with increasing frequency and severity, making life in rural and urban settlements more insecure than ever.

Now, ask yourself why we tend to put up with this. Who is it that lives in a home with leaky roof and weakened mould incapable of keeping one warm? Who is it that lives next to the noises and dust of open cast mines and quarries? Who is it that lives on top of land contaminated by heavy oil industry pollution, land criss-crossed by crude pipelines with constant risk of explosions? Who bears the brunt of scratching a livelihood from polluted lands and water? It is the poor in our society!

The reality is that people who have the most urgent environmental concerns are those who daily cope with the consequences of a poor quality of life, conditioned by transnational companies, whose main aim is financial growth with no regard for the environment or the health of the surrounding community members. This is true for the people of the Niger Delta and Africa at large. Subjecting communities to live in the many circumstances stated above, is great environmental injustice.

In direct response and sharp opposition to the transnational capitals that are waging an ecocidal war in Africa and the fact that communities have been struggling to protect their livelihoods from toxic assaults of an economic system that knows no bounds, groups such as West African Climate Justice Movement (WACJM) have emerged.

JOIN THE MOVEMENT

For too long, environmental organisations in Africa have toiled in isolation from grassroots communities and groups working for human and social justice and, for systemic change.. Some of the existing groups in Africa are focused on mobilising and acting around the symptoms of the crisis without an overall umbrella to bring these trends together holistically and craft actions that are both synthetic and effective.

In their pursuit for influence and recognition among the decision-makers and power brokers, and in the corporate world, some of these groups have staked their reputations for a politics

of moderation and compromise. They have institutionally tied themselves to the political and policymaking establishment, accepting as inevitable a declining public role in environmental protection and seeking accommodation with the powerful interests responsible for environmental destruction. They are deepening the crisis with new plans for expanded resource exploitation, unregulated free trade deals, and the scourge of false solution to offset industry emissions.

These schemes are coming into Africa as carbon trading, REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation), climate smart agriculture that relies on genetic engineering and data mining, green economy, soil carbon sequestration, natural climate solutions, BECCS (bioenergy with carbon capture and storage), and other forms of geoengineering. Through several of these schemes, they are grabbing more community lands and increasing dispossession, while not actually addressing the real problems.

It is time to organise a progressive flank of broadly defined 'Climate Justice' movement in Africa, to strengthen Africa's voices and demands for systemic change and move away from capitalism and its twin forces of racism and patriarchy. By this, the people would achieve ownership, control and democratic self-management of their resources as well as work together to reduce the impacts of climate change. Let's create an Africa that is sustainable, healthy and happy to live in. Join the Movement!



Photo from Unsplash

Oil Theft Pollutes Our Nation

Nnimmo Bassey

To say that Nigeria is being stolen is an understatement. It is a sordid situation. Shocking stories from the oil and gas sector continue to hit the news. Rather than being numbed by the monstrous pillaging of the nation, Nigerians should wake up to the wakeup call, especially in an election season.

By some deft choreography, the blame for the stealing and pollution in the oil field communities of the Niger Delta has been deflected to the poor communities. This devious deflection has been so successful that the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA), which has the fingerprints of multinational oil companies all over it, criminalizes communities and holds them up as

being responsible for interferences that may occur on oil facilities in their territories. This is unambiguously read in Section 257 subsections 2 and 3 of the PIA. The same Act gives the oil companies the sole right of determining who a host community is and grudgingly accedes to extending a mere 3 percent of the companies' operational cost to the communities.

The meagre 3 percent is to be administered by a board dominated by the oil companies' nominees for community projects. The same 3 percent, by the Act, is to be forfeited by the communities in the event of damage and sabotage to oil facilities or production.

At a time when the nation is in dire need of revenue and when she should be investing in renewable energy, 30 percent of the profit from oil enterprise is to be spent in futile search for new oil reserves.

With no divestment policy in place, polluting oil companies have “divested” from their onshore and other acreages, selling them off to their local cronies.

By these moves, companies like Shell, Exxon, and Chevron plot to shrug off their historical and current despoliation of the Niger Delta environment. This they do knowing that the new “owners” would lift no finger to clean up the mess from the decrepit facilities and pipelines they are inheriting.

Whenever there is an oil spill incident, fingers are pointed at amorphous third parties in what is popularly termed sabotage. Meanwhile, a well blowout like the one at Ororo-1 has been raging, since April 2020, off the coast of Awoye in Ondo State with no respite in site. The notorious blowout at Aiteo’s well 1 on Santa Barbara River in Nembe raged for six weeks in 2021, spewing probably over 500,000 barrels of crude oil onto the environment before it was stemmed.

No cleanup has been carried out till date. We are a people fully at home with pollution!

Recent statements by those who should know better, suggest that between 400,000 and 1,000,000 barrels of crude oil are stolen daily. However, these are just recycled figures from years ago as in actuality, the nation does not have accurate figures of how much crude is pumped daily in the country. Not surprising. There is no agreement over how much refined petroleum products are imported into the country, making room for humongous petrol subsidies to be paid endlessly. The imaginary figures of stolen crude have been in circulation for years.

In 2012 the minister of finance under the President Jonathan administration had

told the Financial Times of London that 400,000 barrels of crude oil was stolen daily. The current Minister of State for Petroleum Resources has recently quoted the same figures. A former governor of Delta State opined that as much oil as was officially exported was also being stolen. It has been known that crude oil is being stolen at industrial scale in the Niger Delta.

The narrative has been that the stealing is done by operators of illegal refineries. However, those refineries could not refine 400,000 barrels of crude oil per day. Clearly this is fiction. Those illegal refineries have thrived and become critical suppliers of refined petroleum products in the country today as the four government owned refineries remain comatose and on life support.

“ With no divestment policy in place, polluting oil companies have “divested” from their onshore and other acreages, selling them off to their local cronies.”

Meanwhile, the old but brand new Nigerian National Petroleum Company is staking its hope of meeting national petroleum products needs on a private refinery operating from an economic free zone (EFZ). This zone has been appropriately termed “enclaves of exception” in the book *Enclaves of Exception: Special Economic Zones and Extractive Practices in Nigeria* by Omolade Adunbi.

