ISSUE #51- MARCH 2026

eco~ INSTIGATOR

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF HEALTH OF MOTHER EARTH FOUNDATION

Socio-ecological Transitions and the State of the Nigerian Environment

Do Not Fund the Energy Transition by Prolonging the Fossil Era

Showcasing Nigeria's Food Culture

Oil, Delay and Deception: Kpean's Ongoing Oil Spill Crisis

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Home Run

We welcome this edition of the Eco-Instigator with a deepened sense of urgency and an unshaken commitment to ecological justice.

This edition comes at a time when the fractures in our socio-ecological systems are no longer subtle but have become more visible in forced evictions of Indigenous communities by corporate and governmental bodies, disturbing degrees of environmental degradations, strained livelihoods, and in the ever-widening gap between policy promises and lived realities.

Despite these, this is also a season of renewed solidarity, sharpened analysis, and strengthened resolve within our movement. The articles in this edition bring together accounts of these tensions and contradictions, while also showing pathways of resistance, community resilience, and collective action towards more just ecological futures.

The months behind us have laid bare the deep fractures in our socio-ecological systems, but they have also revealed the power of collective action and reflection.

A key feature in this edition is our reflection on Makoko, an underserved fishing community in Lagos, Nigeria, which is currently under the hammer as the community is being demolished. The demolitions in Makoko stand as one of the most painful reminders of how “development” devoid of justice and participation can displace lives and dignity. Our visit to the community was an act of listening to and solidarity with them. Makoko reinforces a truth we hold firmly: communities must not be excluded from decisions that shape their futures.

Internally, our HOMEF team-building retreat sharpened our focus on socio-ecological transitions, examining how economic instability, energy reforms, climate pressures, and governance gaps combine to shape environmental outcomes.

The retreat provided us with an opportunity to reaffirm that transition must be just, people-centred, and grounded in community sovereignty, evidenced in the ethos of EtiUwem, anti-colonialism, responsible governance, collective action, and community resilience and participation.

This edition also reports the outcomes of our Agroecology projects , which were an opportunity to strengthen our agroecological vision: bringing together farmers, youth, and allies to champion food sovereignty, engender resistance and demonstrate that sustainable alternatives are already being practised among the people.

This edition also draws attention to the wider political, economic and social structures that sustain today’s socio-ecological crises, particularly the violence of extractivism, the persistence of pollution, and the false promises of transitions that leave old injustices

intact. Across its reports, articles, poems, and conversations, the edition reflects on dispossession, food sovereignty, democratic accountability, and the role of culture, memory, youth organising, and political education in resisting systems of harm. It presents ecological justice not simply as an environmental demand, but as a broader struggle over power, participation, dignity, agency and the futures communities are entitled to shape.

Across all programmes from youth organising to culture and advocacy, we continue to confront structural injustices while nurturing imagination, solidarity and environmental justice.

This edition captures journeys of struggles and renewal. We invite you to read, reflect, and contribute. The Eco-Instigator remains a shared space for truth-telling and transformation.

The movement grows because you are part of it.

It's always a delight to hear and read from you. We never stop looking forward to receiving your feedback, stories, articles, poems, or photos.

