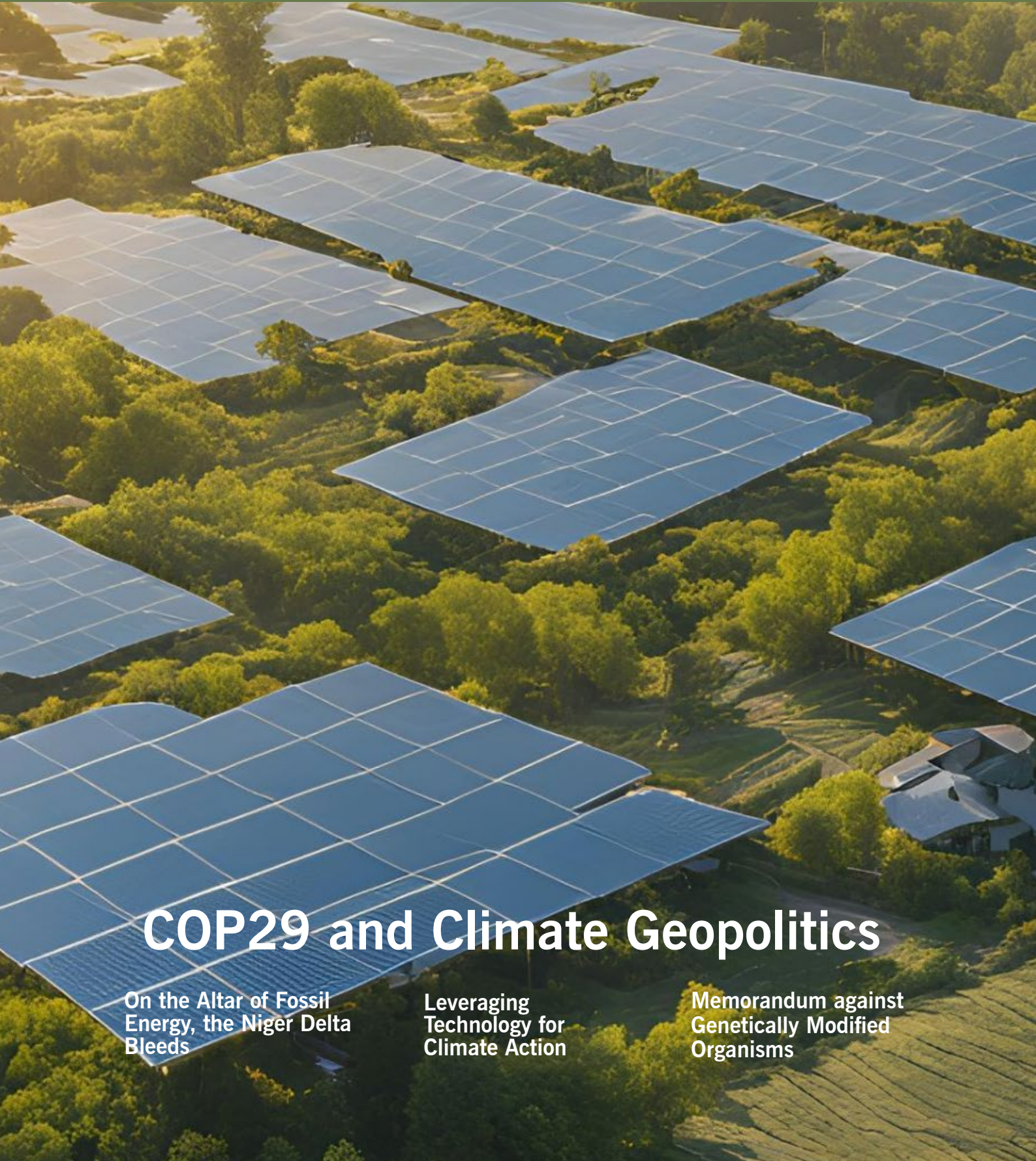


eco~

ISSUE #46 - DECEMBER 2024

INSTIGATOR

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF HEALTH OF MOTHER EARTH FOUNDATION



COP29 and Climate Geopolitics

On the Altar of Fossil Energy, the Niger Delta Bleeds

Leveraging Technology for Climate Action

Memorandum against Genetically Modified Organisms

EDITORIAL TEAM

Nnimmo Bassey
Nduka Otiono
Stephen Oduware
Cadmus Atake-Enade
Joyce Brown
Mfoniso Antia
Magdalene Idiung
Ukpono Bassey
Kome Odhomor
Esele Ojeanelo
Onome Olive Etisioro

EDITOR

Ogechi Okanya Coockey

GUEST COPY EDITOR

Kingsley Ugwuanyi

ADMINISTRATION

Dotun Davids Olatundun
Elvis Omorogbe
Kelechi Okoede
Mabel Obaseki

LAYOUT + COVER DESIGN

Babawale Obayanju (Owales)

CIRCULATION

Shehu Akowe

PUBLISHED BY

Health of Mother Earth Foundation



30 19th Street, off Ugbowo-Lagos Road, Benin City 300212, Nigeria



P.O. Box 10577 Ugbowo, Benin City, Nigeria



+2348173706095



www.homef.org

CONTACT INFO

All mails, inquiries and articles should be sent to:



editor@homef.org



home@homef.org

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



@ecohomef



/ecohomef



@ecohomef



Health of Mother Earth Foundation

ADVISORY BOARD

The Advisory Board is composed of women and men who have distinguished themselves in the struggle for environmental justice and the rights of Mother Earth:

Chris Allan (USA) – Environmental health campaigner and philanthropy activist

Akinbode Oluwafemi (Nigeria) – Environmental justice campaigner

Siziwe Mota (South Africa) – Environmental justice campaigner

George B.K. Awudi (Ghana) – Climate justice campaigner

Evelyn Nkanga (Nigeria) – Environmental justice campaigner

Esperanza Martinez (Ecuador) – Environmental justice/Political ecologist

Pablo Solon (Bolivia) – Climate justice campaigner, diplomat and movement builder

Liz Hosken (UK) – Mother Earth rights advocate

Lim Li Ching (Malaysia) – Agroecologist and rights advocate

Mariann Bassey Orovwuje (Nigeria) – Food sovereignty campaigner

Kwami Kpondzo (Togo) – Environmental justice campaigner

Contents

04 Home Run

Articles & Reports

- 05 COP29 and Climate Geopolitics
- 07 CSOs Critique COP29 and Propose the Way Forward
- 10 The Counter-COP
- 15 On the Altar of Fossil Energy, the Niger Delta Bleeds

Poem

- 18 Poetry of Resilience

Articles & Reports

- 19 The Resilience Conversation: ORA Team Initiates the Creation of the Resilience Lexicon



This edition is published with the support of the Agroecology Fund. The publication or parts of it can be used for free as long as proper reference is made to the original publication. The content of the publication is the sole responsibility of HOMEF.

- 23 Addressing the Polycrisis in the Niger Delta Resilience and Resistance through Culture

- 26 From the Trenches to the Benches of Parliament

Articles & Reports

- 35 Memorandum against Genetically Modified Organisms
- 39 Celebrating Heritage and Advocating Food Sovereignty
- 42 African Youths Unite for Agroecology

Poem

- 44 Duty Bound

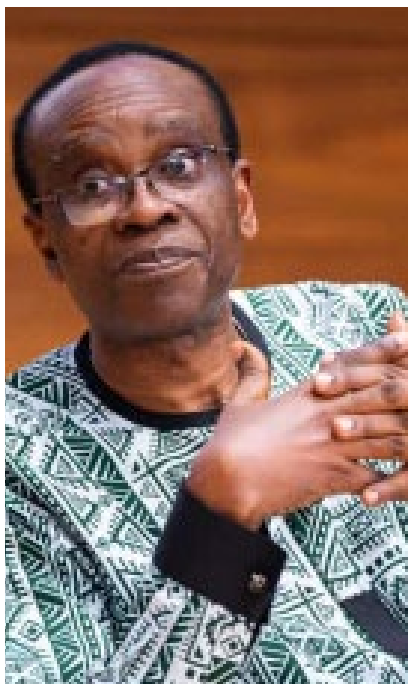
Articles & Reports

- 45 HOMEF/Cayar Network Set to Confront Environmental Challenges in Cayar
- 47 Shaping an Inclusive Energy Transition in the Niger Delta

51 Books You Should Read

- 52 Leveraging Technology for Climate Action

Upcoming Activities



HOME RUN

The many failures of global platforms that are meant to address the challenges facing our world and proffer solutions to the plight of the world (especially that of the Global South) call for new approaches and narratives for thinking about resilience. One of the articles in this issue explains how the Omega Resilience Awards (ORA) global and regional teams in Africa, India and Latin America, together with ORA-India fellows and stakeholders, initiated the creation of the resilience lexicon.

The next article addresses the polycrisis in the Niger Delta, showcasing how one of the Omega Resilience Awards (Africa) fellows used research, documentary analysis and policy brief to tell and show critical aspects of the unfolding polycrisis in the Niger Delta.

Back to the issue of resilience building, which is vital in this epoch of the polycrisis and for attaining the just energy transition, a report on one of HOMEF's activities sheds light on the critical role of culture as a source of resilience-building.

Dear comrades and esteemed readers, on behalf of the HOMEF family, I wish you and your loved ones a Christmas full of celebrations and a new year that brings you closer to the change you desire for yourselves, your loved ones, your communities and the world. The year 2024 was remarkable in many respects, and this last edition of the *Eco-Instigator* brings you articles and reports from some of our latest activities.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, this edition opens with articles and reports from COP29, which took place in Baku, Azerbaijan, as well as from the African People's Counter-COP (APCC), which was held in Saly, Senegal. There are strong reasons to consider COP29 disappointing as it fell far below the mark. This viewpoint is underscored in the article discussing the plight of Niger Delta communities that have been sacrificed on the altar of fossil energy and petrol dollars.

The article relating the landslide victory of the Rezistans ek Alternativ Party which is affiliated with the Alliance for Change Coalition in the 10 November 2024 elections in Mauritius is a demonstration of the results of commitment to the struggle for community and societal transformation. HOMEF and partner civil society groups have become more vocal in the struggle against genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and in the campaign for food sovereignty. This edition features reports on the memorandum on the implications of GMOs in Nigeria, submitted to Rt. Hon. Bello A. Ka'oje, Chairman, House Committee on Agriculture Production and Services, House of Representatives, Abuja, on 12 November 2024. In this respect, a report on how HOMEF celebrated Nigeria's food heritage is also included. Another report shows how African youths from 47 countries gathered in Addis Ababa to declare their commitment to promoting agroecology.

As you read these enlightening articles and reports, find the environmental justice-themed poems nestled within this volume for your reading pleasure and reflection.

Once again, we wish you a revolutionary 2025. Do not forget to write to us or send in your articles, stories, poems or pictures. It is always a delight to get your feedback. Continue to share with us at editor@homef.org.

Until Victory!
Nnimmo Bassey
Director, Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF)

COP29 and Climate Geopolitics

By Nnimmo Bassey

As COP29 stretched into overtime, the expected climate finance target of at least \$1.3 trillion shrunk to an offer of \$250 billion per year, starting from 2035. Following prolonged disputes regarding this meagre offering from the rich countries, they reluctantly raised their offer from \$250 billion to \$300 billion. This token gesture indicates that there is no consensus on the urgent responsibility of developed nations to compensate for squandering the carbon budget and bringing the world on the brink of climate catastrophe.

Additionally, by pushing the date for providing needed funds to a further decade down the road, it does appear that there is no consideration of what the scale of the climate disasters maybe by 2035 and what would be the value of \$250 or \$300 billion then. Developing, vulnerable and poor nations have rightly insisted that whatever funds are made available must not come as loans or instruments that would exacerbate their already huge debt burdens.

Another sad fact is that any offer made remains merely a



promise, as pledges are not enforceable by law. In 2009, the pledge to pay \$10 billion yearly from 2010 to 2020 and raise that to \$100 billion from 2020 was made, but none of those targets were ever met. The polluters never want to accept responsibility for the climate crisis or to financially support the poor, vulnerable nations at scale.

The COP is an arena for geopolitical games, with polluters arrogantly making it seem they are giving

alms to climate victims. When negotiators throw out statistics and speak of temperature and finance targets, there is a tendency to make us lose sight of how climate change affects real people. It is not merely about the numbers. Little consideration is given to the victims and the billions of dollars they are already investing on their own in their desperate struggles to survive the onslaught of floods, droughts and destruction.

Historical responsibility must align with commensurate action, and everyone should humbly accept this fact because, although huge investments are being made in intergalactic pursuits, we have only one Earth.

COP29 ended on a whimper and as a big disappointment on many fronts. It had opened with a broad acceptance of Article 6.4, thus literally opening the floodgates for carbon markets and other elements of carbon market environmentalism. Rather than cutting emissions at source, nations and carbon speculators had a field day raising the banners of false solutions, including those promoting carbon colonialism through carbon trading and geoengineering.

Some even projected nuclear and fossil gas as clean energy pathways. Whereas at COP28, there was a decision to transition away from fossil fuels for energy, at COP29 the point was completely off the table except the mere referencing of "Article 28" in the United Arab Emirate

outcome document. This intentional sidelining of a crucial decision reached at COP28 must have been regarded as a huge success for the petrostates and the over 1750 fossil fuels lobbyists at COP29 who do not mind burning down the planet if there is a chance of profiting from the ashes. However, there was a strong presence of civil society and indigenous activists at COP29, calling for the *Yasunization* of the world. Their cry, *Yasunize the World*, echoed the decisive vote of Ecuadorians to keep crude oil in the soil at Yasuni ITT oil field.

The COP, labelled the Finance COP, failed to achieve the expected level of climate finance. Talks of loss and damage and other instruments of climate finance became largely replaced with a contentious concept of New Collective Quantified Goals (NCQG) – a phantom possibly aimed at erasing the justice base of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR).

The NCQG requires that everyone contributes to the finance pot, a decision that reflects the same ideology that undergirds the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), which is the hallmark of voluntary and convenient emissions reduction.

Perhaps an interpretation of the NCQG logic prompted a Nigerian minister to controversially claim that China and India should not be considered developing countries. This claim aligns with the assertions of some developed nations with the intent to break the solidarity

within the developing world and, by so doing, avoid doing their fair share regarding climate finance and other related actions. The truth is that China and India remain squarely within the geopolitical and economic grouping of developing nations because "developing" cannot be a tag reserved for nations in economic stagnation or regression.

Now is a critical moment for vulnerable nations and allies to stand together in the determination that justice must remain the bedrock of climate negotiations and action.