In fact, we need to be told how the NNPC managed to pay for 20 percent shares in

the Dangote refinery—the EFZ refinery.

We have heard sordid tales and seen utterly despoiled environments, but the official declaration that a 4 kilometres pipeline was built in the ocean and illegally operated for 9 years through an offshore platform without being detected deserves the>NNLG literature prize. Who can explain how a pipeline of that length and quality could be installed without being detected? And how could it have been operated for nine whopping years without being detected?

Not the Ministry of Petroleum Resources and it's NNPC and the then DPR; not NOSDRA nor the transnational oil companies; not the Navy nor the Joint Military Task Force detected it? Certainly, half the story has not been told. The immediate solution may well be to shut down the sector completely and spend some time in soul searching and repentance. Does it not put a lie to official insistence that the petroleum sector is the lifeline of the nation's economy? Or that the energy needs of the nation would only be met by continued extraction of crude oil? The series of exposés we read these days, including that of the stealing of natural gas, clearly show that the nation faces a grave future and that something must be done immediately.

Today, we are told that our oil revenue is not enough to service the nation's external debt. At the same time, the NNPC is declaring profits! Perhaps, economists will tell us that the company is a private enterprise distinct from what it was previously and distinct from government.

Really? It must only be in Nigeria that a public company of doubtful efficiency would metamorphose into a private

company and hopes to have a dramatic difference using the same staff and possibly same tools that had run a very opaque business.

Oil theft has not only polluted our environment, but it has also polluted our national politics. It has impoverished our people and so polluted our consciences that thieves are celebrated as heroes while the poor in their struggle to fish in polluted waters or to farm in polluted soils, are labelled villains.

With revelations of the stealing of the nation pouring daily into the airwaves, it is the time to switch on and not switch off the mic. And when the time to vote the next set of leaders comes, it will be a huge shame if we play the game of musical chairs. This is the time to hold the Niger Delta Manifesto for Ecological Transformation before the eyes of office seekers or holders.

Our recovery from the horrendous happenings in the oil sector will be assured through a conscious focus on righting the wrongs that have been visited on the people, our society, and our environment.

CAPACITY BUILDING THROUGH POPULAR ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING

Impacts of climate change are visible and dire; coastal communities are the worst hit. These communities also fall within the extractive belts in Nigeria and else where in the world, especially in the global south. They are constantly faced with the fallout of an avalanche of shallow and deep-water extractive-activities.

Their challenges are multi-pronged and dynamic as they are caught in-between the impacts of climate change, coastal erosion, sea encroachment, pollution from extractive industries, unwholesome fishing practices by

trawling vessels and an overwhelming security challenge at sea or near shore.

Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF), and her partners organised *a capacity building workshop to address these unwholesome issues at Okoro-Utip community townhall in Ibeno Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.*

The community is riverine, thus, inhabited mostly by traditional fisher-folks. These folks are losing their livelihoods to pollution and climate change related challenges like

coastal erosion, storms and sea-level rise, amidst security challenges at sea. The meeting was held on 28 September 2022.

It brought together fishers, representative of the Ministry of Agriculture from Fisheries department, media, CSOs and other local maritime workers, to discuss these issues and build capacity on popular environmental monitoring, while also discussing health and human rights components.

In an introductory remark, Stephen Oduware, Project Lead for Alliance and Networking, HOMEF

“The oil pollution is killing all the fish eggs; its wiping out generations of fishes.”

stated the objectives of the workshop, thus, “first, to ensure we know our rights; two, to let the fisher-folks know that HOMEF and her partners are in solidarity with them; and three, to train community people on environmental monitoring and work together with all stakeholders, including government officials and civil society organisations, to have the rights of fisherfolks enforced”.

Emem Okon, a leading climate and gender activist spoke on *Common Challenges around Fishing and Livelihoods andm Impacts on Women*.

“Discussing challenges around fisher women is best done by hearing from

the horse’s mouth”, she began, and commenced an interactive session with the participants. The participants bared their minds and revealed their afflictions in relation to impacts of climate change such as ocean level rise and oil exploration which are ravaging their lives and the livelihood as fishers and farmers.

“The oil pollution is killing all the fish eggs; its wiping out generations of fishes.” One of the attendees had lamented. While explaining some changes observed, a community person noted that “when the tides are high because of the extractive industry, the community becomes flooded.” On the same note, another woman vented “I used to pay school fees with proceeds from my periwinkles, but now I no longer can; my catch has reduced.”

Yet another man lamented: “We are also troubled by mighty waves; sometimes our boats and catch gets lost in those waves.”

Another complained: “We also have issues on storage; and our goods get spoilt before getting to the market.” The women fisherfolks stated that some of



Photo by Babawale Obayanju

their needs included capital, boats and freezers.

Taking the discussion further, Ms. Okon asked the participants if fishing roles were gendered in the community. The participants answered in the affirmative, stating, for example, that when the men go out to sea to fish, the women would stay back to welcome them and then move to process the fish.

Ms. Okon admonished the participants to work together with relevant stakeholders so as to build capacity to resolve many of the issues they face.

She identified access to information, and networking with people who face similar challenges, as strategies that must be taken seriously, stating that even HOMEf, through the FishNet Alliance, is working with other fisherfolks.

Training the Participants on Advocacy and Identifying an Issue, Ogechi Okanya Cookey, a communication and research expert, said that there is a connection between fisher-folks and the ocean and that is why, the ocean must be protected. "Before you can talk about protecting the environment, you must have observed and identified an issue or anomaly in the environment," she stated, and went on to guide the participants in identifying some of the issues and anomalies they have observed in their environment.

Participants identified various anomalies and changes, including changes in the river, mangroves, air, cultural/worship system and others.

"The ocean is yours to enjoy within its limits and is to be preserved for future generations. You ought not be deprived of this right," said Cookey.

She also endeared participants to try to ascertain when the changes began, with specificity, or at least by estimation as well as who or what might be responsible for the changes. "All of these will help you shape your advocacy and know who to target with it," she said.