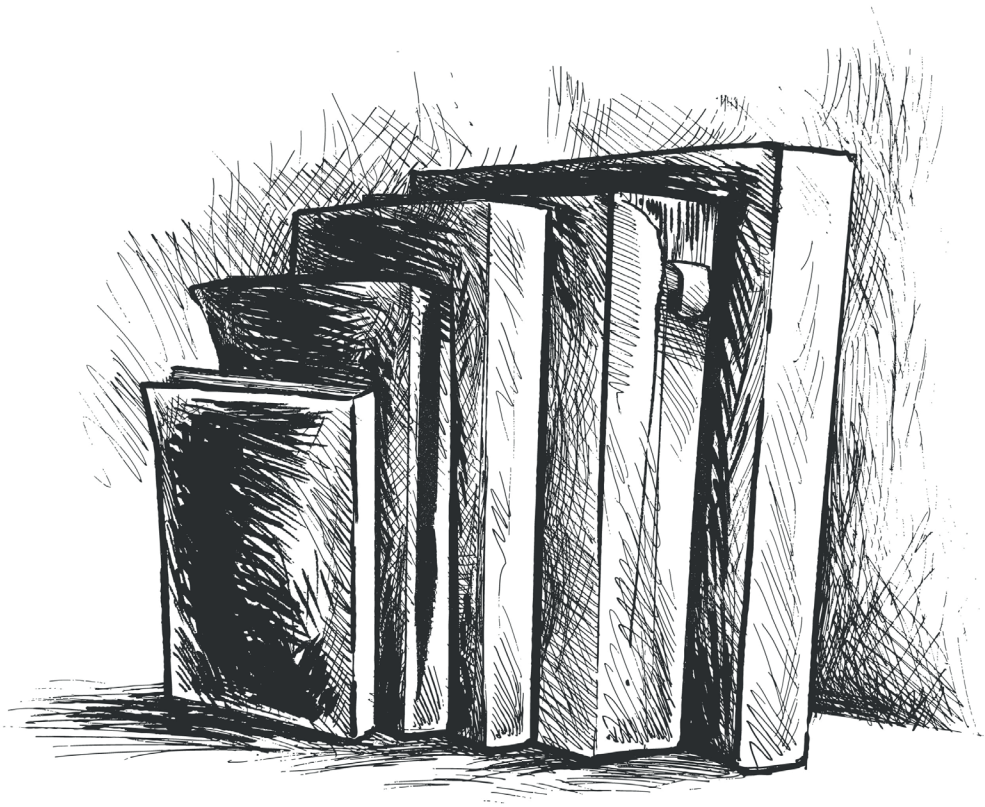
Continue to share with us at

editor@homef.org.

Until Victory!

Nnimmo Bassey

Director, Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF)



SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRANSITIONS AND THE STATE OF THE NIGERIAN ENVIRONMENT

Amara Nwankpa

Nigeria's environment is not collapsing because Nigerians do not care. Much of global environmental discourse rests on an unexamined assumption that degradation is primarily a problem of awareness, of ignorance, of insufficient values. If only people "knew better," they would act better, many believe.

Nigeria's environmental crisis is structural. It is the ecological reflection of how our political economy has evolved over the years. It reflects survival strategies within a system that has not reliably provisioned its citizens. When formal systems retreat, people improvise. When people improvise at scale, the environment absorbs the shock.

The real question is not: "Why don't Nigerians protect the environment?" It is: "What kind of socioeconomic transition is producing (and sustaining) the environmental outcomes we see?"

Simultaneous Transitions

Nigeria is not moving through a single transition. We are navigating multiple, generally conflicting, transitions at once. Unlike Western Europe or North America, where industrialisation, urbanisation, and environmental reform unfolded gradually over centuries, Nigeria and much of Africa are experiencing these shifts within a few decades.

" When formal systems retreat, people improvise. When people improvise at scale, the environment absorbs the shock".

There are at least six pressures currently facing us.

First, urbanisation through accretion. Our cities expand by improvisation. Infrastructure follows settlement rather than shaping it. Drainage, waste systems, transport networks and other manifestations of development are retrofitted into spaces already claimed by necessity.

Second, the youth bulge. Millions enter a labour market that cannot formally absorb them. Environmental risk becomes a rational byproduct of survival, whether through informal mining, waste scavenging, or unregulated land use.

Third, the extraction schism. We are pressured globally to decarbonise while our fiscal architecture remains dependent on oil. The state is asked to abandon the very revenue source that sustains it without a stable alternative.

Fourth, the subsidy shock. Fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria has altered household energy behaviour. When gas becomes unaffordable, biomass becomes the fallback, and this contributes to deforestation. Deforestation is not a habit; it is a policy ripple.

Fifth, climate volatility. Floods, desertification, and erratic rainfall are no longer future threats; they are present multipliers of vulnerability.

Sixth, decentralised power reforms, such as the Electricity Act of 2023 in Nigeria, which could democratise access or deepen inequality depending on implementation.

These are not sequential phases. They are simultaneous collisions. Our institutions were built for a slower tempo. But they are now operating under high voltage as a result of these pressures. The mismatch is structural, and the environment is where it shows.

The Environment as Archive

We must stop treating environmental degradation as an isolated incident. A polluted river or a bald forest is not just a problem; it is a document.

The environment is Nigeria's most honest ledger. It records where governance retreats and where economic systems misalign. Deforestation records an energy access failure. When cooking gas becomes unaffordable, the forest becomes the last free fuel station.

Waste accumulation records a logistics failure. When waste collection systems fail, drainage channels become landfills. Artisanal mining records a labour market failure. When the formal economy is exclusive rather than inclusive, the earth becomes the employer of last resort.