Historical responsibility must align with commensurate action, and everyone should humbly accept this fact because, although huge investments are being made in intergalactic pursuits, we have only one Earth.



CSOs Critique COP29 and Propose the Way Forward

In a media briefing jointly organised by Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF) and a host of other Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) such as Corporate Accountability and Public Participation Africa, Women Environmental Programme, Coalition for Socio-ecological Transformation of Nigeria (CoSET) in Abuja on 4 December 2024, COP29 was critiqued: the shortcomings of the COP were highlighted, while the way forward was proposed.

The 29th session of the Conference of Parties (COP29) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) took place in Baku, Azerbaijan, from November 10 to 24 November 2024. Dubbed the “Finance COP,” COP29 raised the hopes of vulnerable nations for meaningful climate finance. Their optimism was fuelled by the Loss and Damage mechanism agreed to at COP27 in Egypt and endorsed at COP28 in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). However, COP29, much like the previous summits, including COP27 dubbed the “Africa COP”, fell short of expectations. Despite the

optimism, the leader of the Nigerian delegation, Dr Nkiruka Maduekwe, Director-General/CEO of the National Council on Climate Change (NCCC), aptly described the meagre financial commitment as an insult, reflecting the frustration of many stakeholders. In other words, COP29 was far from being a “Finance COP”, much like COP27 fell short of being an “Africa COP”.

aligning with the ideals of CBDR, COP29 perpetuated the reliance on voluntary Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), a system stemming from the flawed Copenhagen Accord of COP15 in December 2009. The NDC system has consistently failed to deliver the ambition needed to keep global temperatures within the limits of the Paris Agreement.

The 2023 and 2024 reports



“The so-called “Finance COP” was shy of mentioning how much the rich polluting nations would contribute to help vulnerable nations adapt and build resilience to the scourge of climate change.”

inflation would reduce to approximately \$175 billion in real terms by the time it starts—and that is if it starts at all. This commitment pales in comparison to the estimated \$1.3 trillion annually needed to support mitigation, adaptation, and loss and damage efforts. Civil society analysts, however, put the climate debt at \$5-8 trillion annually.

In the briefing, the CSOs noted that the urgency of climate action was underscored by the observations of scientists who confirmed that 2024 is the hottest year on record, with devastating weather events increasing in frequency and severity.

They stated that the Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) is the UNFCCC’s core justice base, which demands that rich, polluting nations take responsibility for their historical emissions by cutting emissions and supporting vulnerable nations. These vulnerable nations have not contributed to climate malaise at any significant level. However, instead of

of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) revealed an alarming emissions gap. Current policies and commitments under the NDC framework place the world on a trajectory of temperature increases far above the Paris Agreement targets of 1.5°C and 2°C. The latest report suggests that there is a 90% chance of exceeding 3.6°C with current policies. At just 1.1°C above pre-industrial levels, the devastating impacts of climate change are already evident, highlighting the need for urgent action.

On finance, COP29 also fell short by deferring the substantial climate finance to 2035, pledging only \$300 billion—an amount that

Even worse, the promised funds are likely to come through loans, exacerbating the debt burden of poor countries. Alternatives like redirecting military expenditures, halting fossil fuel subsidies, and holding polluters accountable could generate over \$5 trillion annually, proving that the issue is not a lack of funds but rather a case of misplaced priorities. This must be the reason the so-called “Finance COP” was shy of mentioning how much the rich polluting nations would contribute to help vulnerable nations adapt and build resilience to the scourge of climate change. The figures were kept to the dying hours of the conference and were eventually rushed through, to



the disappointment of many.

COP29 also entrenched false solutions, with a focus on operationalizing carbon markets under Article 6.4 of the Paris Agreement. These markets, driven by fossil fuel lobbyists, distract from the urgent need to end emissions at source. Instead, they promote mechanisms such as carbon credits, geoengineering, and biodiversity offsets, which perpetuate environmental injustice and violate Indigenous peoples' rights. As a result, carbon colonialism continues to rise, with African nations ceding large tracts of land to speculators under the guise of carbon trading, threatening ecosystems and livelihoods.

In response to the above shortfalls of COP29, civil society organisations used the opportunity of the media briefing to call for a) increased community-led solutions aimed at halting pollution, b) the recognition of climate and ecological debts owed by rich nations, and c) the urgent

phase-out of fossil fuels. They also called for reparative justice for communities preserving fossil fuel reserves and the cleanup of polluted areas. They insisted that geoengineering experiments and false market-based solutions must be banned, and that COP processes must prioritise the voices of youth, women, Indigenous Peoples, and impacted communities. The CSOs also called for true investments in a just transition, agroecology, and the recognition of the Rights of Nature, which are critical to addressing the intersecting crises of climate change and social inequity.

The press briefing insisted that COP30 must be a people's COP, free from the undue influence of polluters and fossil fuel lobbyists. It was also stressed that issues like loss and damage must be reframed within the concept of climate debt, and massive investments in peace building, rather than militarisation, must be considered essential. The CSOs averred that climate

action must align with the principles of equity, justice, and sustainability to ensure a liveable future for all.

CSOs who were present and signed the text of the press briefing included Health of Mother Earth Foundation, Corporate Accountability and Public Participation Africa, Women Environmental Programme, Peace Point Action, Lekeh Development Foundation, Environmental Rights Action, Tubali Development Initiative, Coalition for Socio-ecological Transformation of Nigeria (CoSET), We Unite Foundation, Young Professionals in Policy and Development (YouPaD), Basic Rights Watch (BRW), and Angel Support Foundation (ASF).

The Counter-COP

By Cadmus Atake-Enade

From 7 to 11 October 2024, the African Climate Justice Collective (ACJC), in partnership with Lumière Synergie pour le Développement (LSD), held the first physical African People's Counter-COP (APCC) in Saly, Senegal. The 2024 Counter-COP had the theme, 'United Against Systematic Oppression and Climate Injustice in Africa,' with more than a hundred delegates from 21 African countries including Togo, Tanzania, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Mali, Kenya, Senegal, Madagascar, South Africa and others in attendance. Cadmus Atake-Enade, from Nigeria, represented Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF).

The Counter-COP was an opportunity to showcase how communities are negatively affected by the climate crisis and the solutions emanating from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties (COP). The APCC, otherwise known as the Counter-COP, emerged partly because UNFCCC's COP has been hijacked by capitalism and



the Global North, which continues to replicate the injustices that caused the climate crisis and propose false, misleading solutions. The APCC, therefore, convened to serve as a space to highlight the efforts that communities and climate justice activists across Africa are making to engage with various actors in the climate justice struggle and the innovative ways they are handling their negative experiences. These efforts will help build a unified understanding and share political action towards real solutions to the climate, ecological, and social crises facing Africa and the world.

The APCC was envisioned as a space for the delegates to develop and propose viable solutions to the climate crisis and reforms to the captured and corrupt COP. The APCC acknowledges the importance of African people's voices being heard in COP29, making it pertinent that concerns and recommendations shared in the Counter-COP will be brought to the fore at COP29.

Africa produces less than 3% of the greenhouse gases (GHGs) that cause climate change. This is an infinitesimal fraction compared to the pollution caused by the Global North. The emission of GHGs resulting from the dangerous activities of humans that interfere with the climate system gave rise to the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which was adopted to concentrate efforts and find solutions to global climate challenges. Trusha Reddy, who represented WoMin African Alliance at the APCC, pointed out that since 1992, the COP has not addressed the disproportionate impacts of climate change in Africa. "The Global North and [its] large corporations are only interested in launching projects just for profits, not for people's benefit or the planet's as they advance their agenda," she decried.

The Counter-COP was created to advance solutions that address the interests of grassroots communities who are disproportionately impacted by climate change. According to Trusha Reddy,



“This is one reason why we have created a place of exchange between the African peoples, which helps us stay committed as victims, to take into account different proposals and lead the government to listen to the pleas of vulnerable communities.”

The director of Lumière Synergie pour le Développement (LSD), Aly Marie Sagne, expressed the great need for all organisations represented in the APCC to stand firm and united in the fight against climate change-induced injustices, fight for the right of the people to a healthy environment, support communities’ demand for reparations and push the government to respect the public good.

Aly Marie Sagne also highlighted the need to move away from fossil fuels such as coal, often imposed on African countries to promoting local alternatives, such as agroecology. “We must return to environmentally friendly agricultural practices. Peasant agroecology can feed not only Africa but the entire world,” he emphasized.

“We must return to environmentally friendly agricultural practices. Peasant agroecology can feed not only Africa but the entire world,”

massive migration due to the climate crisis. Youths of Africa are migrating to Europe and other parts of the world because their sources of livelihood have been destroyed by either fossil exploration and exploitation or by climate change. This is further escalating the challenges in the continent. For Ibrahima, this situation calls for the people of Africa to “position ourselves and be strategic about the Africa we want and the solutions to the climate crisis must be unified to ensure that our voices are heard in the global level conferences such as the COPs.”



While Ibrahima Thiam of Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, Senegal, was delivering his keynote address titled *The Africa we want in the face of systematic oppression and climate injustice*, he called for a return to the African identity that is rooted in resilience, innovation and solidarity. He spotlighted the place of African indigenous knowledge and cultures in helping the continent adapt to the impacts of the evolving climate crisis, stating that they must be preserved. According to Ibrahima Thiam, the change Africa desires must start with every African and will happen when Africa takes autonomy to solve its problems in its own way. “We have good things in Africa, but we still have to take responsibility to go far. We do not need conferences to talk about climate change because even women outside can talk to us about climate change because they are victims,” he stated.

Ibrahima stressed that Africa is experiencing

Momaduo Sarr, a delegate from Saint Louis (located on an island at the mouth of the Senegal River), spoke of the various environmental, social and economic crises that have escalated due to the climate crisis in Saint Louis. The crises included those surrounding gas exploration in the Saint-Louis region, particularly in the Langue de Barbarie (housing the national park which extends to the mouth of the River Senegal). This strip of land, endowed with the ocean and its unique biodiversity, faces monumental environmental challenges,

including rising sea levels, coastal erosion, flooding and salinization of farmland. Due to a breach made in the Langue de Barbarie around 2003, a new system of ocean currents and waves was formed, totally silting up the original mouth of the river and making the area prey to the ocean and life difficult for the local fishers.

Momaduo Sarr reminded the delegates of the impacts of the Grand Tortue Ahmeyim (GTA) offshore liquefied natural gas (LNG) project led by multinationals BP and Kosmos Energy. This project, which is set to exploit one of the largest natural gas deposits in West Africa, located on the maritime border between Senegal and Mauritania, was presented to the people as a vehicle for economic development. However, it is posing serious threats to local communities, particularly the artisanal fishers of Saint-Louis.

According to Momaduo Sarr, artisanal fishing,

which is the mainstay of the local economy of Saint-Louis, supports thousands of families and contributes to the food security of the entire region. With gas exploitation in the waters, the fishers are impacted directly. Traditional fishing grounds are now off-limits, while increasing pollution from drilling and seismic operations is seriously compromising the health of the marine ecosystems. The waters, biodiversity and natural heritage of Saint-Louis are being destroyed for the profit of a few.

The panel discussion session of the APCC brought to the fore issues of oppression and climate/environmental injustice, as well as stories of resilience across Africa. Examples are issues emanating from the LAPSET coal project in Lamu, which prompted community people to take the government and the company to court. After years of legal battle with great solidarity and focus, the people won the case against the company, bringing the project to a stop. The government's push for more extractions in Ghana and NGOs/CSOs' show of solidarity and struggle against the push was highlighted during the session. The panellists also mentioned cases in Saint Louis and the Salone Delta in Senegal, where community people's lands and water are confiscated by the government and corporations for profit. Fishers attempting to fish in



the waters are arrested and prosecuted.

The APCC had group discussions, which allowed every delegate to share issues surrounding hunger, food sovereignty, and the energy transition in Africa. Cadmus Atake-Enade, the delegate from Health of Mother Earth Foundation, Nigeria, reiterated that the campaign for the transition from oil and gas to renewable energy must continue to be amplified as it has become common knowledge that fossil fuels are the major driver of emissions that cause climate

change. He decried situations where oil and gas companies claim to be transitioning to clean energy while holding onto their usual modes of operation, extraction and destruction of lives and properties with impunity. He further explained that the 'just' in the 'just transition' ideology means justice and equity, fairness, accountability and inclusiveness in the energy transition process. It is about ensuring that community people have a say and have prior and informed consent in energy transition discussions.

Delegates at the APCC, during a break-out session, shared their concerns on the continuously increasing extractive activities in Africa despite the rising call for emissions reduction globally. They also identified the food insecurity challenges across the continent which are being addressed with the highly destructive Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) by the government rather than through the promotion of agroecology and culture-based agricultural practices. Another issue spotlighted during the break-out session was the spreading harassment, victimisation, arrests, and even killing of some activists and community members advocating for environmental and climate justice by beneficiaries of the ecological injustices going on across the region in a bid to subdue the voices of the impacted.

The APCC noted the urgent need for African governments to promote waste segregation and support the efforts of waste pickers across the continent, who play a vital role in sorting, segregating, and repurposing waste. The Zero Waste African team in Kenya is promoting the conversion of bio-waste into organic manure used for growing crops. Testimonies show results, such as improved crop yield and additional income generation for farmers. These outcomes would increase with African governments' effective implementation of zero-waste policies.

The issue of climate debt was also addressed at the APCC. It was noted the African Development Bank and World Bank have recently been pushing for an agenda that will further plunge Africa into more debt and financial crisis. They do this through the promotion of REDD+ projects and GMOs as ways of improving food production and food insecurity across the continent. REDD+ means reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries and is said to include additional forest-related activities that supposedly protect the climate, including conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks. The promise is that African countries implementing REDD+ will get results-based payments for emission reductions done through deforestation reduction. Environmental justice advocates consider this and

other similar projects a false financial narrative in Africa. What Africa needs is not loans from the banks but reparations.

Further, participants at the APCC recognised the failure of African leaders and delegations to COPs in making decisions and proffering timely solutions to the climate crisis ravaging the continent. The delegates insisted that his failure must be addressed at COP29 which held from 11 to 22 November 2024 in Baku, Azerbaijan.

The gender dimensions of the climate crisis formed part of the discussions at the Counter-COP, in a Joint session with the African Women Climate Assembly, allowing women from across Africa to share their challenges relating to the impacts of climate change.

One of the highlights of the APCC was the joint rally for Climate Justice. During the rally, delegates marched through key areas of Saly, Senegal, and, at the end, presented the APCC's demands to the representative of the Mayor of Saly. The representative promised to forward the demands to the appropriate authorities for further deliberation and implementation, particularly those related to the ongoing crises in Senegal. The demands were also presented in a press briefing.