HOMEf's legal expert, Jasper Koikoibo facilitated the section on 'Setting Goals and Objectives; and Know Your Rights' as contained in modules 3 and 4 of the training manual designed for the purpose. He called on the participants to explain their understanding of the term 'human rights'. The community members were able to share their understanding and a common denominator that was extracted was the fact that human rights do not discriminate.

The participants were told that they have the right to speak up about what happens in their environment. They were informed about documents that state clearly what their human rights are. Koikoibo started with the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Chapter 4 specifically) and the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). There was a question from a participant regarding the fairness of a particular customary law.

The said law banned a masquerade that comes out at night and obstructs the movement of people who go about their businesses at that time. The facilitator seized the opportunity to remind the community people that "where one person's rights end another's begin." The session ended on that note.



“The ocean is yours to enjoy within its limits and is to be preserved for future generations. You ought not be deprived of this right,”

ameliorate the challenges of the fishers and maritime workers.

The session ended with the Oduware telling the participants of the importance of working more to sustain a success achieved. They were also encouraged to delegate, as representatives, those who have the character and integrity to represent them.

The core lessons from the previous sessions of the training were summarized by Stephen Oduware who moved on to cover items of the last three modules 5, 6, 7. The modules covered training on preparing message and strategy; determining alliances, targets and opponents; and taking actions and evaluating the process.

Oduware charged the participants to target and query politicians that will come seeking votes on their plans to

GIVING IS UBUNTU



Photo by Buena Vista Images / The Image Bank Unreleased via Getty Images

Giving is Ubuntu.
I am, because we are.

Agenda-less solidarity.
That lights up the interconnected
Thread of Life.

But the treachery of philanthropy
Often is confused with the giving
Of Ubuntu.
In a world where crass accumulation
abounds and Mother Earth bleeds from
wounds of the avarice of men.
Is the poisoned chalice
Of retrograde class of affluence
Seeking redemption.

The winding meander of genocide
Bred by colonial slave-masters
Carrying Scriptures and guns
Birthing the sweat shops dungeons
Of the crony capitalism.

Blood money
Cleansing its stench
Through its layered slaves.
In a tsunami of deceit and lies.
Bought of politicians

Mascoted media talking heads.

Choreograph
A dumbed down humanity.
Stultifying our resistance.

False prophets abound
Purveyors of mass psychosis
The iron heel of fear, coercion and
compliance.

Beware!
Gifts of appeasement.
Shattering dreams.
Giving has become taking.
A sleight of hand
A grubby cauldron
Of vested interests
That sear the consciousness
Constructing the choking chains of
Modern day slavery.

Giving is the gentle flow of compassion of
the heart. Not the wandering arrogance of
toxic Men.

by **Jay Naidoo**

WORKSHOP ON WORKERS' HEALTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The challenges of working and earning livelihoods from the ocean in Nigeria are varied and complex, leaving imprints of human rights abuses on all corners.

The key factors that give rise to these human rights abuses include: lack of knowledge of the rights, pollution of all sort, reduced resource access, incursion of foreign fishing fleets, health issues, militarization of the area and the rise of piracy, kidnapping, robbery, and other violent crimes.

Another issue is climate change, resulting in loss of coastal land, acidification of the ocean and incursion of salt water into freshwater systems.

It is on this basis that the Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF) organised a one-day workshop tagged *Workers' Health and Human Rights in Marine Environment*, on 16 November 2022 in Lagos State, Nigeria. The workshop was for fishers, fish processors, and boat drivers. The target audience was, thus, those at the centre of the crises in the maritime environment. The workshop would help the target groups to begin to identify hotspots and risks. It would stimulate discussions around, strengthen and increase the target groups' capacity and

skills for dealing with the issues plaguing their environment.

The workshop brought together a broad section of related labour unions—Nigerian Labour Union (NLC) and Maritime Union—CSOs, community persons, researchers and media. The gathering was for all to examine the nature and dimensions of human rights abuses in fishing settlements, workers' health and other issues in the coastal region of Nigeria.

The aquatic ecosystem is inundated with lots of issues. Among these issues are: the irregular unregulated and unreported fishing, the challenges of dredging, mangrove destruction, pollution by extractive activities and

health challenges.

According to Stephen Oduware, an environmental and climate justice campaigner with HOMEf, the plan for the meeting is to instigate robust discussion on the above mentioned issues and "come up with a common position on how to engage laws and good policies that will prompt good governance in the maritime environment".

The meeting was graced with thought provoking presentations from speakers on a wide range of issues, from the nature of the environment and the consequences of oil exploration, to activities of multinational oil companies, threats to traditional fishing and, maritime and fisheries sector governance including policies.

Elder Akintemehin, a leader from Makoko fishing community gave an insight on the issues going on in his community. He said "what we are facing, both from lagoon and in the sea is not palatable. Some of our people cannot buy engine boat on their own. They manage canoe for their fishing. Now, whether it is Lagos State government or Federal government, as they are doing dredging, if fishers go for fishing, they cannot catch 1,000 Naira worth of fish. By hearing the noise of the dredging engine inside water, fish will continue to run away."

The fishers' leader revealed that they are concerned about the plan by government to sandfill the entire Makoko community along the lagoon side. "We are begging government that if they sandfill Makoko the entire community will be flooded as we are already facing flood issues. So, we are appealing with government to stop the sand-filling as we are not ready to battle with another problem. If the government can stop, fish will become abundant again in Makoko." Elder Akintemehin implored.

According to Bimbo Osobe, member of Nigeria's Club/Informal Settlement Federation, "sand mining also known as Dredging affects a lot of communities. The more dredging, the more communities are prone to flooding and the more it affects fishing activities. The deeper the water, the further the fishes." Osobe went on to explain that, "for people that paddle to go fishing it's not easy for them." She regretted that as a people affected by these activities, they have complained and had series of meetings with the government, explaining that the activities result to flooding and health issues for community people. As a result of the dredging activities she said, "Our sewage systems are blocked." She adjured the government to stop the sand mining or go further in the ocean instead of dredging close to communities. "We also ask the government should intervene in clearing the canal, build embankment and save Makoko community from going under water." She pleaded.