If we misread these signals, we will treat symptoms while leaving structures intact. Environmental reform must therefore begin with structural literacy and reforms.

The Blind Spot - Vernacular Governance

There is another critical misreading in environmental policy: the assumption that where the state is weak, governance is absent. The informal sector does not operate in the absence of governance. It is an alternative governance. Where formal authority does not reach, institutions do not disappear. They reconfigure. Community associations levy and maintain shared infrastructure. Market unions regulate economic space. Traditional authorities mediate legitimacy.

This is what I call vernacular governance.

Technocratic interventions are often designed as if a vacuum exists. That assumption produces friction. Projects fail not because of engineering flaws, but because they bypass legitimacy structures already in place. The key lesson from all these situations is simple: durability is not produced by hardware alone. It is produced by recognition.

Justice as Recognition

Justice, in this context, begins with recognition, not symbolic inclusion, but the acknowledgment of existing sovereignty.

This becomes urgent as climate finance expands. Carbon markets and adaptation funds are not neutral instruments. They are embedded in global power relations.

Carbon abstraction reduces land to atmospheric value. In some imaginaries, a forest becomes a credit. But within Nigerian communities, land is livelihood, ancestry, spirituality, and moral economy. If we do not ground land governance in community sovereignty, we risk transitioning from oil extraction to carbon extraction, thereby repeating the same dispossession using 'greener language.'

Recognition of the commons is our firewall against green dispossession.

Strategic Questions for HOMEF

> Are we strengthening the informal governance, or bypassing it? If projects dissolve when funding ends, we built structures, not institutions.
>
> Can survival capital be redirected? Households already spend billions on generators and firewood in their bid to produce energy. If alternatives are legitimate and trusted, capital will shift voluntarily.
>
> Are we reducing institutional friction? Are we leaving behind bridges or parallel competitors?
>
> How do we prevent transition

Conclusion: Governing within the Grain

Nigeria's environmental condition is not a story of ignorance. It is a story of structural misalignment within a compressed, simultaneous transition.

> The path forward is not louder policy. It is alignment.
>
> Alignment between formal systems and informal institutions.
>
> Alignment between climate finance and community sovereignty.
>
> Alignment between youth potential and regenerative opportunity.
>
> If we learn to govern within the grain of our social reality, reform becomes durable.
>
> If we do not, our efforts risk becoming just another entry in the environment's archive of failure.

dispossession? As the green economy grows, where will revenue concentrate?

And finally, how do we centre youth as regenerative labour? If restoration does not result in employment for people, degradation will remain the order of the day.

(This was a presentation at HOMEF's Team Building Retreat 2026. Amara Nwankpa is an experienced civic technology and public policy expert. He is the current DG of the Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Centre, Abuja.)

SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL TRANSITIONS (SeT):

HOMEF 2026 Annual Team-Building Retreat

“ transition implies movement...movement does not just entail motion, but it must have a purpose, a direction and a clear target”

Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF) convened its 2026 Annual Team-Building Retreat at Almat Farms in Kuje, Abuja, under the theme Socio-Ecological Transitions (SeT). The six-day gathering brought together team members from across locations to deepen shared understanding of the year's focus, strengthen internal cohesion, and align our programmes towards building an ecologically just world.

The Executive Director, Dr Nnimmo Bassey, opened the retreat with a reflection on Social-Ecological Transition (SeT), emphasizing that transition implies movement. He pointed out that movement does not just entail motion, but it must have a purpose, a direction and a clear target.

Each desk within the organization was challenged to reflect on what transition they are bringing about in HOMEF in 2026 and on the core values guiding their work. In this context, transition was defined as the outcome of a process: whereas change is not always definite or final, transformation is deeper and internal. The transition HOMEF seeks must therefore be deeply rooted, internal, and systemic, not cosmetic. The exposition on SeT emphasizes that transition is a living process guided by a clear vision. The organisation's vision of an ecologically just world, where all beings live in harmony with Mother Earth, remains central to this process. The opening session emphasised that a clear vision is essential, as an individual or organization without vision lacks direction.

HOMEF's vision remains the realization of an ecologically just world where all beings live in harmony with Mother Earth. This vision is not a distant or receding dream; it is a concrete and guiding image of the future we are committed to building.

We are transitioning from a system where short-term profits and corporate interests override the needs of people and the planet. This pattern persists due to an enforced rupture between citizens and governments, marked by restricted political participation and weakened civic spaces. To tip the balance, it is necessary to reclaim people's sovereignty and strengthen environmental defense through popular political participation. The interests of ecological destroyers will never align with those who depend directly on the environment for survival.