The APCC demanded climate justice for Global South communities who are at the centre of the climate crisis while denouncing all forms of false solutions to climate change, such as REDD+, Net zero, and Geo-engineering, which further entrench the climate crises. Another demand was the immediate end to all forms of fossil fuel exploration, extraction and production across Africa, prioritization of sustainable practices through people-centred renewable energy that protects ecosystems and supports local economies, and the payment for rehabilitation of degraded land, oceans and rivers by hydrocarbon extractors. The APCC also demanded the tackling of the issue of climate refugees resulting from climate-induced displacement and migration by

mitigating climate impacts, such as droughts, flooding, and desertification, and ensuring that communities have the resources to remain in their homelands.

Demands were also made for climate reparations, alongside colonial reparations, to be paid to African nations and the Global South to the scale of damage caused by climate change and historical exploitation. These reparations should come as grants, not loans that further entrench debt. Related to this demand was the recognition of the urgent need for structural tax reform of the current financial architecture that will ensure transnational corporations (TNCs) pay the highest tax rates in the host countries where they extract resources rather than in their headquartered nations.

There was also demand for the reform of land laws and the promotion of food sovereignty through the prioritization of local food crops over cash crops and the promotion of seed preservation methods that resist GMOs. This protection must include ratified binding policies such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas.

Also, part of APCC's demands was energy democracy for all, which involves the placement of priority and support for the shift to renewable energy within Africa before the burden on Africa to export its resources for the Global North's transition. The demand is for renewable energy projects to be socially owned and benefit local communities before industry, meaning that the transition must be grassroots-driven, ensuring that policies prioritise the well-being of people and the environment, not corporate profits.

Another demand was to stop waste colonialism, emphasizing that Africa is neither a dumping ground nor a disposable. This necessitated the call for Africa to adapt to the Global Plastics Treaty, which allows the continent to address plastic pollution across its lifecycle, from extraction to production to disposal.

Also, among the demands was the ratification and implementation of communities' rights to Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) and the right to Say No in all extractive projects. Where communities say yes, the APCC demands that the community should dictate the terms of the project in a manner that benefits them and their environment. Compensation should be commensurate to the level of displacement and losses.

To support resilience building in Africa, the APCC demanded that African resilience skills and traditional knowledge be respected and incorporated into other systems and processes, as it is expert knowledge.



ON THE ALTAR OF FOSSIL ENERGY, THE NIGER DELTA BLEEDS

By Perfect Johndick

Imagine a herd of elephants, adored for their strength and the riches they carry in their tusks. Yet, instead of roaming free in their natural splendour, they are hunted for their tusks, ripped away to decorate the trophy rooms of so-called collectors, while the hapless elephant is left to rot. Those who survive are left wounded, wandering through polluted waters, with scars that tell the story of sacrifice for the benefit of others. While the world marvels at the beauty of the stolen ivory, the elephant bears the burden of loss, its strength drained, and its future left uncertain.

This narrative mirrors the plight of Niger Delta communities, sacrificed on the altar of fossil energy and petrol dollars. Since the commencement of commercial oil extraction in 1956, the Niger Delta has been transformed into dystopian landscapes of oil-coated rivers, toxic skies, barren farmlands, and polluted air that burdens every breath with a complementary cough.

The local communities, the rightful owners of the land, have no voice in decisions on resources in their places. They are treated as uninvited guests and exploited as they watch oil companies, government officials, and corrupt players degrade their environment.

Instead of benefiting from the promises of extraction, the communities face devastating floods, malnourished fish unfit for consumption, health conditions worsened by the absence of medical facilities, dashed hopes, and persistent hunger. Meanwhile, the executives of the extractivist companies and their abetting government officials toast their successes with glasses of red wine, celebrating supposed progress.

However, the only 'progress' evident in the communities is environmental degradation, loss of livelihoods, and the escalation of chronic health conditions.

At Health of Mother Earth Foundation's School of Ecology (SoE) on Recovering Oil-Sacrificed Zones, scholars identified over 77 sacrificed communities in the Niger Delta alone. These

‘Instead of benefiting from the promises of extraction, the communities face devastating floods, malnourished fish unfit for consumption, health conditions worsened by the absence of medical facilities, dashed hopes, and persistent hunger.’

communities, ravaged by extractivism rooted in colonial exploitation, represent more than just fossil fuel zones. They are living systems pushed to the brink of collapse by extractivism-enabled destruction.

Across Africa, similar stories unfold in Ghana and South Africa's gold mines, the diamond mines of Sierra Leone and Liberia, the cobalt fields of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the oil fields of Uganda's Albertine Graben. From Senegal's Saloum Delta to the Okavango Basin and Mozambique's gas fields, the continent is littered with sacrificed zones.

This devastation arises from the unchecked privatization of natural resources by international oil companies driven by greed and convenience. These companies have rendered creeks, rivers, and lands unfit

for anything but pollution. Their actions have not only damaged the environment but also severed communities from their cultural roots and identities.

This exploitation represents a form of environmental racism, where both the land and its people are deemed disposable.

Oro 1 well exemplifies this exploitation. For four consecutive years, it has burned and spilt crude oil since its explosion in May 2020. To this day, the well spews pollution unabated, with local authorities offering no intervention.

Communities like Awoye, reliant on fishing and farming, remain trapped in a devastating nightmare, making them prime examples of oil-sacrificed zones. Studies conducted by the Kebetkatche Women Resource and Development Centre reveal alarming levels of hydrocarbons in the blood of women in Bayelsa State's Otuabagi community.

These women endure premature births, cardiovascular diseases, and respiratory illnesses due to constant exposure to gas flare pollution and ingestion of crude oil-contaminated food and water.

The global economic model exacerbates climate change rather than mitigate it.

The emphasis on market-driven economies prioritizes profit over sustainability, laying the groundwork for environmental degradation. This reliance on fossil fuels—coal, oil, and gas—for energy,



“Ecosystems must be valued for their inherent worth, not merely for their economic potential”

transportation, and industry has led to massive greenhouse gas emissions, particularly carbon dioxide (CO₂), which accelerates global warming.

The commodification of nature poses another significant threat. Treating natural resources as mere commodities has led to widespread environmental degradation. Ecosystems must be valued for their inherent worth, not merely for their economic potential.

Corruption, poor policy implementation, and lack of political will further hinder recovery efforts in these zones.

The addiction to fossil fuels has driven humanity to the brink of destruction. Continuing the practice of extraction offers no sustainable path forward. The question is no longer about the equitable distribution of oil wealth but about rejecting fossil fuels altogether and breaking free from this destructive cycle. Real solutions, not token gestures or false promises, are urgently needed.

Environmental impact assessments must become mandatory before any development projects are initiated in these communities.

Such assessments can mitigate the long-term negative consequences of developmental initiatives. Furthermore, the solidarity movement for justice is vital in reclaiming sacrificed communities from the scars of fossil extraction and demanding reparations and restoration.

Investments in adaptation techniques, advocacy for policy reform, and a decisive end to fossil fuel addiction are critical. Any solution that fails to address the root causes of the climate crisis will ultimately prove inadequate.

[Perfect Johndick is an environmental storyteller and Communications and Media Person at We the People.]



Poetry of Resilience

By Jacinta Kerketta

O, city!
Leaving behind their homes,
Their soul, their bales of straw,
Fleeing the roof over their heads,
they often ask,
O, city!
Are you ever wrenched by the
very roots
In the name of so-called
progress?

The river, the mountain, and the
bazaar
It was a Sunday, and I
Holding little Posterity by the
hand
Set out for the village bazaar.

Coming upon a narrow path
Amidst dry and withered trees,
I said to little Posterity,
Look, 'tis where the village river
used to be.

A deep furrow in the ground
ahead,
Swallowed all the mountains, I
said.
Suddenly, struck by fear, she
held me tight,

A graveyard, vast and sinister,
lay in sight.
I said to her, do you see?
'Tis where the barns of your
ancestors used to be.

Little Posterity ran on.

We're here at the bazaar!
"What would you like to buy?"
the shopkeeper asked.
Brother, a little rain, a handful of
wet earth,
A bottle of the river that the
mountain preserved
There, hanging on that wall is a
piece of nature as well.
And why is the rain so dear, pray
tell?

The shopkeeper said
This wetness is not of here!
It comes from another sphere.
Times are slack; I have ordered
just a sack.

Fumbling for money in the
corner of my sari,
I united the knot only to see
In place of a few folded rupees
The crumpled folds of my entire
being.

Care
Mother,
Why do you scour the jungle?
Climb over hills all day,
And come home late
With a load of wood - just one
bundle?

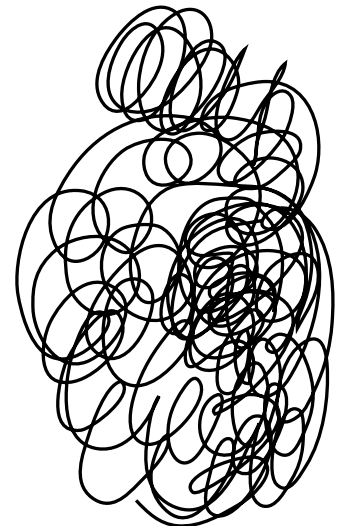
In reply, Mother says,
I scour the woods,
Climb over hills,
Wander the whole day
For dry firewood - just one
bundle -
As I'm wary of cutting a living
tree,
Out of care for my jungle.

Why is the mahua not plucked
from the tree?
Mother, why do you wait all night
For the mahua to fall?
Why not pluck it all
From the tree itself?

Mother replies,
They grow in the tree's womb all
night
And when the time is ripe
Fall to the ground on their own.
As the dewdrops soak them at
dawn
We pick them up and bring them
home.

When all night long, the tree
Is writhing with pangs of birth
How could we shake a branch?
Tell me.
How could we pluck the mahua
From a tree forcibly?
We wait for the mahua to fall,
For we love them, that's all.

[Jacinta Kerketta is one of ORA-India's second cohort of fellows. She is a poet, writer, journalist, and community builder]





The Resilience Conversation: ORA Team Initiate Creation of the Resilience Lexicon

By Ogechi Okanya Coockey

When teams of resilience workers from different continents, areas of work, and diverse backgrounds come together to tackle an issue, new perspectives, both those expected and out-of-the-blue outputs, (e)merge to pave the way for transformational outcomes.

This was the case with the gathering of the Omega Resilience Awards (ORA) global team—from North America and Europe—and ORA anchors—from Nigeria, Argentina, and India—in New Delhi, India from 15 to 19 October 2024.

The gathering was hosted by StartUp, the ORA-India anchor, and attended by partners from Health of Mother Earth Organisation (HOMEF), ORA-Africa anchor, Asociación Argentina de Abogados Ambientalistas, ORA-Latin America anchor; Commonweal (originator of ORA) and members of the ORA global team.

The resilience converse was a blend of interactions during the Global Team Retreat of 16-17 October, ORA 'Adda' (a place where people gather for conversations in Hindi) held on the 18th of October and the ORA Ideas Festival on the 19 of October.

A wide range of ideas from these three events merged, resulting in the co-creation of an enriched lexicon and narratives of resilience. It was the birthing of fresh ideas and insights, new understandings, new narratives, new songs, and, in short, a new language.

This new language, *the lexicon of resilience*, built basically through the word formation processes of borrowing and calque, is needed to develop and strengthen resilience capabilities and relations in this age of the polycrisis. This language of resilience transcends the traditional definition of language as a purely human and non-instinctive method of communication.

This language of resilience is built volitionally out of the many interactions with, within, and between resilience workforces represented in the six cohorts of ORA fellows in Africa, Latin America, and India, the respective ORA

anchors, and the ORA global team.

In other words, it is language co-fashioned out of insights from the resilience work of the anchors, fellows, and the global team in their respective communities, projects, programmes, and activities. Very importantly, resilience language is also born out of signs and symbols from nature and its other-than-human offspring, with which resilience workers and their communities relate. It is the language of a burgeoning resilience movement.

The conceiving of the language of resilience began at the team retreat, during group brainstorming and sharing sessions on the subject matter of *what resilience looks like in the different regions represented by the ORA team (including the initiators, anchors, and fellows)*. Through the deliberations, it was revealed that resilience

found expression in concepts and ideas like *community energy systems, economic autonomy, and agroecology*. The question “*What stories elevate what we see in terms of resilience?*” threw up more on the conceptualisation of the language of resilience: *humour, community security initiatives, and, on the negative side, maladaptation*.

Expressions that tell what resilience is emerged from the enlightening group sessions: a way of life/culture, creating narratives, speaking the language of humanity, seeing the past whilst being in the present and envisioning the future, integrating indigenous knowledge/ancient wisdom, practice not reaction, and not having a binary between dying and surviving.

Resilience was conceived as being about thriving in complexities, not getting torn apart by it, coming when people learn the fun art of diffusing power, emanating

“we live in a post-truth world, given the increasing difficulty in determining what is true due to the proliferation of technology and false narratives

from the reimagination of what legacy is about. Resilience is a community that supports itself; it is epitomized in community initiatives. Also, part of the resilience lexicon is the action words *reinvent* and *respond*, signifying actions that need to be taken in the light of present circumstances and specific contexts. *Creativity, healing with art, and healing with food* form part of the resilience language emanating from ORA fellows, as noted by the anchors.



It was noted that there are different forms of resilience, including physical and spiritual, personal and community. Thus, resilience is found in the personhood, local communities, systems, global spaces, and spiritual realms.

With the understanding that we live in a post-truth world, given the increasing difficulty in determining what is true due to the proliferation of technology and false narratives, the team also delved into the issue of *what resilience is not*: resilience is not war.

At the ORA Adda, the resilience lexicon was expanded with terms like *grit, survival, courage, resist, tenacity, determination, creativity, capacity to survive, manthan* (churning), *optimism, hope, consistency, perseverance, community, confidence, sabr* (patience), *ability to listen, spirituality, cooperation, and ability to pause*.

In Adda where people suddenly converge, the issue of what resilience is not was further explored with the trigger question: *does resilience have a bad side?* Many caveats were noted here. The world confuses resilience with enduring, condescending, and patronizing. Those who are power-disadvantaged are made to endure more. The desire for resilience can mount pressure on a person, lead to unfair competition and resistance to change, become a burden, kill sympathy and empathy, and make it difficult for one to know when to let go and be perceived as compromise.