J. D. Koikoibo of HOMEf's legal section, gave a presentation on *Protection of Human Rights in the Maritime Environment*. He explained the importance of the ocean. "The ocean is home to vast mysteries ranging from the largest animal on the planet, to microscopic organisms which make up 98 per cent of the ocean's biomass." He explained.

Throwing more light on the importance of the ocean, Koikoibo stated that the microbes housed by the ocean are essential to the food chain, the production of nutrients for land and sea, and the health of all animals and human. Talking about human rights, the HOMEf's legal expert explained that when people speak of human rights and make reference to the constitution, what they mean is that human rights are rights that we are born with.

These rights are universal, inalienable, inherent, indivisible, interrelated, are



Photo by Eduardo-goody / unsplash.com

protected by law, thus, very much enforceable. He painted a scenario where fishers are unable to fish in a particular ocean due to oil spill. He explained that such a scenario clearly shows that there is pollution of a people's source of livelihood and that, in itself, is a threat to life. In this case, the community can charge those responsible to court because their rights to life have been violated. He said "the different avenues for enforcement of human rights are local court, Human Rights Commission, International court and trial in Foreign Jurisdiction".

He advised that citizens should always try to have good knowledge of who they are suing and why before they sue. In matters pertaining to the issue of discourse, who to sue may be government agents/bodies and decision makers, flag states of IUU fishers, and private entities including fossil fuel producers. Reasons for suing may be to stop or reduce specific infringement, force government to take bolder action, gain support for eco-friendly alternatives, improve infrastructure, protect vulnerable areas, relocate communities

or protect threatened resources. Key recommendations made at the end of the session included: keeping the oil in the soil, criminalising ecocide, promoting investment in renewables, recognising the Rights of Nature, and enforcing court judgments.

Speaking on *Maritime and fisheries sector governance*, Prof. Ako Amadi, former head of Marine Biology in Nigerian Institute for Oceanography and Marine Research (NIOMR), stated that almost 60% of the world live in the coastal environment. "If you look at Africa, you can see that all the big cities are on the coast line." He affirmed. What does it mean for fishers and the marine environment? He queried, giving the answer, "it means a lot of pollutions, increase in recreational facilities, transportation, shipping of goods and prospecting for oil and minerals".

With the big cities and increased industrial activities on the coastline come marine habitat degradation, indiscriminate waste dumping, more plastics, increased coastal fish farming, inland deforestation, more clearing of

coastal mangroves and, oil and pesticides pollution. It also signals overfishing problems like excessive trawler fishery which involves bottom trawling that destroys sea bed.

There is also the issue of climate change impact on the oceans as the planet warms up. Changing dynamics of ocean currents impacted by thermal expansion result in unpredictability of surges and flooding. More heat stored in the ocean now means more will inevitably return to the atmosphere via circulation of ocean currents. Climate change and its impact on the ocean is causing shifts in ecosystems and centres of fish production, thereby, impacting on fishing, especially small-scale operators. With the changing climate, accelerated sea level rise is a 100% probability, aided by subsidence, and increases in ocean acidity, depressing metabolic rates and immune responses in some organisms, also causing bleaching of coral reefs.

Prof. Ako explained that there are governance and regulatory mechanisms responsible for overseeing actions and affairs regarding the world's ocean in order to avoid loss and damage in ocean operations. These mechanisms include, the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ), Territorial Waters, Contiguous Zones, Dispute settlement, Jurisdiction and Arbitration.

Explaining the possible solutions to maritime challenges, the professor suggested that there should be more focus on investment in research, especially in developing nations. He called for a balance among economy, ecology and institutional collaboration in Nigeria. He concluded by noting that there should be a policy consistency,

coordinating role of international institutions, curriculum review in Nigerian schools and, environmental and social impact assessments.

A public health professional affiliated to the University of Ibadan and the University College Hospital, Ibadan, Francis Fagbule, spoke on *Health Concerns for Workers and Communities in the Maritime Environment*.

He began by giving the World Health Organization (WHO) definition of health as: a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity. Our social environments, physical environments, personal health practices, childhood experiences, income and social status, social support networks, education and literacy, working conditions, health services, culture, age, genetic endowment, and sex/gender all form part of what determines our health.



Photo by Idowu-omotoyosi / unsplash.com

“With the changing climate, accelerated sea level rise is a 100% probability, aided by subsidence, and increases in ocean acidity, depressing metabolic rates and immune responses in some organisms, also causing bleaching of coral reefs.”

Still on concepts clarification, Mr. Francis explained that a coastal environment is a settlement where people live on a thin strip of land or on the water along the boundaries between the sea and the land, this includes seaside towns and ports.

He cited, as an example, Makoko fishing community which he referred to as the world's largest floating slum in Nigeria. The Makoko community, due to the nature of their physical environment and activities such as fish smoking, manual dredging and sawmills, has suffered numerous health issues including cholera, diarrhoea, malaria and typhoid. The environment is plagued with high concentrations of heavy metals (Cr, Cd, and Pb) which have been found in the aquatic animals, air pollution, smoke and sawdust.

Lamenting the deteriorating condition of Makoko coastal community, Mr. Frances avowed that the women in the community have a lifetime risk of maternal death. According to him, a pregnant mother living in Makoko is two times more likely to die during childbirth compared to their counterparts in other

parts of Lagos.

“These people suffer from a lot of avoidable diseases and premature deaths compared to other Nigerians. The reason for these problems is due to unhealthy situations, activities, and practices in these areas.” Mr. Frances stated. He suggested few holistic approaches to solving the problem, they include: empowerment for the people of Makoko to have control over their health; instituting a healthy public policy, creating a supportive environment, strengthening community actions, re-orienting health services, etc. He concluded by saying that healthier choices should be made the easier choices and that everyone has a role to play.

Comrade Abiodun Bakare, Secretary, Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Lagos State Council added that just like all other stakeholders, the labour unions have a huge role to play in ensuring workers' health and human rights in Nigeria's maritime industry.