" HOMEF's vision remains the realization of an ecologically just world where all beings live in harmony with Mother Earth. This vision is not a distant or receding dream; it is a concrete and guiding image of the future we are committed to building" .

He further noted that many of today's crises, including finance, food, climate, and water, are driven by unequal power relations. Environmental degradation has been worsened by the shrinking of democratic spaces, exclusion of citizens from decision-making, and the capture of governance processes by corporate interests. The transition we seek must, therefore, involve closing the gap between the environment and regulators, and restoring public participation in environmental governance.

Further discussions highlighted that we are transitioning from systems marked by the financialization of nature, environmental degradation, repression, corporate capture, and the exclusion of citizens from democratic spaces. These current systems prioritise short-term corporate interests over the wellbeing of people and the planet. A genuine transition demands reclaiming popular sovereignty, strengthening environmental defense through active political participation, and challenging technocratic governance.

The subsequent session on Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning (MERL) explored practical tools for transition. It

strengthened the team's capacity to measure outcomes and impact, while a keynote conversation on Nigeria's socio-economic transitions framed environmental degradation as a structural challenge rather than a failure of individual responsibility. Metaphors of foundations and bridges underscored the need for strong institutional grounding to sustain long-term change.

Partners and teams shared testimonies of agroecological transformation, community empowerment, and collaborative advocacy. Across programme presentations spanning community culture, fossil politics, media, youth engagement, rights of nature, mining, and hunger politics, teams outlined concrete strategies for advancing socio-ecological transitions through research, litigation, creative expression, policy influence, and grassroots mobilisation.

Administrative sessions addressed tax reforms, financial controls, and institutional compliance, reinforcing accountability and sustainability. Creative reflection remained central to HOMEF's approach to achieving its goals. So, the team embarked on a visit to Nike Art Gallery, which highlighted the connection between art, resilience, and environmental renewal. Group exercises simulated rapid response strategies to oil spills in Ogoni, GMO importation policies, and corporate forest grabs, producing 30-day action plans grounded in community leadership.

In a closing remark, Bassey urged prompt responsiveness, ethical conduct, authorship accountability, and stronger internal amplification of HOMEF's work. The retreat concluded with a movie night featuring Lean on Me, which thematises leadership, discipline, and collective responsibility.

Overall, the 2026 retreat reaffirmed that socio-ecological transition requires courage, coordination, and consistent action. With strengthened foundations and shared purpose, HOMEF steps into the year with a renewed commitment to advancing justice-centred, community-led ecological transformation.

LIVING IN UNCERTAINTY: THE HUMAN COST OF EVICTIONS IN MAKOKO

HOMEF Team

Makoko is an important fishing community located in Yaba Local Government Area of Lagos State, overlooking the Third Mainland Bridge. Since the last week of December 2025, demolition squads accompanied by armed security have been bulldozing the community of about 300,000 people, with the attacks intensifying since the dawn of the new year.

The Lagos State Government, which is responsible for this condemnable act, is displacing a people from their community without prior and informed consultations or any provision for resettlement, and with no options whatsoever. Makoko people, who are predominantly fishers, have lived peacefully in their community for more than a century, using the proceeds from fishing to support their families and provide shelter, some on stilts and others on land. Makoko is one of the largest informal fishing settlements in Nigeria.

HOMEF team and other partners from Corporate Accountability and Public Participation Africa CAPPA and Centre for Children's Health Education, Orientation and Protection CEE-HOPE met with affected and displaced members of Makoko community to show solidarity and offer moral support to the victims of the demolition.

The demolition of the iconic community extends far beyond the limits of 30, 50, and 100 metres from a power line that passes through the community, rendering thousands homeless and contributing to deteriorating human conditions.

About 700 homes, four places of worship, two schools, and two clinics were destroyed by the time of our visit.

CREDIT: CADMUS ATAKE ENADE

The Lagos lagoon waterfront communities, comprising Makoko, Oko-Agbon, and Sogunro, are densely populated, underserved territories that are home to fishing families that have lived there in very poor conditions for generations. The communities have historically faced periodic threats of eviction and demolition tied to the state government's urban redevelopment goals and mega-city ambitions. In May 2022, Makoko residents resisted the state government's planned demolition of their community through an estate developer. This time, the ears of the government appear largely closed to the pleas of the people.