But how can people tell the difference? Discernment and intuition were noted as key in determining if what is witnessed is resilience or not. Resilience is transmuting suffering into life, having the feature of buoyancy, thus empowering one to bounce back rather than compromise. It is felt more internally than externally and is born mostly out of experience. As the conversation deepened, it became clear that humans

This brought to the converse table the issue of the *politics of family and resilience*. The question *"is whether resilience is built through strictness (though love), nurturing, or soft love?"* provided room for exposure to the role of family in creating either generative positive frames or negative frames of resilience for individuals.

These could reveal securities



and, indeed, all living things have in-built systems of resilience. This is captured more aptly in the comment of one of the ORA-India fellows: "We are born with resilience and nurture it. And at some point, we lose it. And at some point, again, we begin to search for it."

Also made explicit was the fact that resilience can be viewed through different lenses such as culture, values, gender, age, family, etc. The frames of reference that people use to make meaning out of the world are the same that determine how people build resilience.

and insecurities. There was the need to decouple resilience born out of insecurity from that which comes from security, that is, resilience which equates being comfortable with one's vulnerabilities. The gender and age dimension of patriarchy was discussed, and it was noted that resilience may lie in the power granted by gender and age, and backed up by culture. Building the resilience language is an incomplete task without words from local languages. Where words could not be found, metaphors came to the rescue, and resilience was

seen as something that comes from a place of strength and weakness, causing one to bend (in humility).

It meant stabilizing, a lively capacity, the agility and elasticity of the tree, power with hope, rooted like the earth, and *taltaneta*, a Finnish word meaning 'to chisel'. In all, one thing was clear: it is the context that gives meaning to the word 'resilience'. The context is what embodies the stories of resilience from which the language is derived.

Another question that was placed on the table of the converse: *What is the political economy of resilience?* brought to mind the possible impacts of capitalism, socialism, and communism on resilience.

The interrelations of a people, their government, public policies, and resilience were almost visible yet needed more interrogation. An issue cited was the calculated decoupling of nutrition from food, with nutrition being sold as a different commodity, thus weakening the food systems and food sovereignty of local and Indigenous Peoples and nations.

One thing was clear throughout the converse: resilience moves from *surviving* to *thriving* and then to *beyond thriving*; it is an everyday effort, exemplified by fellows across the entire cohort of ORA.

Resilience stories from the different continents of ORA show that it is a practice that people engage in instinctively. ORA is turning the practice into a framework by curating

the transformative stories of resilience emerging from ORA fellows and building the culture and language; in other words, deepening understanding of resilience. The fellows, by their work, are creating paths to sustainable resilience.

For the continuance of the struggle to build resilience across the Global South, there is a need for support systems that empower people for resilience. These systems would enable communities to build ground-up solutions and elevate the narrative that the world is not being run by the few in government.; do away with the messianic mentality; diffuse and give power back to communities.

Support systems for resilience should not neglect narratives springing from 8 billion people in the world for a few narratives; instead, we should amplify the understanding that there are no one-size-fits-all strategies to address challenges in the world.

Also important is the creation, identification, and amplification of counter-narratives that build resilience. Examples of such narratives are those framing food as healing, not just as a commodity to stop hunger and those that counter-dominant narratives from Western-influenced cultures.

Building the resilience language would require actively listening to elders, nature, and other cultures, as well as keeping ears close to the grassroots, having crowd-sourced data, collecting data with emotions, archiving data, storifying data, locating the seats of knowledge

(forests, community people, etc.), shifting narratives, accepting the plurality of narratives, adopting influencer approaches, and putting care at the core of all resilience works.

ORA, which is a programme of the Commonwealth—an innovative nonprofit organisation with about 50 years of commitment to community, healing, and resilience, works—created as a cross-continental space for a community of people interested in building resilience strategies, especially in the Global South was envisioned from different dimensions during the resilience converse.

For some, ORA is a resilience world nurtured by voices, a process of finding coherence between the self and collective, and seeking answers to questions; a new way of talking about human rights and other issues related to the polycrisis; a place of acceptance, freedom, creation, and expansion; a refuge.

ORA is also thought of as a community, a space for the cross-pollination of ideas, a strategy-building space, and a space for sharing tools. ORA is creating hopeful worldviews in a world of polycrisis, using the power of collective imagination to create a new world.

ADDRESSING THE POLYCRISIS IN THE NIGER DELTA

By Prince Eze

Across Nigeria, Africa, and the world, the polycrisis—the interplay of multiple crises—continues to manifest. Climate change, wars, food crises, hunger, migration, gender inequality, and environmental degradation continue to rise, reinforcing one another. These interconnected crises are

major drivers of conflict and threaten the survival of millions globally. They wreak havoc, destroying the environment and ecosystems, disrupting livelihoods, and severely affecting food production.

With the funding I received from the Omega Resilience Awards (ORA) and the

support of Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF), the anchor organisation for ORA-Africa, I initiated a research project encompassing various activities. I visited five communities—Luuwa, Odioama, Obogoro, Odimodi, and Forcados—in three states—Rivers, Bayelsa, and Delta—in





PHOTO CREDIT: PRINCE EZE

Nigeria's Niger Delta to examine the interconnections among environmental degradation, climate change, migration, and gender disparities. My goal was to uncover new insights and approaches to addressing the nexus of these crises, particularly as they manifest in Nigeria's oil-rich region, one of the most challenging places to live on Earth. The research findings were unsettling, revealing the harsh realities faced by most people in the region.

A seminar/research validation event was organised in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, on Tuesday, 10 December 2024, to present and deepen participants' and stakeholders' understanding of the complex, unfolding polycrisis in the Niger Delta. This event brought together experts, academics, policymakers, members of civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to contribute to

the discourse. The seminar was a key component of my ORA project, implemented under the platform of the Hope for Tomorrow Initiative (HOFTI Centre). It aimed to chart a course towards a more resilient and sustainable future.

The event featured thought-sharing sessions, goodwill messages, the screening of a documentary showcasing the research findings, verbal presentations of the research results, a policy brief derived from the project, and feedback and recommendation sessions.

During the thought-sharing session, Dr Nnimmo Bassey, who chaired the event, emphasized the need for new knowledge to tackle the polycrisis.

He highlighted that the Omega Resilience Awards (ORA) aim to stimulate innovative thinking among

young people. Describing me as a leading light in the current cohort, Dr Bassey commended the resilience and dedication I demonstrated throughout the project. His recognition provided a sense of fulfilment that will continue to guide me as I collaborate with other resilience workers to address the polycrisis.

Dr Bassey also discussed the impacts of climate change on the Niger Delta, noting the seminar's critical role in fostering a deeper understanding of the research's key concerns. He stressed that addressing complex challenges requires Indigenous knowledge alongside new ideas. "The more complex the challenges, the more we need new knowledge to tackle them," he stated, emphasizing the importance of drawing on African cultural resources to address the polycrisis sustainably.

“The more complex the challenges, the more we need new knowledge to tackle them,”

One of the key recommendations from the policy brief, shared prior to the event, was the adoption of a comprehensive systems-thinking approach, which ORA advocates. This approach is essential for navigating the polycrisis, especially for addressing climate change. Dr Bassey argued that the challenges require more than superficial solutions, such as tree planting; instead, it demands a deeper consideration of their complexities. He also critiqued the universalization of climate change causes, pointing out that Africans, who contribute minimally to the crisis, are often unfairly implicated.

Delivering his goodwill message, Prof. Fidelis Allen, Director of the Centre for Politics at the University of Port Harcourt, highlighted the interconnectedness and complexities of the concepts explored in the project, “Tackling the Polycrisis Nexus of Environmental Degradation, Climate Change, Migration, and Gender Disparities.” Prof. Allen called for the decolonization of knowledge in Africa, urging the continent to produce knowledge grounded in African realities to develop more effective solutions. He noted that knowledge production in Africa must respond to local

challenges, underscoring the significance of Indigenous knowledge systems in addressing the polycrisis. According to the professor, ideas and knowledge are not neutral as they carry the ideologies and preferences of the power holders and the producers.

My ORA project aimed to generate knowledge based on the lived experiences of communities grappling with the polycrisis in the Niger Delta. The goal of the seminar/research validation event was to spark further discussions around the findings of my research and explore diverse perspectives for evaluating the crisis.

The documentary and policy brief produced as part of my ORA project highlighted insights from community members, civil society organisations, academics, and other stakeholders on the polycrisis. They underscored the challenges faced by communities in Rivers, Bayelsa, and Delta States. These outputs, derived from field visits to sites including Luuwa in Rivers State, Odioama and Obogoro in Bayelsa State, and Odimodi and Forcados in Delta State, served as powerful tools for advocacy and education.

The seminar’s discussions spurred conversations about revisiting local content issues to promote economic development in the Niger Delta. Participants highlighted the destructive role of capitalism in exacerbating the polycrisis and, therefore, recommended adaptive measures to mitigate the impacts of climate change. They stressed the need for actionable, time-bound

recommendations and the integration of Indigenous knowledge on tackling the polycrisis into school curricula in the Niger Delta.

Additionally, participants emphasized the importance of prioritizing research and knowledge-sharing, fostering collaboration among governments at all levels, civil society, and international organisations, and promoting social protection and gender equality. Restoring the region’s degraded environments and encouraging sustainable land use practices were also deemed crucial in the battle against the polycrisis.

The polycrisis in the Niger Delta and in other regions across the world demands collective action. By understanding its complexities and addressing interconnected challenges, the people of the Niger Delta and other regions can build a more resilient and sustainable future. This seminar marked a critical step in that direction, fostering dialogue and knowledge-sharing among stakeholders.

Together, we can make a difference and create a brighter future for all.



Dr. Prince Eze is one of the 2024 ORA-Africa Fellows. He is the founder of the Hope for Tomorrow Initiative (HOFTI Centre), a social crusader, and an academic at Admiralty University in Nigeria.

From the trenches to the benches of Parliament

By Roland Nkwain Ngam & Ibrahima Thiam

It is a hot day, and I am sitting at home watching news feeds from Mauritius. I want to know how Rezistans ek Alternativ (Rezistans or ReA) performed in the 10 November 2024 elections. Although there has been a lot of anger in Mauritius following leaks about a “wiretaps scandal” (which I revisit below), I do not have my hopes up. Every recent election (USA, Georgia, Poland, France...) has been won by right-leaning parties. Can a democratic socialist party in Mauritius really buck the trend?

Rezistans is part of the *Alliance for Change* coalition that includes the Labour Party of Navin Ramgoolam, son of the founding Prime Minister Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, former Prime Minister Paul Bérenger of the Mauritian Militant Movement (MMM) and the centre-right Nouveaux Démocrates. Rezistans is a fairly young party by Mauritian standards. They first participated in the General Election in 2005. However, their challenge of the electoral system that forces ethnic-based classification of candidates led to their disqualifications in several general elections after that. They rebranded and relaunched around 2015. The fact that they are a young party is further depicted by their presenting only three candidates in three different wards in the 2024 election: Ashok Subron who ran in Constituency 4 (Port Louis North and Montagne Longue), Dr Babita

Thanoo who ran in Constituency 8 (incumbent Prime Minister Pravid Jugnauth's district) and Kuvalayen Kugan who ran in Port Louis Constituency 1.

Several prominent Rezistans members, activists and trade unionists got together and founded the Centre for Alternative Studies and Research (CARES) in 2010. CARES' main objectives are to provide emancipatory education to Mauricians and Southern Africans, promote post-growth alternatives to hegemonic market capitalism, lead anti-war and anti-extractivist campaigns, provide a deep-democracy counter-power from below and build a strong rising Southwest Indian Ocean People's Movement. Every year, they organise a series of schools and seminars, and at the end of the year, they hold an annual School of Ecology (SOE).

The overarching goal of CARES is to educate people to actively deconstruct colonial experiences and replace them with new pluriversal imaginaries that are rooted in sharing and caring. People who attend their SOE leave better equipped to defend human and natural rights. The Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (RLS) has supported CARES and its School of Ecology since inception. Former RLS Southern Africa director Jan Leidecker was a guest at Resistans's relaunch, and subsequent directors Sigi Schroeder and Janine Walter have had a special place for it in their hearts because it espouses the same ideals as the Die Linke party.

The Alliance for Change gets a landslide victory. My heart beats faster as the results start coming in. The Alliance for Change has defeated incumbent Prime Minister Pravid Jugnauth's Militant Socialist Movement and *Lepep* Alliance by a landslide, no, a blowout, taking 60 of 62 available seats in parliament. The remaining two seats went to Rodrigue's Organisation du Peuple de Rodrigues (OPR). It is only the third time in Mauritian politics that the opposition has defeated incumbent candidates across the spectrum.

It is a wipeout. Still, I am trying desperately to get specific details about Constituencies 1, 4 and 8. I try to make some calls, but no



“ educate people to actively deconstruct colonial experiences and replace them with new pluriversal imaginaries that are rooted in sharing and caring.”



one is answering their phone. The next day, I learn that all three Resistans candidates have been elected to office, and a day later, I finally get a call. It is Ashok, and he has even better news: "It has happened, comrade. Look, they have agreed to give us a ministerial position, and we are busy discussing it internally in the party right now. I don't know yet what will happen, but that is the situation."

Simultaneously, my colleague Ibrahima Thiam is calling to share the results of the interview that he has just done with Dr. Babita Thanoo. My other colleague, Fredson Guilengue, who initiated the relationship between CARES and RLS Southern Africa, is super excited. "This is big; you need to go and cover this story," he keeps telling me. In my head, it is already

clear that I have to go and see this seismic event for myself. A week later, after COP29, I am on the South African Airways flight to Mauritius.

The victorious feeling at the School of Ecology is profound. It is the evening of the first day of the annual CARES 2024 Indian Ocean Summer School of Ecology, and the Senlis-sur-Mer open-air auditorium is bouncing. Dany-Marie welcomes me with a broad smile on her face.

There are delegates from Réunion, Rodrigues, Madagascar, Comoros and Seychelles. Delegates have also come from mainland Africa, including South Africa, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Kenya, Mozambique, the Republic

of Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria and Senegal. There is even a delegation from Denmark.

News has spread that the leader of the Rezistans ek Alternativ Party, Ashok Subron, is going to stop by to say hello to the delegates. He has been appointed Mauritius' Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity, a portfolio that manages the social contributions and payouts of over 70% of Mauritians. His Junior Minister, Kugan Parapen, is also a founding member of Rezistans.

Then he arrives. The room spontaneously erupts in songs of freedom. Chants of "Amandla! Awethu!" can also be heard around the room. Ashok takes it all in, as he waits for the amphitheatre to settle down again. He gives a short speech.