At the end of the workshop, participants demanded that:

1. all forms of dredging in Makoko community should stop;
2. community fishers be consulted and made part of the governance structure in coastal and maritime areas;
3. the government stops trawlers from fishing in no-trawling areas and;
4. fishing and maritime policies be inclusive in such a way that fishers are allowed to play important roles in implementation.



TOWARDS DEVELOPING AN AGROECOLOGY POLICY FOR NIGERIA

A study in 2019 on climate change policies in Nigeria revealed that there was currently no policy that holistically recognizes agroecology as a viable solution to climate change. Some elements of agroecology are mentioned in some of the policies.

But there is need for a policy that covers all the dimensions of agroecology especially as the world battles to address the climate change menace.

The study recommended a number of policies that can be reviewed for the purpose of mainstreaming agroecology, one of which is the National Agriculture Resilience Framework (NARF).

Following that study and owing to the significance of agroecology in our food system and for climate resilience/adaptation, HOMEF organised a round-table with stakeholders from the Federal Ministries of Environment, Education and, Agriculture and Rural Development. The aim was to deepen understanding on agroecology and define a road-map for its inclusion in Nigeria's climate change policy documents.

The workshop had in attendance, over 15 representatives from the listed ministries. It featured various presentations and a group session which outlined policy entry points for agroecology.

Presentations were on:
Major Contributors to Global Warming (Industrial Agriculture, Resource Consumption; Fossil Fuels etc.); False Solutions to Climate Change (REDD, Carbon Offsets & Market, Agrofuels, Climate Smart Agriculture, geoengineering etc); Agroecology - Background, Principles, Role in Food Sovereignty and; Agroecology as a Viable Solution to Climate Change.

Among the issues laid on the table were, some of the steps that can be taken to mainstream agroecology in Nigeria's climate change policies/global commitments; road blocks to this and how these can be overcome.

Opening discussions centered on the current move to review the National Agriculture Resilience Framework (NARF). Representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture restated their readiness to work with HOMEF

to review the document in order to mainstream agroecology.

In the first presentation the major drivers of climate change identified included deforestation, burning of fossil fuels, agriculture and transportation. It was explained that deforestation is the second leading cause of global warming and it produces about 24% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Deforestation in tropical rain forests adds more carbon dioxide to the atmosphere than the sum total of all the cars and trucks on the world's roads. Nigeria has an annual deforestation rate of about 3.5%, meaning an average yearly loss of between 350,000 and 400,000 hectares of forest cover. Nigeria loses about 10.5 billion naira (\$34.3 million) to deforestation.

On the contribution of fossil fuels exploration, it was noted that coal burning is currently responsible for about 42 % of global carbon emissions, while liquid fuels (primarily oil) are the source of another 33%. Combustion of natural gas accounts for 19% while 6% come from cement production and gas flaring.

Industrial Agriculture generates around half of all anthropogenic methane emissions (CH₄ – 25 times more deadly than CO₂) and around three-quarters of anthropogenic N₂O. These come from: land use change, engines/ machines, use of Nitrate and phosphate rich fertilizers, application of pesticides, food waste (a third of food produced is lost or wasted).

Transportation, on its part, accounts for 15% of the global greenhouse gases, with its contributions coming from the burning of fossil fuels in the engines of our vehicles. It also accounts for 25% of the world's carbon dioxide emissions.

The second session exposed carbon offsetting, carbon capture and storage, REDD+, carbon trading, genetic modification, etc. as false solutions. REDD+ is not aimed at stopping deforestation; it only encourages deferring of deforestation.

Carbon capture and storage is not a viable solution. In the first place, a lot of extra energy needs to be generated in order to capture, transport and store CO₂. Plants fitted with carbon capture and storage (CCS) capabilities require 15-25% more energy than conventional plants. The question is: where will this extra energy come from if not from burning even more fossils? CCS, hence, simply increases reliance on fossil fuels. The CCS model will need more and more 'unused' space (potential crop lands) to actually bring about substantial negative emission levels, giving rise to more challenges. The model results in damages to the environment arising from the leakage of CO₂ from pipelines or storage reservoir.

The genetic modification of trees to make plantations is another problematic practice as it encourages monocultures and land grabs. Agroecology was presented in the context of food sovereignty - the rights of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their rights to define their own food and agriculture systems.

It was highlighted that one of the lessons that Covid-19 taught us is the need to build local economies; to have food come from very close sources (no food miles, if we can help it). This makes people more responsible and independent. Nobody will contaminate or pollute a river or land in the same area where they grow their food, or where their food is coming from. When people are disconnected with how and where their food comes from, all sorts of things are done to that food. It is a recipe for disaster.

Agroecology is increasingly promoted as being able to contribute to transforming food systems. It does this by applying ecological principles to agriculture and ensuring a regenerative use of natural resources and ecosystem services. Also, it addresses the need for socially equitable food systems within which people can exercise choice over what they eat and how

and where it is produced.

The multi dimensional nature of agroecology was also explained, that is, the political, economic, ecological and social dimensions.

Agroecology was also described as a science, a practice and a movement. Case studies that show how agroecology can assure food sufficiency were highlighted.

During the final presentation on the climate change mitigation and adaptation potential of agroecology, it was noted that its biggest mitigation potential relates to the practice of conserving and building soils. Chemical fertilisers are avoided, thereby obviating the catalysts and enormous energy consumed in the high pressure process used to make ammonia. And organic waste is returned to the soil as compost, thereby nourishing the soil.

Agroecology also avoids land-filling where a lack of oxygen creates methane as organic waste decompose. Methane and Nitrous oxide are known to have even much greater impact on the climate than carbon dioxide.

Key recommendations from the group discussions are as follows:

- ❑ HOMEF should continue its engagement with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to have the NARF reviewed. The Ministry is in support of having agroecology mainstreamed in that document.
- ❑ The state governments should be adequately engaged, although policies are made at the federal level, implementation is mostly at the state level.
- ❑ A manual on agroecology should be produced. This will be instrumental in the training of farmers on its practices.
- ❑ All elements of agroecology in other policies should be extracted and compiled in one document for easy reference and implementation.
- ❑ Stakeholders at the legislative level should be engaged.