Many households have had their homes and possessions destroyed without prior notice, leaving victims to seek shelter in canoes, which were being used as emergency sleeping platforms on the lagoon.

While narrating the incident, a resident, Marcel Adingban, who lost his five-day-old baby during the demolitions, stated:

"My house was not marked for demolition. I went to help my friend whose house was being demolished when I received a call informing me that teargas had been thrown into my compound, and my new baby was coughing and could not breathe. I rushed the baby to the local hospital. Due to a lack of equipment, we were asked to take the baby to the general hospital, but before getting to the hospital, I lost my baby. This is my first child who died from the government's action".

Another resident of Makoko, Ayinde Roderick, noted: "The patients were successfully evacuated from the first clinic. When the doctor returned to remove some of his equipment, the place was burnt down. They threw tear gas and fire into the place to burn it down, so everyone ran away. About eight houses were burnt down."

The secretary of Fishnet Alliance in Makoko, during a detailed account, noted:

"The youths and community members were informed that security operatives and contractors had received an order to prevent access to the waterside and to take over the entire waterfront area. When community representatives went to engage the officials, a commanding officer confirmed that the instruction they received was to demolish the

entire waterside. The officer further stated that they were acting strictly on orders and would only stop if a counter-order was received. This directly contradicted the earlier agreement with the government to limit demolitions to 100 metres from the power lines. Community members challenged this inconsistency and insisted that the agreed-upon terms were clear and should be adhered to. The officials then stated that if the work extended beyond 100 metres, the community could protest, and that their superior would later come to verify and measure whether the agreed distance had been exceeded. We saw this response as a pretest to fool us because a metre is universally the same and does not change irrespective of who measures it."

He further stated:

"In response to the situation, the community contacted six to seven television stations, and journalists visited the area to document and report on the demolition activities. The witness stated that media coverage was necessary because the situation represented a clear case of intrusion and intimidation, with children having died as a result of the stress, displacement, and conditions caused by the ongoing forced eviction of the community. One such case involved a woman who died, leaving behind her children."

Nnimmo Bassey (HOMEF Director), while visiting affected areas of Makoko to commiserate with displaced residents, stated that "Makoko is a historic community that has existed for centuries and plays a vital role in Lagos' social and economic life. Makoko did not just happen yesterday. This is a community that has been here for generations. Destroying it is a shame on Lagos State and a shame on Nigeria. The government is obviously acting in connivance with private interests to dispossess residents without due process or resettlement plans."

Bassey further recalled the 1990 demolition of Makoko under a former military administration, which displaced over 300,000 people, warning that the current exercise risks repeating a painful history.

"Demolishing communities is never a solution. Government is meant to protect and serve the people, not render them homeless. This assault on the urban poor is comparable to what Nigerians suffer from bandits in other parts of the country. Forced evictions and land-grabbing are repugnant and must be halted."

The government has ordered all demolition victims to vacate the area completely and stop sleeping in boats on the lagoon. Children and other vulnerable groups are disproportionately affected. Parents shared that their children have lost school materials and uniforms and are unable to return to classes, while adults are struggling to preserve livelihoods tied to fishing and trade. Without shelter, food supplies, clean water, waste disposal, or healthcare facilities, insecurity has intensified. Several families expressed concerns about their safety, citing exposure to the elements and the risk of sleeping over open water.

The demolition of homes in Makoko is not merely an urban planning exercise but a deepening humanitarian crisis with long-term socioeconomic repercussions. Residents face displacement, loss of income, disrupted education, and acute insecurity. Unless immediate corrective action is taken - grounded in human rights, law, and dignified engagement - the aftermath will continue to affect the most vulnerable families in Lagos.

Oil, Delay, and Deception: Kpean's Ongoing Oil Spill Crisis

HOMEF Team

On the morning of 3 August 2025, residents of Kpean community in Khana Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria woke to unmistakable signs of imminent danger. A sharp, suffocating hydrocarbon smell hung in the air, driving people from their homes and towards an oil facility that has long overshadowed their lives and livelihoods. Before anyone reached the site, the land and water had already delivered the message: crude oil was spilling again.

Darkened soil, slick streams and wilting vegetation spoke before any official confirmation. At the centre of the spill was Well 14, drilled around 1967 in the Yorla Oil Field of Oil Mining Lease (OML) 11.