"Fellow comrades, this is our moment!" The delegates cheer. *"This victory is a victory for workers"*. Ashok talks a bit about Rezistans's journey to power as well as the last elections. Then he adds: *"Before I went for the swearing-in ceremony, all of Mauritius was wondering: 'Is Ashok going to wear a suit and proper shoes to parliament?'"* General laughter. *"I made a little compromise."* More laughter. *"However, what we are not going to compromise on is our promise to the people. Everywhere I go now, I carry with me a copy of our manifesto as both a reminder and a promise that we are never going to betray the people. If we betray them, we are introducing laws so that they are able to kick us out."*

Another standing ovation.

Ashok greets the room again and then takes his leave. He has to get back to his office. His in-tray is already very full. Kugan and Dr Babita Thanoo are not present at the school. They will only make it on the weekend. Dr Thanoo has a new nickname, *"le tombeur du premier ministre"*, literally the Prime Minister's slayer, because she defeated incumbent Pravind Jugnauth in Constituency 8.

How did Rezistans ek Alternativ make it to the Parliament? How did they achieve this landslide victory? When we chat briefly at Pomponette Beach a few days later, Mauritian

social activist Amira tells me: "If you had told anyone that by 2024, Rezistans would be in government, they would have flat-out laughed in your face. Rezistans are known as the party that confronts social issues head-on, sometimes organising protests and things like that, and they do not compromise on their policy positions. Voters love them because they are seen to fight for the people. But voters have often been a bit scared of casting their ballot for them."

This is a paradox, right? Are people voting against their interests? There is a familiar ring to Amira's words. In many countries, democratic socialist parties that helped secure important victories around worker-controlled means of production, equal pay, mental health, protection of the environment, ending wars, gender parity, and LGBTQ+ rights have often been tarred and feathered and labelled too 'woke', too dangerous to be elected to political office. Such smear campaigns are often very successful. They always tend to nudge voters towards demagogues.

True, Rezistans ek Alternativ has been about living their principles, come what may. Since the party was founded, they have always rooted their struggle in improving the material conditions of the Mauritian people. Their tagline for the 2015 municipal election was *ansam nous transform nous lavil – let's change our towns together*. This can be applied to a broader vision that they have for the country.

To actualise this vision, Rezistans has been at the forefront of fights against all forms of injustice. Their first mass campaign focused on promoting *Morisianism*—that is, the right of Mauritians to seek employment or run for elected office without having to declare their ethnic origins.

Ashok explains it this way: *"We describe ourselves as an ecosocialist movement which articulates the ecological issue with working-class issues with social issues and democratic issues. Our first action was to challenge the ethnic-based political system that we inherited through our long colonial history, where there were lots of ethnic-based tensions during political times, tensions used to oppose the working-class consciousness*

and so on. We launched a legal battle all the way to the Supreme Court and the United Nations Human Rights Council, alongside a political battle. Ultimately, that struggle gave birth to Morisianism, which is our version of humanism, our version of our multiple and indivisible identities; we are a product of colonialism. We are a product of our struggle; you know we didn't have an indigenous population; people came from all over the world to work here, slaves, indentured labourers, others, coming with many cultures and ways of life."

environment.

For many years, Rezistans fought against beach grabbing in Palmarin Rivière Noire and Pomponette, where on 1 May 2018, they successfully pulled down barriers around an area demarcated for the construction of a five-star hotel. Rezistans wants the beach to be designated a Blue Flag beach with 'clean water, clean coastline, and free access for everybody'. Many members of Rezistans were arrested during the Pomponette protests in 2018, including National Committee members David Sauvage and Ashok.

“We are a product of our struggle”

Morisianism is Mauritian humanism, a new ontology for Mauritius: equal rights for all, strong protections for the environment, improvement of workers' conditions, ending beach grabbing by hotel chains and property developers, protecting digital rights of all citizens, joining the international solidarity call to end all wars, calling for a revisiting of treaties for the Chagos Islands and Agalega. When workers in the hospitality sector were furloughed during the COVID-19 pandemic, Rezistans successfully campaigned with other movements for the government to safeguard employment in every sector through wage assistance and a redundancy board that withheld dismissal until the pandemic was defeated.

When a Japanese oil tanker ran aground off the coast of Mahebourg on 25 July 2020, Rezistans mobilised people to erect booms made with dry sugarcane leaves around the accident area. This artisanal solution minimised the impact of the accident and sustained the victims until the government and foreign entities offered to help by scooping out oil from the most affected areas. Almost all of Mauritius acknowledges that ReA's action mobilised hundreds of thousands of volunteers to secure the coast of Mahebourg.

A few days later, they helped mobilise over a hundred thousand people to criticise the Mauritian government's slow response and demand reparations for the country and its

The ReA slogan *Aret Kokin Nu Laplaz* (stop stealing our beaches) has become a rallying cry for all those who fight to ensure that ordinary Mauritians get to enjoy their country's beaches.

Amilcar Cabral once said: *“Always bear in mind that people are not fighting for ideas, for the things in anyone's head. They are fighting to win material benefits, to live better and in peace, to see their lives go forward, to guarantee the future of their children.”* True to this credo, Rezistans do not just resist; they also provide alternatives for a better world. The build-up to the 2024 elections revealed a fairly toxic underbelly in Mauritian politics. There was already the cost-of-living crisis, a major problem for a country that imports most of its foodstuff and even some of the molasses used in the many sugarcane and rum factories, as well as high fuel costs, which sparked several protests. However, the biggest issues were corruption and the wiretapping scandal.

Since 2020, there have been serious allegations of corruption against the Jugnauth government, with claims that some of his cabinet ministers were involved in the assassination of a main political actor that held enough evidence that could get them out of power. There were scandals around plundering large sums of taxpayer money when emergency procurements of personal protective equipment for COVID-19 were made. There were serious allegations that



“Always bear in mind that people are not fighting for ideas, for the things in anyone’s head. They are fighting to win material benefits, to live better and in peace, to see their lives go forward, to guarantee the future of their children.”

involved senior ministers facilitating land acquisition for renowned drug traffickers. The allegations also included collusion by sections of the police to ‘pre-emptively eliminate’ political opponents by what has become popularly known as ‘drug planting,’ similar to what the Russians call *Kompromat*. There were even allegations by former national telephony company workers of tampering with the SAFE cable system that goes through Mauritius to probably spy on foreign communication.

In the build-up to the 2024 elections, a social media activist known as “*Missie Moustass*” started releasing recordings of conversations between activists, police officers and members of the opposition. After the government was accused of wiretapping, PM Jugnauth suggested that the recordings were done with AI. Then it got worse. Recordings soon emerged that gave the impression that the entire government was being run by Kobita Jugnauth, the PM’s wife. In one tape, she was heard making disparaging remarks about the Indian ambassador, a strong partner of Mauritius. In another tape, she worked to cut off media access for opposition figure Navin Ramgoolam.

Elsewhere, she was recorded dictating who should get jobs in governments, complaining about Tamils and even plotting to run a smear campaign against former PM Collendavelloo. In yet another damning recording, Police Chief Anil Kumar Dip browbeat a forensic doctor to change the autopsy report of a man who died after being beaten in a police cell.

Kobita became the Marie Antoinette of Mauritian politics, the lightning rod that drew the entire island’s anger. Pravind Jugnauth tried to get ahead of the leaks by banning all social media on the island from 4 to 11 November. The stories were overwhelming for Mauritians, who resorted to using



VPNs and word of mouth to campaign against the government of Jugnauth.

It is weekend and Ashok is back at the School of Ecology. So are other global icons of the left, including the French political scientist Françoise Vergès, Zo Randriamaro from CRAAD-OI Madagascar, Oil Watch board member and founder of the Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF), Nnimmo Bassey, AIDC Senior Researcher Charlize Tomaselli and former Director Brian Ashley. There are Global Aktion comrades from Denmark. They have come not only to offer radical emancipatory education to eager minds, young and old, but also to break bread with fellow comrades who are starting a new life of activism within government structures. Rezistans regulars are also around: Dany Marie, David Sauvage, CARES President Stefan Gua, Devianand

Narrain, Michel Chiffone, Veena Dholah, Dany Montille, Ashvin Gudday, Blackwell Louis, Anne-Gaelle Carré, Ian Jacob and many others.

Amid the hustle and bustle, Ashok finds time to chat with me about the significance of the elections. We both agree that there is a general sense of joy in the country.

“Walk around the streets. People are happy! They feel liberated; they have a sense of joy and also...I’m proud, very proud! It is the third time in the country’s history that the opposition won all the seats. The priority was to get rid of this government with its authoritarian neo-fascist tendencies that we have seen in the last ten, and especially five years. And the people are also saying, we elected you, but if you don’t deliver, we are going to vote against you.”



Although the victory seems a bit sudden, Ashok makes sure to highlight the work that has been done in the background for ages: *“We have been fighting for Mauritian values, family values, preservation of beaches, controlled tourism, wetlands, workers’ rights, precarious workers’ rights and other issues for a long time. I for example have been in the trade union movement for over thirty years. We have also been active in the organisation of small energy cooperatives and training small farmers’ organisations. We were foresighted when we started campaigning for digital rights and privacy rules many years ago. Now, with the sniffing (wiretapping) scandal, people can see that we were right all along.”*

We talk about the changes that Rezistans wants to make at the national level:

*“We agreed to a number of key policies to be included in the Alliance for Chance manifesto as a precondition for joining the coalition. These include a) **the generalisation of the five-day forty-***

***hour week** in order to ensure the work-life balance of Mauritians and reorganise how much time we spend with our children; b) **an end to the requirement for political candidates to declare their ethnic background** when their candidature is disqualified; and c) changes in how the law relates to workers in times of climate disaster. For the first time we have a democratic mandate for **nature rights to be recognised in the constitution of Mauritius**; we also have included **two judicial principles. Firstly, public interest litigation** that will apply both to socioecological issues as well as socioeconomic issues **and class action lawsuits**. In a region where there is an ecological disaster, all the citizens are immediately able to sue for reparations, **and we have introduced the right of recall**. What we are thinking is that two years after an election, people should have the right to*

revoke the mandate of their MPs if they are not satisfied with their performance. This is a major shift since universal suffrage in 1948, since independence in 1968 and since the consolidation of the right to vote in the constitution in 1982.”

Ashok agrees with Amilcar Cabral that, ultimately, the people have to win power to effect real improvements to their material conditions. He explains that this is what convinced Rezistans to run for office: *“Ecological issues cannot be separated and confined into NGO frameworks. It cannot work. It is important to keep coal in the hole and oil in the soil, but these slogans are meaningless without power being in the hands of the people, the people taking over the power of the country to change things in a meaningful way. This [i.e. not conquering real political power] would be fatal!”*

We discuss what lies ahead for Rezistans and Mauritius for about an hour before someone comes looking for him. General Workers Federation leader Clency Bibi and others are trying to get hold of him.

The final day of the School of Ecology is a celebration picnic at Pomponette Beach. We are celebrating the last day of the School of Ecology, Rezistans’s entry into the government, the fact that Pomponette Beach is a public space, the success of the left and just life in general. Over two thousand people have descended on the beach to celebrate, reminisce on past battles and discuss the future.

Things heat up around one o’clock in the afternoon when music bands start warming up the audience. All the musicians on the show are also activists in their own right: Ragalayam, Emlyn/Langaz Ravann, Son of the Waves, Latanier, Racinetatane - late Kaya Band...Some of them were part of the Pomponette struggle. Others showed up to support the crowds when they were making sugarcane leaf booms at the peak of the Wakashio crisis. They are here again today, basically as a family. Vahantsaina, from Madagascar, who is a participant in the 2024 summer School of Ecology and a winner of a prestigious jazz competition, also performs

some of his greatest hits.

Ashok has arrived around this time with several Rezistans and Alliance for Change politicians in tow: Rajesh Bhagwan of the Mouvement Militant Mauricien, Dany-Marie, Babita, Kugan, the Pomponette parliamentarian and a few others. Sandwiched between the musicians, a roster of speakers take turns to give short speeches about what comes next for Mauritius. Clency Bibi congratulated Rezistans on their big win and says that workers have a lot of expectations from this government. *“The working class is in power now. Rezistans is a partner of the General Workers Federation, and what we see going forward is enthusiasm, hope and promise”*.

Lall Dewnath, the president of the Independent Unions Federation, gives a rousing speech about the role that workers have played in changing Mauritius and the battles that remain ahead. There is electricity in the air. As I watch Lall’s effect on the crowd, I wonder why he, too, did not run for office.

The indefatigable Rajesh Bhagwan takes the stage. He is eager to remind everybody that he has always engaged with Ashok on matters relating to workers’ rights, the environment and climate change. The MC asked him to speak for five minutes, but then, it is Rajesh Bhagwan; they call him *bulldog*, Amira tells me, a senior citizen to boot, so he’ll do what he wants to do. But the crowd love him, and his oratory skills are top-notch, so all is good. While he is talking, people are mobbing Ashok, Babita and Kugan for selfies. The smiles cannot be disguised. There is genuine happiness everywhere. The MP for Pomponette is up after Rajesh. He congratulates Rezistans but insists that he is not going to tolerate any ideas that are too radical for his liking. He does not say what these radical ideas are, but the people are not insisting that he elaborate further. It is a day for celebration.

There is more music before Ashok, Babita, and Kugan get to speak.
“This is a transformative moment for our

society, and women were at the forefront of that struggle,” roars Babita. The crowd goes wild.

“I will tell you why we chose the butterfly?” Kugan tells the audience. *“Our logo used to be sort of a square, but one day, a friend came to my place, and we were bouncing ideas off each other, and the idea of a butterfly came up. To signify transformation. Complete change. And this is what we want to achieve!”* Loud applause ensues.

As the sun sets and the crowd starts belting out *Krapo Kryé* and other *sega* and *seggae* tunes, and as I look at all the proud and happy faces around me, I am convinced that this is a big moment for the left in Mauritius. Rezistans has always been about transformation. Their transformative, deep democracy approach to politics and society, not just preaching but practising what they preach, from the trade unions through Pomponette and Wakashio, has endeared them to the people. This is an opportunity to spread those transformative ideas within wider society, and I am certain that they will do all they can to translate all those visions into reality.

Perhaps this is the biggest lesson from Rezistans’s victory: having the courage of one’s convictions and living them daily in one’s community so that the people who see your efforts and your philosophy can choose you to effect even greater change within the wider polity. I am excited to see how far this experiment in ecosocialism will go.