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Strengthening Ocean and Maritime Policies

A Media Roundtable

At Ikeja, Lagos State on 24 October 2022, the Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF) held a media round table on *Strengthening Ocean and Maritime Policies*. Journalists, other media experts and research experts in the maritime sector, from Lagos and across the country, were present at the event.

Philip Jakpor, the Director of Programmes at Corporate Accountability & Public Participation Africa (CAPPA) made a brief presentation on *Oceans, Energy, and the Future We Want*. According to him, the ocean is beyond literal description; it feeds and connects us through transportation and, can be a source of tourism but it is under pressure.

It is projected that by 2040, the ocean will receive 29 million metric tons of plastic yearly. There has been an excessive warming of the ocean the last 50 years, leading to melting of the ice which in turn leads to sea rise, floods and storms, etc. Also, 25% of CO₂ is absorbed into the ocean; fish stock is to decline by 85% due to overfishing; and oil pollution continues to plague the ocean with 4,486 oil spill cases amounting to 242,193 barrels of oil, between 2015 to 2021.” The shipping industry, Mr. Philip said, is also occasioning human rights concerns vis-à-vis local communities, workers in direct operations and in value chains, and at-risk groups including indigenous peoples, women and girls and, human and environmental rights defenders.

Also, “Respect for human rights in port-city relations and within port cities is an essential, often forgotten, dimension of social sustainability.” he reminded participants. Some of the human rights issues arising in port cities were said to include: Loud soundscape,

*“by 2040, the
ocean will
receive 29
million metric
tons of plastic
yearly”.*

complicated traffic, unmanaged waste and, serious socio-economic and environmental challenges faced by the majority of the population.

He spoke about the Ocean and Human Rights platform which addresses the inclusion of people working in and impacted by ocean industries. The target is to ensure that such people are represented and heard in conversations around the current and future use of the ocean. Another purpose, is to ensure that ocean actors, both private and public apply up to date knowledge and ideas in addressing social and human rights issues related to the ocean, especially in the era of the blue economy.

Professor Zabbey of the Department of Fishery in the University of Port Harcourt and Coordinator of the Centre for Environment, Human Rights and Development, provided a broad analysis on the Health of Niger Delta Coastline and Inland Waters. He iterated that the Niger Delta has four geomorphic zones stretching up to 853 km. The delta which stretches from Benin River to Opobo Channel, at lower reaches of the Imo River, having a chain of 20 barrier islands on its rim, is the third largest delta and home of the fifth largest expanse of mangrove forest globally. It used to be the fourth but for loss of mangrove.

The professor talked about the extensive biodiversity of the inland waters (e.g. red snappers, groupers and permanent residents), stating that "Unless the coastal fishes are protected, we are wasting our time with artificial fishery. Artificial fishery cannot save us. More so, there is taste in the diversity of the wild."

Prof. Zabbey educated the participants on the four indicators of aquatic health. These are: physical and chemical indicators like temperature, dissolved oxygen, nutrients and toxicants (such as hydrocarbon, heavy



metals, insecticides); biological indicators such as species richness, relative abundance, diversity and biomass; habitat indicators including fringing habitat factors and; flow indicators. He worried that the waters were highly compromised by human activities. The ecosystems are fast degrading; there is high loss of biodiversity, loss of livelihoods, increasing vulnerability to the impact of climate change, weakening resilience and driving maladaptation, in addition to oil theft, artisanal refining and, obnoxious fishing practices.

According to Prof. Zabbey, factors affecting the health of the waters include: pollution, municipal waste, ineffective and inefficient sewage disposal, hazardous emissions from industries and biological wastes from hospitals, invasive species, deforestation, land reclamation and conversion, upstream built infrastructures (dams along the Niger River) and, dredging and sand mining.

Deposited in the waters in the Niger Delta are the over 77% of oil spills, over the last fifty years, that were not recovered, with over 2000 oil spill legacy sites. Oil pollution, from operational causes and artisanal mining, are undermining the health of the water bodies. "Soot also affects the river system," Prof. Zabbey revealed.

He spoke on the importance of mangroves, stating that they are critical ecosystems of Niger Delta's inland and coastal environments which are under threat. The professor

explained that mangroves serve as breeding home for fish, provide ornamental resources, freshwater, food, fibre and fuel, among other functions.

He said the mangroves are threatened by overexploitation, oil pollution, reclamation and conversion, dredging and channelization, invasive nipa palm, etc. Gory images of the Sivilagbara protected mangrove swamp before and after the September 2008 Bodo oil spills, were displayed to buttress his point. On invasive species, Prof. Zabbey said there is 600% spread of the nipa palm in the Niger Delta in the past 10 years and subsequent 12% reduction of native mangroves. Nipa palm now covers 11,447 ha of former native mangrove areas. Tiger shrimps and hyacinth are some other invasive species listed by the professor.

At the conclusion of his presentation, professor Zabbey recommended the following:

1. Citizen stewardship
2. Need for investment in taxonomy training and the establishment of at least row natural history museum
3. EIA should no longer be 'paper packs'.
4. Build capacity in deep sea monitoring research.
5. Urgent need to strengthen the capacity of NOSDRA to monitor and coordinate offshore oil spill response.
6. Urgent need for a strong and effective integrated coastal zone management system.
7. Ecosystem restoration.
8. Sustainable national plan for mangrove conservation,
9. Invest in low-tech, pro-poor utility technologies for nipa palm and water hyacinth to mitigate their spread.

Mr. Francis Omiunu, a legal and maritime practitioner, made a presentation on *Ocean Protection: Engaging Maritime Laws in Nigeria*. He listed the regulatory institutions

of the Nigerian Maritime sector as the Federal Ministries of Environment, Agriculture and Transportation, and the regulatory agencies as NIMASA, NOSDRA and NESREA.