Production at the well had ceased decades ago, but the infrastructure remained abandoned, unmaintained and dangerously exposed. From its corroded wellhead, crude oil seeped freely into

surrounding land and water bodies, contaminating farms, poisoning streams and destroying vegetation. For Kpean, a community in Ogoniland, this was not an accident but a familiar pattern, one that has defined life whenever oil infrastructure is left to decay in their community.

The community immediately alerted the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA), the federal government body mandated to detect, respond to and coordinate oil spill clean-ups in Nigeria. Yet, as oil spread across land and water, the response lagged behind the damage. Records from NOSDRA's Oil Spill Monitor portal show that the spill was stopped only on 6 August 2025, three days after it began. A Joint Investigation Visit (JIV) did not take place until 8 August, five days after crude oil first escaped the wellhead.

The JIV, led by NOSDRA and attended by representatives of the Rivers State Ministry of Environment, NNPC Exploration and Production Limited (NEPL), the host community and security agencies, estimated that about 28 barrels of crude oil, approximately 4,450 litres, were released, with just about half of that amount reportedly recovered. The report identified corrosion as the cause of the spill and documented oil-stained, withering vegetation. It concluded that the impacted area lay within the company's facility and recommended immediate repair of the wellhead and clean-up of the site under regulatory monitoring.

On paper, these steps suggested responsibility on the part of the government.

However, residents say that the recommendations were ignored, as oil continued to seep into the environment long after the investigation, unchecked and uncontained. Twelve days later, on 15 August 2025, neglect turned into full-scale disaster when the spill site caught fire. Though the blaze was eventually contained, it exposed how regulatory delays and corporate inaction can transform environmental pollution into a direct threat to human life.

The crisis did not end there. On 4 December 2025, barely five months after the first spill, oil was once again seen spreading across Kpean's land and waterways. According to community accounts, containment efforts for this second spill did not begin until 25 December, 21 days after the spill started. By late January 2026, more than seven weeks later, clean-up had still not commenced. What unfolded was not an emergency response but a prolonged abandonment.

For the people of Kpean, the consequences of the spills and the neglect are immediate and devastating. Farming and fishing, once the backbone of survival, have become impossible. A community member, Sorleba Bari Appolos, described Kpean as a people whose life has been stripped of dignity and security. The stream that once provided drinking water and sustenance to the community is now contaminated with oil. Families are forced to buy sachet water just to survive, while income sources disappear.

Beyond lost livelihoods lies a deeper, more disturbing crisis: residents report strange illnesses and an alarming pattern of deaths.

"The stream that once provided drinking water and sustenance to the community is now contaminated with oil. Families are forced to buy sachet water just to survive, while income sources disappear".

According to Mr Appolos, people in the community rarely live beyond 60 years, while younger residents die from complicated and unexplainable health conditions. "If the federal government, through NEPL, remembers that we are humans, they should consider us," he said, stressing that any intervention must prioritise healthcare alongside environmental remediation.

The Paramount Ruler of

Kpean, Lucky Gbene-Ewoh, questioned how a spill could remain without meaningful clean-up for more than five months. Repeated petitions, he said, have yielded only promises without action, while livelihoods continue to collapse and both humans and animals continue to die. His concerns echo a broader frustration across Ogoniland, where pollution is not an isolated event but a continuous reality.

Kpean's experience fits into a wider pattern of spills across Ogoniland in 2025. In May, oil leaked in B-Dere community in Gokana Local Government Area from the Bodo-West 1 Oil Well, reportedly linked to a ruptured section of the Trans Niger Pipeline. In April, crude oil spilled in Korokoro, Tai Local Government Area, close to a HYPREP remediation site. In February, another spill occurred in Ogale, Eleme Local Government Area. Every local government area in Ogoniland recorded at least one spill in the same year the federal government renewed conversations about resuming oil production in the region.

This pattern reflects the history of oil exploration in the region. Oil production began in Ogoniland in the 1960s, bringing decades of pollution, gas flaring and environmental devastation. By 1993, sustained resistance led by the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) forced production to stop. The execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni activists in November 1995 entrenched global outrage and halted operations. Yet while oil extraction stopped, the infrastructure remained. Wells, pipelines and flow stations were abandoned rather than properly decommissioned, leaving communities exposed to recurring pollution from dilapidating and unsafe facilities.

Nigeria's laws are clear on what should happen next. The NOSDRA Act of 2006 mandates the timely clean-up of oil spills, with penalties for failure and provisions for health impact assessment and full environmental remediation. The Petroleum Industry Act and the Nigeria Upstream Petroleum Decommissioning and Abandonment Regulations 2023 require the safe decommissioning of facilities that have exceeded their operating lives. In practice, however, enforcement remains weak.