I leave Mauritius confident that Rezistans ek Alternativ’s story is only just beginning. With the wins that they are securing for the Mauritian people, Rezistans will be all right. [Roland Nkwain Ngam is Programme Manager, Climate Justice & Socio-Ecological at Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung; Ibrahima Thiam works on climate change and natural resources at the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation’s West Africa Office in Dakar. The article was first published on the Climate Justice Central platform created by the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation]



Memorandum against Genetically Modified Organisms

On 12 November 2024, a memorandum concerning the environmental, economic, and health implications of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) in Nigeria was submitted to the Rt. Hon. Bello A. Ka'oje, Chairman, House Committee on Agriculture Production and Services, House of Representatives, Abuja.

The submission was presented by Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF), Environmental Rights Action/ Friends of the Earth Nigeria (ERA/FoEN), and endorsed by over 90 organisations, including scientists, farmers, faith-based groups, and independent researchers, united under auspices of the GMO-Free Nigeria Alliance. These groups applauded the motion by the House of Representatives, in May 2024, to investigate GMO approvals in Nigeria. They advocated for their complete ban due to their severe negative implications for human health, environmental sustainability, and Nigeria's food system. The submission was made with utmost urgency and commitment to Nigeria's agricultural and ecological well-being.

The memorandum outlined the grave concerns surrounding the introduction and use of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) in Nigeria. Genetic engineering, which is the technology behind GMOs, involves the unnatural manipulation of genes in plants, animals, and microorganisms. While the promoters of GMOs claim that the aim is to improve agricultural productivity, the evidence suggests otherwise. For instance, GMOs have been shown to harm biodiversity, disrupt local economies, and exacerbate existing challenges in Nigeria's agriculture. Despite claims of increased yields, many farmers have reported declining productivity with GM crops over successive planting seasons. Furthermore, GM seeds often cannot be replanted, forcing farmers into dependence on

foreign corporations.

The health implications of GMOs are alarming. Studies funded by biotechnology corporations who profit from GMOs often report that GM crops are safe. However, independent research links GMO consumption to a host of medical concerns, including antibiotic resistance,

significant threats. Over 80% of GMOs are herbicide-tolerant, leading to increased herbicide use, which damages non-target organisms and disrupts ecosystems. The contamination of non-GMO crops through cross-pollination can result in irreversible genetic changes and unforeseen legal disputes for farmers. The



immune dysregulation, and increased risks of cancer and miscarriage. Glyphosate, the herbicide commonly used with GMOs, has been classified as a carcinogen by the World Health Organisation and is widely available in Nigerian markets despite its documented DNA-damaging effects. Multiple lawsuits in the United States have highlighted these risks, underscoring the need for stringent regulations.

Environmentally, GMOs pose

proliferation of GMOs also encourages monoculture farming, reducing biodiversity and compromising climate resilience. The emergence of "superweeds" and "superbugs" due to genetic transfer further complicates the situation, threatening long-term agricultural sustainability. Thus, environmental risks associated with GMOs include the destruction of biodiversity, the emergence of pesticide-resistant pests and weeds, and contamination of non-

GMO crops. The glyphosate herbicides used with GMOs, linked to cancer and other health issues, exacerbate these problems.

Economically, GMOs have not delivered the promised benefits. Cotton farmers, for instance, reported no significant yield increases with GM seeds. Worse off, they have observed that lands cultivated with GM seeds often fail to support other crops afterwards, effectively rendering the soil barren. This trend reflects broader global resistance to GMOs, with numerous countries banning their cultivation or requiring clear labelling. Nigeria's unregulated GMO market undermines consumer choice, as many Nigerians unknowingly consume imported GMO products disguised within processed foods.

Considering these findings, the memorandum strongly recommended the repeal of the National Biosafety Management Agency Act, which facilitated the approval of GMOs in Nigeria. Furthermore, the memorandum urged the Nigerian government to shift focus towards sustainable agricultural practices, emphasizing ecological methods that preserve biodiversity, enhance soil health, and promote food sovereignty. It stressed the need for a robust regulatory framework and public awareness initiatives, as these are essential to protect Nigeria's agriculture, environment, and public health from the risks associated with GMOs.

To further substantiate the concerns of HOMEF and the

other anti-GMO organisations, the memorandum incorporated recent global developments, such as the landmark court ruling in South Africa against Monsanto, which underscores the risks of inadequate assessments and regulatory oversight in GMO approvals. On 22 October 2024, South Africa's Supreme Court ruled in favour of the African Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) after a nine-year legal battle with Monsanto. The court found that Monsanto's drought-resistant maize had been approved without sufficient health and environmental assessments. This pivotal decision highlights a broader pattern of neglect in regulatory processes, which mirrors Nigeria's experience, where over 25 GM products have been approved without robust long-term risk assessments. The South African ruling reinforces the call for Nigeria to prioritize biosafety and food sovereignty over corporate interests.

Without sufficient health and environmental assessments, GMO proponents cannot claim that it is the solution to food insecurity. Contrary to claims of enhanced agricultural productivity, GMOs have not demonstrated higher yields or nutritional benefits compared to conventional crops. Studies reveal unintended consequences, such as reduced beneficial compounds and increased allergenic proteins in GM crops. Examples include GM soy with reduced isoflavones and heightened allergen levels, as well as GM maize with altered protein profiles. Burkina Faso's 2016 phasing out of GM cotton due to poor lint quality and significant farmer losses serves as

another cautionary tale for Nigeria, which approved the same variety that year.

The National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA), established under the 2015 NBMA Act, has functioned more as a promoter of GMOs than a regulator. Despite scientific objections from civil society, the NBMA has approved GMOs without adequate transparency, public consultation, or rigorous risk assessments. Permits have been granted for GM maize and cotton engineered with synthetic toxins and antibiotic-resistant marker genes, raising serious health and environmental concerns. Instances of bribery and falsified impact studies linked to biotech companies further undermine trust in the regulatory process.

Globally, resistance to GMOs is mounting. Nations like Mexico, Russia, and 19 European countries have implemented outright bans or strict regulations on GMOs to safeguard public health, ecosystems, and food sovereignty.

To achieve true food security, Nigeria must address systemic issues such as poverty, gender inequality, and conflicts rather than relying on GMOs. The adoption of agroecology offers a sustainable path forward. Agroecological practices enhance soil fertility, combat pests naturally, support smallholder farmers, and build resilience against climate change. Unlike GMOs, agroecology prioritizes biodiversity and the long-term health of both people and the environment.

This report strongly recommends the repeal of the

NBMA Act due to its deficiencies in safeguarding biosafety and addressing conflicts of interest. Reforms must include strict liability provisions, enhanced public participation, and adherence to the precautionary principle. By rejecting GMOs and embracing agroecology, Nigeria can ensure not just food security but also food sovereignty, protecting its people and environment from the pervasive threats posed by genetically modified technologies.

The memorandum called for a ban on GMOs in Nigeria, given the overwhelming evidence of their adverse health and environmental impacts. It posited that GMOs pose a significant threat to the stability of Nigeria's food system and will undermine food security in the long term. Hence, all permits issued for the importation and release of genetically modified maize, beans, cotton, and other products must be nullified. This is because the approvals have been granted without adequate regard for the objections of millions of Nigerians and proper consent. Additionally, the memorandum demanded rigorous surveillance of markets and farms to prevent the illegal entry of GMOs into Nigeria and their infiltration into the food supply chain.

The memorandum also demanded an outright ban on toxic agrochemicals, particularly highly hazardous pesticides, including glyphosate-based products that have been identified as probable carcinogens. This demand was backed by studies indicating that over 50% of the pesticides registered and used by farmers in Nigeria are classified as highly hazardous and, thus, pose severe risks to public health and the environment. The memorandum considers these actions to be imperative for ensuring the well-being of Nigerians and protecting the nation's agricultural integrity.





CELEBRATING HERITAGE AND ADVOCATING FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

The Nigerian Food Festival, held on 26 November 2024, was a remarkable celebration of the country's rich culinary diversity and a platform for addressing the challenges threatening local food systems.

Sponsored by the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) and hosted by Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF), the event highlighted the importance of preserving Nigeria's indigenous food heritage amid the growing influence of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and modern industrial food systems.



The festival commenced at 11:03 AM with an inspiring speech by Joyce Brown, HOMEF's Director of Programmes, who outlined its purpose. She emphasized the celebration of food diversity, the urgency of protecting local foods from external threats, and the packed itinerary, which included cultural performances, food exhibitions, and panel discussions.

Following her address, HOMEF Director Nnimmo Bassey delivered a powerful welcome speech, emphasising the intrinsic role of food in shaping cultural identity and community. He expressed deep concern over the proliferation of GM foods in Nigeria, describing them as threats to agricultural independence and biodiversity. He passionately

declared, "We want real food, and what we eat must never be allowed to eat us," advocating for a return to natural, indigenous foods.

The cultural segment of the festival was marked by enchanting cultural performances. The Osaretin Theatre Troupe showcased Bini culture through dance and song, while the Igbo Cultural Troupe performed traditional songs and dances that resonated with the audience.

Spoken word artist Osi delivered a poignant poem, "Our Food is African, Our Food is Nigerian," which underscored the festival's theme of safeguarding local food systems. A drama presentation further reinforced this message by urging attendees to be mindful of the

origins of their food and to unite in preserving indigenous food traditions.

A key highlight of the event was a panel discussion moderated by Joyce Brown. The panel featured prominent speakers, including Mariam Bassey-Orowuje, Lovelyn Ejim, and Cadmus Atake-Enade. Each speaker addressed the significance of conserving indigenous foods for health, environmental sustainability, and economic resilience.

Barr. Mariam Bassey-Orowuje stressed that food is the essence of life and that consuming harmful food compromises health. She criticized GMOs as tools of economic manipulation, warning about their detrimental effects on local food systems. Similarly,



Lovelyn Ejim celebrated local foods as central to Nigeria's identity, urging the preservation of indigenous seeds and rejecting the perception of traditional foods as inconvenient or unappealing.

Further, Cadmus Atake-Enade championed the benefits of returning to natural, locally produced foods, describing them as essential for health and well-being. He cautioned against the growing consumption of fast food, explaining how it is detrimental to our health and wellness.

The panellists also addressed the misconception that GMOs improve food security, arguing that these organisms harm soil health and undermine Nigeria's agricultural independence.

and prioritise health over aesthetics.

Similarly, Mr Michael advocated for a return to natural diets, emphasising personal responsibility in understanding the origins of the food we consume. Mercy Nnanna elaborated on the harmful effects of GMOs on soil health and underscored the nutritional value of Nigerian crops. Dorcas lorkusa, a farm manager, reiterated the health benefits of organically produced local foods, urging attendees to reject GMO products. "The foods we need to eat to stay healthy are our local foods, organically produced. We don't need GMOs to feed ourselves," she emphasized.

The festival also featured an exhibition showcasing

They emphasized the importance of knowing the origins of food and choosing organic options over genetically modified alternatives.

Additional speakers contributed valuable insights that further enriched the discussion. For instance, Joy Etor, a social media food influencer, highlighted the need to promote indigenous foods online to preserve Nigeria's culinary heritage. She encouraged attendees to embrace the joy of preparing traditional meals

a wide array of indigenous seeds, including acha, tamba, tiger nuts, bambara nuts, groundnuts, cowpeas, sesame seeds, white melon, and millets.

These seeds were celebrated as essential components of a healthy diet and as foundational elements for a sustainable agricultural future in Nigeria. A culinary competition among chefs representing various Nigerian tribes added a spirited element to the festival. The chefs presented traditional dishes, with the Isoko/Urhobo chef emerging victorious in the food competition that was part of the festival, impressing the judges with the flavours and authenticity of their cuisine.

The Nigerian Food Festival concluded on a celebratory note, with the HOMEF team expressing heartfelt gratitude to all participants, performers, and attendees. The event successfully blended cultural celebration with critical and reflective discussions on food sovereignty, leaving a lasting impression on all present. By showcasing the richness of Nigerian cuisine and addressing threats such as GMOs, the festival reaffirmed the importance of preserving the country's culinary heritage for future generations.

African youth from 47 countries convened at the First Thousand African Youth Summit on Food Systems and Agroecology to declare a united commitment to transform Africa's food systems. Held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from October 14 to 16, 2024, this Summit of Solutions brought together over 300 participants in person and more than 1,000 virtually, providing a veritable platform for deep discussions on the future of Africa's food systems.

At the summit, the youth explored and deepened their understanding of agroecology's transformative potential in fostering food sovereignty across the continent. They collectively renewed their commitment to

being part of a growing movement for people-powered food sovereignty, where their voices and actions shape the future of Africa's food systems.

The African youth acknowledged the failures of the current food systems, which have adversely impacted their generation and the continent. Armed with expertise, passion, and a commitment to Africa's rich and diverse cultural heritage, the youth expressed their dedication to driving forward solutions for a dignified food system that serves both present and future generations, calling on governments and businesses to take bold and decisive actions to support these efforts. According to them, the new food system must prioritise agroecological and farmer-driven solutions.

AFRICAN YOUTHS UNITE FOR AGROECOLOGY

By Kirubel Tadele



PHOTO CREDIT: AFSA

Representing Africa's vibrant young population, which constitutes 60% of the continent's population, the youth highlighted the urgent need to address challenges threatening the future of the continent's food sovereignty and systems. They declared a steadfast commitment to advocating for an inclusive transition to agroecology as a solution to pressing issues such as the climate and biodiversity crisis, deteriorating health, cultural erosion, violations of the right to food, rising food prices, and ongoing conflicts across the continent.

Agroecology was identified as a sustainable agricultural practice that challenges economic systems that prioritize profit over people. The youth expressed a vision of a just, healthy, and culturally appropriate food system that honours Africa's heritage and preserves its values a vision that is actualizable with agroecology.

Through the Youth Declaration, they reaffirmed their dedication to creating a better food future and urged governments to demonstrate bold leadership in this transformative journey.

The commitments made during the summit emphasized showcasing agroecological opportunities and capabilities for addressing Africa's food system challenges, building adaptation to the climate crisis and harnessing the energy of youth to promote agroecology. They also made a commitment to focus on amplifying youth innovation, building networks of agroecology stakeholders, and advocating for nutritious, sustainable diets while striving to end hunger in Africa. The youth also pledged to align with social movements advocating for social justice, dignity, peace, and environmental conservation while staying rooted in indigenous food traditions and cultural values.

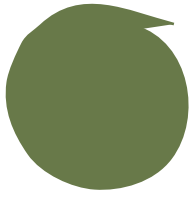
The African youth recognized the role of new technologies in advancing sustainability but stressed the importance of vigilance against corporate-driven solutions that undermine Africa's food sovereignty. They also reiterated their commitment to empowering women and youth through agroecology, advancing gender equality, and fostering ecological justice, environmental protection, and biodiversity conservation.