The agencies all have respective functions and powers deriving from enabling laws and regulations, both municipal and international. Participants raised concerns about the reforms made in NIMASA by Peterside Dakuku (as documented in the book *Strategic Turnaround*), wanting to know if the reforms were mere image laundering or sustainable and still part of the NIMASA culture. Another concern raised was the need for the international laws, when being domesticated by the National Assembly, to be at least tweaked by the legislature to favour the countries local peculiarities and outlook. Mr. Omiunu's response to the concerns showed the need for a continuum in government such that each elected leader does his/her part to see that good reforms are sustained.

Media and CSOs, Crucial in Ocean Protection

The critical roles of the media and civil society organisations in ocean and indeed, the entire maritime environment protection were on the front burner of the *Strengthening Ocean and Maritime Policies* event organised by HOMEF at Ikeja on 24 October 2022. During presentations made by Kome Odhonor, HOMEF's Communication's Lead, and Stephen Oduware, HOMEF's Alliances/ Networking lead, it was made clear that the media and CSOs need to work more closely and better towards the protection of the environment and ocean.

The media can help by talking about the wellbeing of the ocean, the abuse it faces and how it can be protected. Other roles that the media can play, according to Miss Odhonor include: educating and/or conscientising the public through the use of cartoon skits, short but captivating write ups, picture slides with warm songs. The media can as well expose underlying issues, amplify local voices, set the agenda and, interrogate government policies.

CSOs, working in conjunction with the press,



can embark on campaigns for change or revision of policies, plans of action and certain provisions in legally binding instruments. They can also work in concert to organise policy dialogues targeting to come up with or push for more desirable policies. Other activities to engage in are: monitoring existing instruments' effectiveness and implementation; calling for improvement of policies, plans of action or legally binding instrument implementation and; drawing the attention of the public and concerned authorities to policy/instrument failure or poor performance. Professionals could also be hired to draft critical reports with robust analysis of evidence gathered through monitoring and events in the environment.

Other vital activities include: publishing and widely distributing critical reports of failing policies or poorly implemented ones; planning and seeking support for projects that demonstrate successful implementation of desired policy to get attention of decision makers, inspire duplication and scale up the projects. In a follow-up meeting to the roundtable, there were deliberations around fostering collaborations between CSOs and the media in advocating against the issues of oil and plastic pollution, overfishing, oceanification and insecurity, which plague Nigeria's water bodies, especially the Gulf of Guinea area.

The Director of HOMEF, Nnimmo Bassey, stated in the meeting that protecting and defending the ocean and water bodies is



a collective responsibility that must not be abandoned. Everyone has to play their role as the issues not only affect ocean ecosystems but also the humans who depend of the ocean for life support.

The event also featured a presentation on protection of human rights in the maritime environment by Jasper Koikoibo, one of HOMEF's lawyers. Mr. Koikoibo stressed that human rights are not gifts from states or national constitutions but are natural and inherent in all humans simply by virtue of their being human. He asserted that the violation of the ocean equals a violation of human rights, particularly the rights to life and livelihood, dignity and healthy environment of fisher folks, fish processors, and other maritime workers.

Media practitioners were called upon to take up the challenge, collaborate with NGOs and speak up for the ocean by reporting and asking the right questions about the environment. The pressmen and women committed to playing, more effectively, their roles in amplifying the voices of ocean and human rights defenders henceforth.

The need to unite and organise to defend human rights and protect the environment is crucial.



HOMEF Trains Farmers in Rivers State on Agroecology

Small-scale farmers have to be aided to produce food optimally with methods that are ecologically sound and economically viable. Assisting these farmers have become imperative given the overwhelming dominance of huge transnational conglomerates in agriculture. These large corporations are monopolizing food in Africa and beyond. It is against

this backdrop the Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF), on 12 and 13 of October 2022, hosted a practical training on agroecology with farmers in Rivers State.

The two-day training had both discussion and practical sessions, with over fifty persons in attendance. Participants included farmers from communities in five Local

Government Areas in Rivers state, journalists and the HOMEF team. The training exposed the myths and implications of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and inorganic pesticides, provided space for farmer-to-farmer learning while equipping farmers with practical knowledge on agroecology.

The use of GMOs or

genetically modified seeds have negative implications for our food system, health and environment. Agroecology on the other hand is a viable solution for the food and climate crises experienced all over the world. It is a solution to the dangers of chemical intensive agriculture.

In perpetuation of agroecological practices, farmers were taken through the practical preparation of organic fertilizer from neem leaves and organic pesticides from neem seed.

Farmers also practicalised the preparation garlic, onion and chilli pesticides as well as compost. The facilitators of the training were Tatfeng Mirabeau, a professor of Medical Microbiology at the Niger Delta University; John Baaki, Agroecology Expert and Executive Director at Women Environment Programme and, Joyce Brown, Programmes Manager at HOMEF.

The farmers were informed that GMO crops and food products were being released into our food system. They are increasingly being alluded to as the future of our agricultural system although evidence abound connecting GMOs with health disorders, environmental damage and violations of consumers' and farmers' rights.

There are several myths around GMOs, some of which are that- they are an extension of natural

breeding and do not pose different risks from naturally bred crops, hence, are safe to eat. Other myths are that: they can be more nutritious than naturally bred crops; increase yields and reduce pesticides use; will help feed the world and; benefit farmers, thus, make their lives easier.

There are also the myths that they are strictly regulated for safety, bring economic benefits, environmental benefits, reduce energy use and can help solve problems caused by climate change. In reality, however, GMOs are laboratory-made, using a technology that is totally different from natural breeding methods. GMOs pose different risks to humans, animals and the environment. They can be toxic, allergenic or less nutritious than their natural counterparts. And GMOs are not adequately regulated to ensure safety. They do not increase yield potential nor reduce pesticides use but increase it.

GMOs create serious problems for farmers, including herbicide-intolerant "superweeds", compromised soil quality, and increased disease susceptibility in crops. The current agriculture and food systems orchestrated as the Green Revolution and promoted by World Bank, Gates Foundation, the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), etc. are still based on the

old high energy consuming mode of production. This failed system also favours fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides while contributing significantly to climate change. It is the industrial form of agriculture and is responsible for at least a third of all the greenhouse gases.