When contacted, NOSDRA's Port Harcourt Zonal Director said the agency was carrying out its responsibilities but declined to explain why clean-up had not begun several months after the spill. NNPC Ltd, on its part, claimed remediation was ongoing, even if not visible, citing a December 2025 field visit by top government officials as proof. Yet this narrative conflicts with NOSDRA's own investigation, which attributed the spill to corrosion, whereas NNPC said it was due to vandalism. Between these conflicting explanations lies a troubling gap: a community still living with oil-soaked land and poisoned water.

Civil society organisations, including Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF) and Miideekor Environmental Development Initiative, argue that these spills expose the hollowness of plans to resume oil drilling in Ogoniland. According to Nnimmo Bassey (HOMEF's Director), oil spills in Ogoniland are not relics of the past but ongoing events. He warns that reopening oil fields without first restoring polluted land, decommissioning unsafe infrastructure and addressing health impacts, represents a dangerous choice that prioritises extraction over human life and environmental justice.

What is unfolding in Kpean is more than an environmental incident; it is a test of political will and moral responsibility. As crude oil continues to stain soil, water and human lives, the question is no longer whether Ogoniland can sustain oil production, but whether the Nigerian state and its institutions are willing to protect Nigerians from the violence of neglect. Until clean-up, healthcare, compensation and genuine remediation replace excuses, delays and inaction, the demand for environmental justice in Ogoniland will only grow louder.

WHAT THE DELTA REMEMBERS AND WHAT THE CLOUD FORGETS

Olive Etisioro

Before the flares, there were fireflies.

Nature herself lit up the clouds in soft yellow glow, bathing us in the light of the Morningstar so that our sins were sent into remission with each new day.

Before the forgetting, there was a name, but the old women do not say much anymore.

We must speak it anyway. The silence is not peace...no, it is a debt we are still paying.

The river had a name we gave it...and a name it gave itself. We drank from it, and it read our lineages back to us through the lifeblood flowing through Mother Earth's veins.

We must read it again. Read it before they file the paperwork, before the permissions arrive with their particular blindness: the kind that sees a landscape and tags it a sacrifice; the one that sees a people and finds them nothing but obstacles.

They say they brought light... the sky at night is never dark now. But our children have never seen the Milky Way.

What have we traded darkness for? What have we traded?

Somewhere, a server is drinking the sea.

Somewhere, a server is drinking the sea and soon, we will not have a drop left to drink.

The fish run for land, and its very name has become a word carried quietly toward death, a memory too fragile for ordinary air.

But we are not fragile, and we are not finished. Say the name of the fish that left. Say it until the water hears you and remembers.

Because the light we made of ourselves has consumed the Morningstar, and the sacrifice of blue light torches the dying reefs.

And we must take care not to forget that this is not memory, nor is it care. We are archiving the world we are ending, and we cannot call it progress, nor can we call it just. Just because you cannot see the thirst from where you are standing does not make the drought a lie.

Before the flares burned all night, there were fireflies. And the river remembered everything and told everyone. Now, we must do the remembering on its behalf and tell it not to the cloud, which cannot grieve...not to the algorithm, which cannot mourn,but to each other...

Until Mother Nature reminds us of what it is, to exist.

(This was a spoken word made for the Socio-ecological Transitions (SeT) session at HOMEF's Team-building retreat, presented by Onome Etisioro and Mercy Inegbe, who both work at Health of Mother Earth Foundation)

Showcasing Nigeria's Food Culture

Joyce Brown

Food does not exist merely to satisfy hunger. Food, for the Nigerian people and indeed for Africans, is deeply rooted in our culture, as was demonstrated today by the diversity in dishes from different ethnic groups in the different geopolitical regions of Nigeria at the 3rd edition of the Nigerian Food Festival.

This edition of the Nigerian Food Festival, which was held on 17th December 2025 at the Abuja Centre of Commerce and Industry, featured, among many other activities, a cooking competition where chefs prepared on the spot and presented Nigerian delicacies from the North Central, North-East, North-West, South-East, South-South and Southwest regions.