The youths made several demands, including shifts in policies to promote agroecology across Africa's food systems. They also demanded increased investment in agroecology to support small-scale farmers and youth-led enterprises, the inclusion of agroecology as a core strategy in the CAADP Kampala Declaration, and equitable access to vital resources such as land, water, and energy for youth and smallholder producers. Additionally, the youth emphasized the need for digital inclusion in agroecology, land rights for marginalized groups, and greater political dialogue to support sustainable food systems. They urged governments and institutions to empower young researchers and entrepreneurs, support youth-led innovations, and promote agroecology as a critical component of climate action.

The youth also championed farmer-managed seed systems to protect smallholder farmers' rights, conserve seed diversity, and ensure the resilience of food systems and cultural heritage. They also emphasized intergenerational learning, preserving traditional ecological knowledge, and fostering peace and social justice throughout Africa.

In conclusion, the African youth emphasized that transforming the continent's food systems requires collective action and bold leadership. They positioned themselves at the forefront of this movement, championing agroecology as the pathway to sustainable, just, and resilient food systems. Their leadership and engagement were deemed essential to achieving food sovereignty, climate resilience, and a healthier future for all. The declaration concluded with a rallying call for governments, businesses, global leaders, and communities to join forces with Africa's youth in building inclusive and equitable food systems driven by agroecological practices. The youth emphasized that the time to act is now and expressed their unwavering passion and vision for the continent's food future.

[Kirubel Tadele is a Pan-African committed to environmental, social justice, and human rights causes in Africa and a Communications Officer with the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA). The article was first published on AFSA's website on 17 October 2024]



Duty Bound

by Nnimmo Bassey

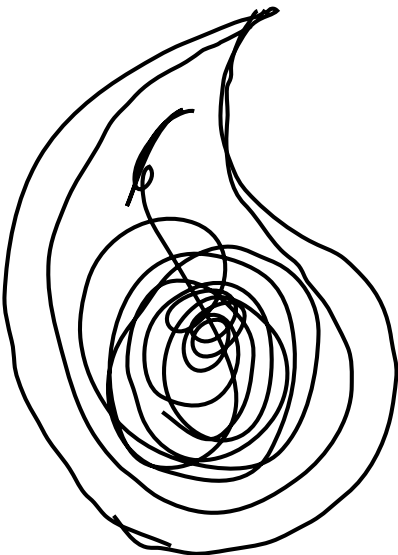


It can be beautiful watching the mounting
Anxieties of the undelivered bag
Hung thick over the conveyor belt.

Necks craned in rhythmic twists.
Eyes peeled like predators about to strike
Devotees watch as dreams of tokens Fly by.

Echoes of sauntering steps
In the twisted, cavernous, multicoloured
Scented duty-free alleys
Quicken dreams.

Sold by low priests of capital and
Retailers of greed entrap the unwary and
Insatiate and addicted accumulators of
Junk
Duty bound by vacuous promises of
embraces.





HOMEF/CAYAR NETWORK SET TO CONFRONT ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES IN CAYAR

The Municipality of Cayar, the biggest fishing community in the southern part of the Senegalese coast, is approximately 58 kilometres northeast of Dakar and 40 kilometres northwest of Thiès. It spans an area of 1,604 hectares, with a seafront extending over 3 kilometres. This area is characterized by its geographical diversity, including a dune system bordering the seafront, inter-dune basins, and a vast valley of wetlands. These features are typical of the Niayes agroecological zone, renowned for its horticultural activities.

Cayar's environment is enriched by a variety of ecosystems, including a marine-coastal ecosystem and wetlands. Recent offshore discoveries of gas deposits in the area have further highlighted its potential. The combination of a mild maritime climate, proximity to Dakar, and the economic

opportunities linked to natural resource exploitation has attracted a growing population to Cayar. The population increased from 28,516 in 2020 to 30,863 in 2023, according to the latest ANSD census. This demographic growth reflects the region's attractiveness, yet it also brings significant challenges, particularly in the context of environmental conservation and climate change.

Despite its natural wealth, Cayar faces numerous environmental challenges, namely the overexploitation of natural resources, inadequate management of solid waste, and poor sanitation infrastructure. The rapid population growth, combined with limited public awareness of environmental issues and unsustainable resource use practices, has intensified these problems. Climate change impacts such as coastal erosion and rising



temperatures have further compounded the risks.

The wetlands and dune ecosystems are particularly vulnerable. The dumping of garbage and housing expansion into areas designated as non-aedificandi zones have significantly degraded the wetlands. The dune agroecological system has suffered from unsustainable practices, such as sand quarry exploitation, excessive agricultural clearing, and the loss of filaos (*Casuarina* trees), which

serve as natural protective barriers. These activities have led to a drop in the water table due to overpumping for agricultural purposes, contamination from pesticides and herbicides, and pollution caused by diesel motor pumps.

The living environment in Cayar has also deteriorated due to overcrowded family concessions, unregulated housing expansion, and the proliferation of illegal garbage dumps. The shallow water table, often less than three meters deep, is at risk of contamination from septic tank drainage. Moreover, many homes are not connected to the existing sanitation network, and newly developed neighbourhoods lack adequate access to drinking water. These issues, combined with poor waste disposal practices, have created significant public health risks and environmental pollution.

Efforts to address these challenges have been undertaken by Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) like the HOME F and Cayar Network. The Network focuses on raising awareness about sustainable environmental practices through educational sessions utilizing animations, site visits, and community discussions. As part of this collaboration between HOME F and Cayar Network, local residents will be mobilized to engage in activities such as cleaning up degraded sites and planting trees to rehabilitate the area. Additionally, the Network will be launching ecological and socioeconomic projects to generate income, enhance community resilience and solidarity, and promote environmental preservation.

The combination of municipal efforts and community-driven initiatives aims to mitigate environmental degradation and improve living conditions in Cayar. However, these actions require stronger collaboration and sustained community mobilization to achieve long-term sustainability. Cayar's immense environmental and economic potential can only be realized through a balanced approach that prioritizes both development and conservation. By addressing issues related to resource exploitation, waste management, and inadequate sanitation, the municipality can secure a healthier environment and a brighter future for its residents.

Shaping an Inclusive Energy Transition in the Niger Delta

A just, equitable, and inclusive energy transition is key to the change desired in the Niger Delta and Nigeria as a whole. To see to the actualisation of this transition, Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Foundation, Africa Policy Research Institute and Health of Mother Earth Foundation gathered community representatives, civil society organisations, and community leaders at a workshop held in Abuja on 18 October 2024 to discuss the integration of justice imperatives into the National Energy Transition Plan (ETP). The meeting resulted in agreements on actions to be taken and a range of responsibilities that communities committed to.

The workshop participants made several key observations centred around climate change impacts, lack of community input in Nigeria's Energy Transition Plan (ETP), environmental restoration deficits, affordability and access to clean energy, gas flaring and transition fuels, job migration and skills

development, illegal mining and conflicts, adoption of renewable energy, and experience sharing.

It was observed that the effects of climate change are becoming increasingly evident in Nigeria, particularly in rural and extractive communities that are facing compounded challenges of environmental degradation and socioeconomic marginalisation. The workshop emphasized that a brighter future for extractive communities lies in real solutions such as a just and inclusive energy transition. Unfortunately, ETP was developed without sufficient consultation with extractive communities, which are the most affected by both historical fossil fuel exploitation and the potential impacts of the transition to cleaner energy sources. As a result, the ETP has failed to adequately address the historical environmental damage caused by fossil fuel extraction.

Extractive communities continue to



suffer from severe environmental degradation, and insufficient efforts are being made towards environmental remediation. The cost of cleaner energy technologies, such as solar power, remains unaffordable for many extractive communities. Without intervention, these populations risk being excluded from the benefits of the energy transition.

While Nigeria positions gas as its transition fuel, the continued flaring of significant amounts of gas represents both a missed opportunity for energy production and a source of ongoing environmental harm.

It was also observed that, despite the commendable plan to transit to cleaner energy sources, the transition is raising concerns about job migration and the need for retraining workers displaced by the decline in the fossil fuel industry. This signals the urgent need for investments in skills development to prepare workers and the next generation for employment in green sectors. Another urgently needed action is investment in and the incorporation of climate education into the current curriculum of schools in the Niger Delta and Nigeria at large.

Part of the observations made by the participants is the fact that illegal mining of critical minerals for the energy transition is already driving local conflicts. As mining operations expand to meet the global demand for transition minerals, communities may lose more agricultural land, exacerbating food insecurity. This is a conflict trigger.

It was also noted that some Nigerians are already adopting renewable energy solutions, such as solar power, in response to rising fuel costs. However, these efforts should be scaled up, particularly in underserved regions. Nigeria must engage in experience-sharing with countries facing similar challenges in their energy transitions to achieve a just energy transition. This will help in the determination and sharing of best practices for energy transition and to avoid common pitfalls.

The workshop participants affirmed that a just transition must ensure that the benefits and burdens of the transition are shared fairly. In other words, while marginalised and underserved communities bear the burdens of the transition, they should enjoy



the benefits therefrom as well. Four key justice imperatives were emphasized. The first is procedural justice, which ensures that all stakeholders, especially vulnerable communities, are included in decision-making processes through transparent and participatory mechanisms. The second is distributive justice, which guarantees equitable distribution of the benefits (such as jobs and energy access) and burdens (such as displacement or costs) associated with the energy transition, with particular interest in the benefits for marginalised groups.

The third imperative, restorative justice, addresses historical harm caused by extractive activities and ensures that communities suffering environmental degradation receive compensation. It also ensures ecosystem restoration in the communities.

The fourth is recognition justice, acknowledging and incorporating the specific perspectives, knowledge, and rights of marginalized groups—especially Indigenous Peoples, women, and rural communities—within the national energy transition framework.

Aside from these justice imperatives, accountability mechanisms, including

independent monitoring committees, performance benchmarks, community feedback loops and public accountability audits, must be incorporated into the transition process. Thus, to ensure compliance with the justice imperatives, participants agreed on the need for the introduction of these robust accountability mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the performance of the National Energy Transition Plan.

The independent monitoring committees should be established and led by communities. These committees will track the implementation of the energy transition plan and report on the plan's alignment with justice imperatives, focusing on equity in resource allocation, participation, and restorative efforts. It was proposed that the government, in collaboration with communities, should establish clear performance benchmarks that define success in terms of justice imperatives. These benchmarks will be subject to regular review, ensuring the energy transition remains responsive to community needs.

The community feedback loops entail a framework for regular feedback from community members, allowing for grievances, concerns, and suggestions to be communicated to decision-makers. This will include safe, anonymous platforms for whistleblowing and reporting corruption, exclusion, or rights violations. Public accountability audits mean that annual public audits of the energy transition plan are conducted to ensure transparency and accountability. These audits will focus on the equitable distribution of benefits, procedural fairness, and restorative efforts, with the findings shared publicly.

Discussions at the workshop also focused on the importance of community responsibility in shaping an inclusive energy transition in the Niger Delta. The participants agreed that communities have a critical role in ensuring that the transition is not just sustainable but also equitable. Deliberations on these issues motivated representatives of communities present at the workshop to commit to several responsibilities. One of such responsibilities was active participation in decision-making, with communities pledging to actively engage in consultations, public forums, and policy discussions



relating to the energy transition. This would entail communities nominating representatives to participate in decision-making bodies and monitoring committees to ensure their voices are heard. With regard to capacity building and education, communities pledged to undertake capacity-building initiatives to enhance the knowledge and skills of their people, empowering them to participate more effectively in the energy transition process. This would involve educating community members on the imperatives of justice, energy policies, and their rights.

Pledges were also made around monitoring and reporting as communities promised to actively monitor the impacts of energy transition projects within their regions, documenting successes and challenges. They plan to communicate the information gathered to relevant authorities and monitoring bodies. Community representatives at the workshop also saw peaceful protests and advocacy as part of their key responsibilities in contributing to the transition process. Thus, when communities feel excluded from the decision-making process or when justice imperatives are violated, they stated they would exercise their right to engage in popular and peaceful protests. Such protests will be staged to peacefully demand accountability, inclusion, and corrective action.

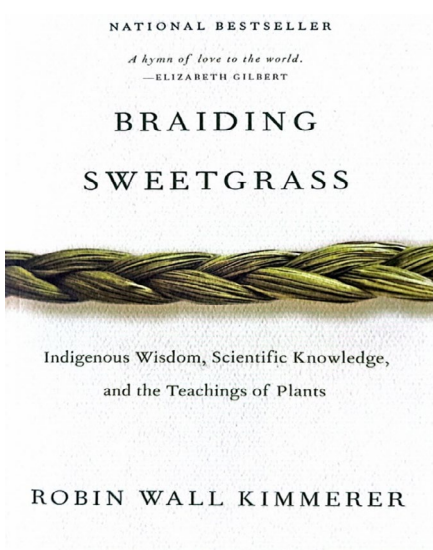
The communities vowed to organise public demonstrations and rallies when necessary to amplify their demands for a just transition while maintaining peaceful and lawful means of expression. They equally recognised the need for collaboration and solidarity, promising to collaborate with other civil society organisations, labour unions, and environmental groups to strengthen advocacy efforts. These collective actions will ensure that marginalised voices are amplified and that justice imperatives remain central to the transition agenda.

The workshop participants recognised that the success of a just transition in Nigeria requires substantial support from the international community, particularly developed countries, in line with their obligations under the Paris Agreement. They considered the international community to have critical roles, including providing climate finance to support Nigeria and other developing nations in implementing just energy transition strategies.

The participants also expect the international community to work with the Nigerian government to facilitate the transfer of clean energy technologies and provide technical assistance to build local capacity for renewable energy development. Another role the international community is expected to play is addressing loss and damage. Hence, it was stated that developed countries should support developing nations in addressing the impacts of climate change and provide compensation for communities facing losses due to climate-related events. The international community's support will be essential in ensuring that the energy transition is both sustainable and just, thereby empowering Nigeria to meet its climate goals while ensuring equitable outcomes for all its citizens.