This current food system also causes a lot of health problems such as obesity and diabetes. A good balance of different stable crops together with lots of vegetables and fruits is needed for a good diet and to avoid the problems currently encountered with obesity and diabetes.

It is time for a food revolution. We need to push for enabling policies and a supportive economic environment. Small holder farmers who produce most of the world's food should be adequately supported with needed infrastructure, credits schemes, extension service and access to land.

Agroecology is a viable solution for food and climate crises. It is a system of farming that aligns well with nature. It sustains the health of soils, builds biodiversity and nourishes ecosystems while assuring food sovereignty. Having food sovereignty means that all people have access, at all times, to food that is safe, healthy and produced using sound ecological methods. Agroecology relies on ecological processes and

nutrient cycles adapted to local conditions rather than the use of external inputs with adverse effects.

Africa can nourish herself by setting her agricultural and food systems right. Agroecology is the key to transforming our food systems. It is a diversified regenerative farming method that encompasses the three dimensions of sustainable

development, that is, the environment, social and economic dimensions. The transformation path which ensures Africa's ability to nourish herself is hinged on diversified agroecological farming. This system adds the elements of connections to markets, crop diversity, mechanization and knowledge building to subsistence agriculture. It transforms industrial

agriculture by inputting the elements of food system localization, diversification of crop, reduction in chemical input as well as knowledge advancement. It takes away from industrial agriculture the degenerative and degrading elements of pesticides, herbicides, unfair competition to local farmers, mono-culture agriculture (e.g. corn or cocoa plantation) among others.

"Agroecology is a viable solution for food and climate crises. It is a system of farming that aligns well with nature. It sustains the health of soils, builds biodiversity and nourishes ecosystems while assuring food sovereignty."

The training featured a documentary which revealed how industrial agriculture impacts the environment through erosion of indigenous farming practices, the marginalization of smallholder farmers, degradation of soils and loss of biodiversity. Industrial agriculture significantly contributes to climate change which is a big threat to food security and food sovereignty. The video identified agroecology as a viable solution to the climate and food crises stressing that it cools the planet while ensuring stable and optimum food productivity.

Further in the programme, the farmers considered the following questions in

groups:

Are there species of crops that have gone extinct?

How does your farming community preserve resources e.g. seeds?

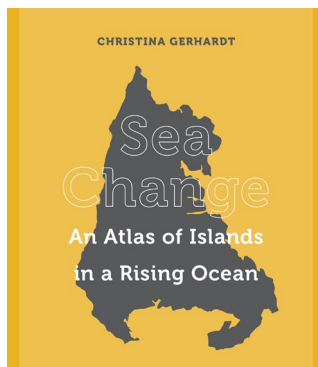
What are the major challenges with farming now?

What are the challenges with markets, roads?

The farmers listed some species of crops that have gone extinct, including cocoyam, water yam and red cassava. They identified challenges such as bad roads, insecurity, theft of farm produce, high cost of transportation of farm produce, excess taxation, lack of storage facilities, etc.

There was farmer-to-farmer knowledge transfer of best practices and solutions to common problems. It was emphasized that the government and all concerned stakeholders should ensure the protection of indigenous seeds/ varieties. There was evidence of increased knowledge and capacity to produce food agroecologically. Farmers denounced the use of GMOs and inorganic chemicals, made commitment to embrace agroecology, and work in solidarity to promote a safe, resilient and profitable food system.

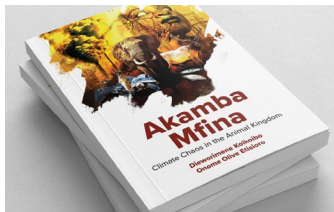
BOOK YOU SHOULD READ



Sea Change: An Atlas of Islands in a Rising Ocean By Christina Gerhardt

Atlases are being redrawn as islands are disappearing. What does an island see when the sea rises? *Sea Change: An Atlas of Islands in a Rising Ocean* weaves together essays, maps, art, and poetry to show us—and make us see— island nations in a warming world.

Low-lying islands are least responsible for global warming, but they are suffering the brunt of it. This transportive atlas reorients our vantage point to place islands at the center of the story, highlighting Indigenous and Black voices and the work of communities taking action for local and global climate justice. At once serious and playful, well-researched and lavishly designed, *Sea Change* is a stunning exploration of the climate and our world's coastlines. Full of immersive storytelling, scientific expertise, and rallying cries from island populations that shout with hope—"We are not drowning! We are fighting!"—this atlas will galvanize readers in the fight against climate change and the choices we all face.



Akamba Mfina By Dieworimene Koikoibo and Onome Olive Etisioro

Discussions on the climate crisis often centre on the extreme weather events that humans experience, and on how global warming impacts countries' economies. The world has hardly considered how the crisis is affecting the many other beings who suffer the brunt of humans' reckless and disrespectful dealings with the Earth. If the world had soberly considered the extensive impacts of the climate crisis, perhaps we would not be busy extracting and burning fossil fuels and then trading in the carbon pollution or grabbing forests to supposedly capture the carbon.

In conceiving this publication, we reminded ourselves that the solutions we frame for the climate crisis would be retrogressive and counterproductive if we do not frame them in a holistic manner that considers the well-being of the other beings. Perhaps, if we had delegates from the animal world attending platforms such as the annual Conference of Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the conversation might have taken a positive and greener turn by now. A system that shuts out the consideration of real solutions to the crisis, elevates the voices of polluters and would not take a bold step to phase out fossil fuels does not even consider that anthropogenic actions are already driving many species into extinction. Peer into what's happening in the animal kingdom, in *Akamba Mfina*. Let's save the suspense. Enjoy the read!

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

- Team Building Meeting
- FishNet community dialogues
- Community Training/Capacity Building Workshop
- SOE on Extractivism, Climate & Food Crises
- Community Stakeholders Mapping and Training in Senegal and Togo

Volunteers Needed!

If you will like to join our team of volunteers.

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Stay in touch by visiting our website and social media pages for updates on our programmes.



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