It is the collective responsibility of government, energy companies, civil society, and local communities to ensure that Nigeria's energy transition is not only environmentally sustainable but also just, inclusive, and equitable. The Nigerian government and private sector are expected to respect and integrate the justice imperatives outlined above into the National Energy Transition Plan. All stakeholders should be held accountable to ensure that procedural, distributive, restorative, and recognition justice imperatives are fully realised in the transition process. The communique issued at the end of the workshop was signed by Shehu Musa Yar Adua Foundation, African Policy Research Institute, Nextier Advisory Limited, Health of Mother Earth Foundation, Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Environment, and Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Agriculture. Others who signed the communique included Peace Point Dev Foundation, Policy Alert, Kebetkache Women Development and Resource Centre, We the People, Environmental Rights Action, and Lekeh Dev Foundation. The communique was also signed by prominent individuals, such as Prof. Fidelis Allen/Dr. Boma Amaso of the University of Port Harcourt, Prof. Alex Enuneku/Ayamezimi Oziofu Ehinlaiye of the University of Benin, Prof. Gabriel Umoh of the University of Uyo, Dr Charles Oyibo of Niger Delta University, as well as communities in Akwa Ibom, Rivers, Bayelsa and Cross River.

Books You Should Read

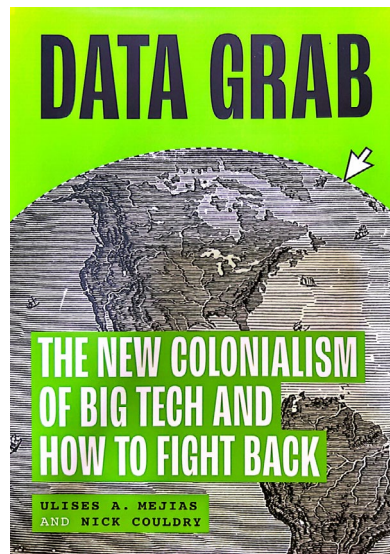


Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants by Robin Wall Kimmerer

In *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Robin Wall Kimmerer uses her knowledge of Indigenous science and life as a woman to tell how the other-than-humans (i.e., all non-human entities in the natural world) hold enormous lessons for humans who may have lost their connection with the other-than-humans. The narrative reflects on the creation of Turtle Island and the forces that threaten its flourishing in the present times.

The book is built on the premise that awakening ecological consciousness requires acknowledging and celebrating human reciprocal relationships with the other-than-humans. The author argues that unless humans begins to hear the voices of the other-than-humans, we will continue to be incapable of understanding the earth's generosity and unable to learn to give our gifts of love and care in return. The book is relevant to a world steeped in extractivism, destructive capitalism, and continuous disconnection from living harmoniously with nature.

The book is available in paperback on Amazon. Grab a copy!

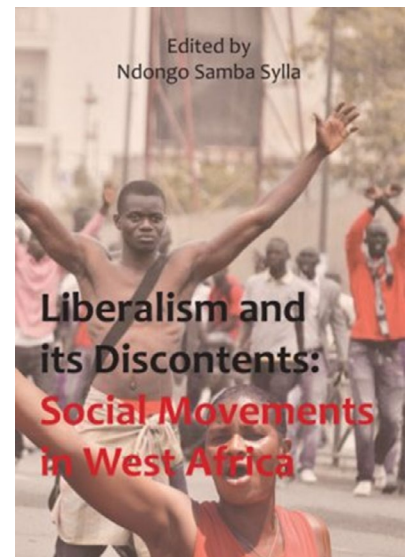


Data Grab: The New Colonialism of Big Tech and How to Fight Back by Ulises A. Mejias and Nick Couldry

Data Grab exposes another form of colonialism happening in the present dispensation—data colonialism—and informs us that we have a choice regarding how we relate with big tech companies like Meta, Amazon, and Alphabet, who have unparalleled access to our daily lives. These companies collect our data—when we check emails, shop online, etc.—in the same way that nations stole territories for ill-gotten minerals, crops, wealth, and dominance. The book explains that it is only within the framework of colonialism that we can understand the full scope of the data heist. Similar to land grabbing, data grabbing means that data from our lives is converted into raw material for corporate profit generation against our interest.

The results are the consolidation of corporate wealth in the Global North, the engineering of discriminatory algorithms and the deepening of global inequality. But we do have a choice to fight back, and *Data Grab* tells us how.

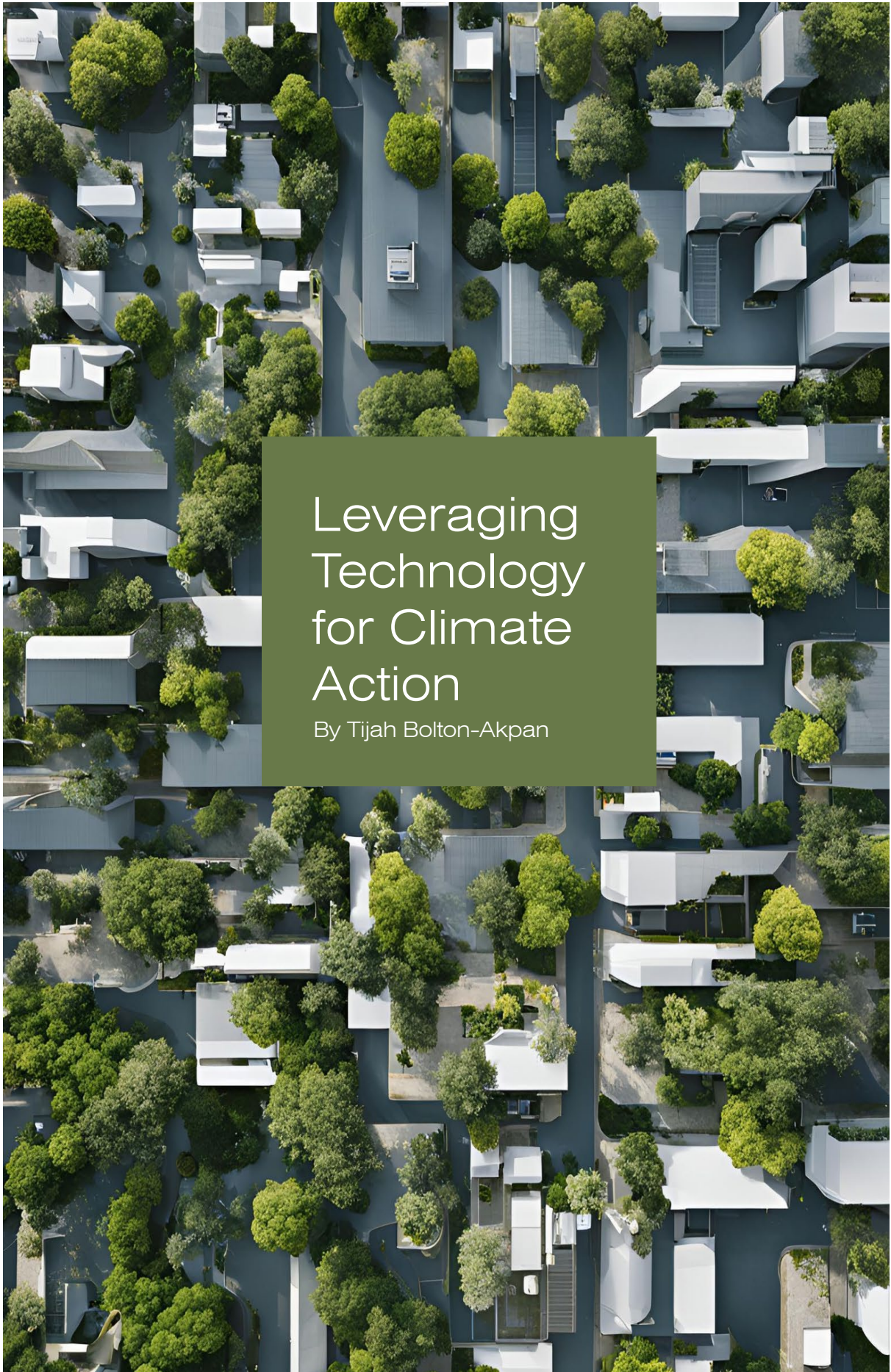
Find the book on eBay, Amazon and Blackwells. Enjoy the read!



Liberalism and its discontents: Social movements in West Africa by Ndongo Samba Sylla

Liberalism and its Discontents: Social Movements in West Africa is a compilation of engaging and wide-ranging discussions that explore contemporary political realities in Africa through a 'social movement' lens. It details the nuances of social movement politics in 12 West African countries during the 2010-2013 period, presenting a chronicle of the socio-political struggles that have taken place in the region. In the book, one finds answers to questions such as: What logic drives the social movements? What forms do they take? What has been their political impact? Can we speak of a resurgence of social movements? If so, are these a response to the crisis of 'representative democracy'? Did they give rise to new forms of expression and democratic participation? What challenges do they bring? The compilation reveals that the tension between discontent and liberalism, in its political and economic dimensions, is the trigger of the numerous popular uprisings and protests that occurred in West Africa.

Purchase this book from Daraja Press. It is a good read!



Leveraging Technology for Climate Action

By Tijah Bolton-Akpan

With only a few years remaining to achieve the net-zero targets outlined in the Paris Agreement of 2015, nations are racing to phase out unabated fossil fuel consumption while ramping up renewable energy sources.

In whatsoever we do in this race to achieve net-zero by 2050, a balanced approach is required—one that is both “fast and fair”—to phase out fossil fuels and transition to clean energy technologies. This process must safeguard the long-term health of ecosystems and prepare for the lasting community impacts of climate change.

Adapting to climate change begins with understanding climate risks, which necessitates measuring and managing these risks—an effort that relies heavily on technology.

Technology involves utilizing tools and machinery to create products, services, and experiences that simplify human life. Technology encompasses tangible objects like computers, cell phones, and vehicles, as well as intangible services such as the internet, email, and social networking. It also includes simple, locally developed solutions that communities have used for generations to address complex challenges.

However, technology is a double-edged sword. Misuse, as seen in the fossil fuel industry, refrigeration and aerosols, industrial processes, transportation, agriculture, deforestation, and waste management, has exacerbated

environmental problems.

On the other hand, technologies for climate mitigation include renewable energy, energy efficiency measures, carbon capture and storage (CCS), sustainable agriculture, electric and hydrogen vehicles, blockchain for sustainability, and smart technologies. Similarly, climate adaptation technologies include climate-resilient infrastructure, early warning systems, water management tools, biodiversity monitoring, urban planning using GIS, climate-resilient crops, and community engagement tools.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) emphasizes that addressing climate change is impossible without technology. Since its inception in 1992, the UNFCCC has prioritized the development and transfer of technology to support national climate actions. Article 4, Paragraph 1, of the Convention, commits all parties to promote and cooperate in developing technologies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Paragraph 5 mandates developed countries to “promote, facilitate, and finance” technology transfers to developing nations.

Furthermore, the financial mechanisms outlined in Article 11 include technology transfer provisions. Article 4, Paragraph 7, links developing country implementation to the effective fulfillment of developed country commitments regarding financial resources and technology transfer. Significant milestones have

“ Adapting to climate change begins with understanding climate risks, which necessitates measuring and managing these risks—an effort that relies heavily on technology”

been achieved under the UNFCCC. In 2010, the Conference of Parties (COP) established the Technology Mechanism, comprising the Technology Executive Committee (TEC) and the Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN). In 2023, the Technology Mechanism launched *Artificial Intelligence for Climate Action* (#AI4ClimateAction) to scale transformative climate solutions in developing countries, particularly in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Over 150 parties have submitted national designated entities (NDEs) for climate technology transfer, which act as conduits for requesting technical assistance from the CTCN.

Climate technologies encompass tools designed to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate impacts. Examples include drought-resistant crops, early warning systems,



seawalls, and agricultural technologies like precision robotics and space data. Soft technologies, such as energy-efficient practices and equipment training, also play

a role. Mitigation technologies range from renewable energy solutions like wind, solar, and hydropower to carbon capture, storage technologies, and engineered carbon

removals.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) are also harnessing technology to address climate impacts. In Nigeria,

“ These technologies must have adequate safeguarding to prevent data misuse and ensure that technology applications align with “Do No Harm” principles.”

for instance, Sustainability International uses a blockchain-based platform, Sela, to enhance trust and transparency in pollution compensation payments in the Niger Delta. National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA), a government agency, and Stakeholder Democracy Network (SDN) employ satellite imaging to track gas flaring and oil spills, while Media Awareness and Justice Initiative (MAJI) uses technological tools to capture air quality data for legal advocacy. Kebetkache Women Development and Resource Centre uses basic laboratory research to detect hydrocarbon presence in the blood of women in Niger Delta communities.

Nigeria’s Energy Transition Plan (ETP) of 2022 underscores the transformative power of technology, focusing on five key sectors: power, transport, cooking, industry, and oil and gas. The plan features the Integrated Energy Plan

(IEP), an interactive data visualization platform powered by geospatial modelling, which assists stakeholders in planning energy access expansion. The ETP also considers gas a transition fuel, involving exploration, processing, and distribution for industrial and domestic uses. However, reliance on gas perpetuates Nigeria’s dependence on fossil fuels. To ensure effective oversight in the oil and gas sector, advanced regulatory technologies are essential. Cases of unqualified contractors handling environmental cleanup, as seen in Ogoni, underscore the need for adequate technology deployment and capacity building. Regulatory capture and resource limitations also hinder agencies like NOSDRA, which depend on polluters for logistical support. Climate technologies must be standardized, transparent, and equitable to be effective at scale.

These technologies must have adequate safeguarding to prevent data misuse and ensure that technology applications align with “Do No Harm” principles. Enhanced public reporting on technology transfers is necessary, requiring multinationals to disclose economic activities on a country-by-country basis. Ultimately, technology must be viewed as an asset—not a panacea—integrated through consultations and user-needs assessments to empower local communities.

The adoption of indigenous technologies and the reclamation of traditional knowledge systems are critical for sustainable adaptation. Early adoption of clean

energy solutions, supported by investment in tech skills and digital inclusivity, can yield a competitive advantage. Efforts must also prioritize scaling battery technology advancements in order to reduce reliance on rare materials. Conversely, several “false solutions” masquerade as climate-friendly. “Climate Smart Agriculture,” for example, often benefits multinational corporations more than local communities. Similarly, biofuels exacerbate land conflicts and deforestation, while carbon capture technologies benefit the fossil fuel industry without addressing root causes. Geoengineering, nuclear energy, and other interventions raise ethical and practical concerns, further emphasizing the need for responsible innovation. In conclusion, technology offers transformative potential in combating climate change.

However, its success hinges on equitable implementation, ethical oversight, and the rejection of exploitative practices. By embracing indigenous knowledge and prioritizing sustainable investments, societies can build a resilient and just future powered by technology.

[Tijah Bolton-Akpan is the executive director and co-founder of Policy Alert]

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Consultation and Team Building Workshop on the State of the Ocean Feb. 2025
- HOMEF Team Building Retreat Feb. 2025
- Omega Resilience Awards, Africa (ORA-A) Fellows' in-person Meeting Feb. 2025