Some of these delicacies include atama and fufu, miyan kuka and tuwo masara, eforiro and pounded yam, miyan busheshe kubewa and tuwo masara, ofe oha and eba, miyan jeda and tuwo shinkafa. Also, there was highly flavourful native rice and coconut rice served with fish and garnished with Nigerian dodo. We had street foods like suya, masa, akara and local bread. As a rule, there were no carbonated drinks served. Our choice of

drinks was locally made, healthy and delicious 'kunu aya' made from tiger nuts and 'zobo' made from hibiscus flower and fruits.

The event started with an atilogu dance session, which captivated the audience and revived memories of cultural vibrancy, community celebrations, youth energy, and spiritual dynamism. Following the dance session was a panel discussion on "our food culture and why it matters'. Main highlights from this session were: a) that our local food is medicinal, able to preserve health and life; b) that food is identity and culture; and c) that having the right information and proper planning will help consumers, young and old, make better food choices.

Food shaming (looking down on certain foods and on people who consume them as socially "unfit") was condemned by both the panelists and the audience. Central to the discussion was the need to preserve and promote food sovereignty - the right of people to safe and culturally relevant food. The discussants called on the government to enforce a ban on GMOs and highly hazardous pesticides and increase support for smallholder farmers to make healthy food more available and accessible to the public. The panelists were food system experts like Barr Mariann Bassey-Olsson (Food Sovereignty advocate and Deputy Director at Environmental Rights Action), Dr Jacqueline Ikeotuonye (Medical doctor and Country Coordinator at Bio-integrity and Natural Foods Awareness Initiative), Chief Nicholas Chibueze (Farmer and Chairman, Cassava Growers Association, Nigeria)

Beyond the dishes on display and the conversations on food sovereignty, the festival also drew attention to a more fundamental issue: the preservation of indigenous seeds, which remain central to local food systems, cultural identity, and the future of food in Nigeria. Seed is life. Seed is the future. Seeds embody generations of knowledge and cultural practices, integral to local food systems and identity.

The food festival also featured an exhibition of seeds from across the country, including akidi, ofor, achi, edu, ede, ahaja etc from the South-East; Bambara nuts, sesame seeds, soybeans, chia seeds, millet, fonio, guinea corn etc from the Northern regions. We also saw cassava stems, hibiscus leaves, maize, rice and groundnuts. These seeds are highly nutrient-dense and rich in fiber, protein and essential minerals like iron, folate, potassium, and magnesium.

"Art is such a vital tool for cultural expression, as it offers a unique language to communicate shared beliefs, traditions, and social commentary across generations and borders, making the intangible aspects of culture visible and tangible".

The women farmers who showcased these seeds highlighted several medicinal and cultural importance of each of the seeds, including fertility improvement, blood sugar regulation, maintaining blood pressure, detoxification, weight loss, post-delivery treatment, hormonal balance, aiding digestion, etc. Akidi, for example, is often prepared as a porridge or with yam and is prized for symbolizing unity and continuity in many Igbo communities. It is often served at important ceremonies like naming rites and funerals.

The festival also used artistic performance to celebrate and preserve food memory, cultural identity, and indigenous knowledge.

Art is such a vital tool for cultural expression, as it offers a unique language to communicate shared beliefs, traditions, and social commentary across generations and borders, making the intangible aspects of culture visible and tangible. In addition to the singing and dancing, Rije Kume, a farmer and storyteller, used poetry to paint the picture of what food was before "modernisation" invaded Nigerian communities.

The farmer told of a time when our people relished the taste of food - every ingredient told a story and every bite held a memory of our mothers and grandmothers in glory; a time when ugu, bitter leaf and efo riro (all leaves rich in anti-oxidants) fought diseases before paracetamol arrived; a time when there were no chemicals or GMOs and all our fathers and mothers had was the soil and sunlight.

Here's an excerpt from his speech:

> "(Sneezes) Someone called my name...It is Ajanaku, the voice of truth, the voice of Africa. It says to tell and urge you, to eat what your ancestors ate, to honour the soil that bore you; for every plate must remember where it is coming from; for so will you be strong as the rocks; and be continuously reminded, that our food is also our medicine."

The high point of the event was the presentation of foods by the chefs representing the six regions. The different chefs spoke about the foods they prepared, including the nutritional and cultural value of the meals. The chef from the South-South region said something profound in her presentation: that food is a unifier, bringing diverse people together, transcending language and fostering connection through shared meals, food traditions and food art, and creating a sense of belonging. It is no wonder they won the competition!

The judges – Chef Zainab (culinary expert), Brian Nwana (Guinness World Record holder/social media influencer) and Lovelyn Ejim (Farmer and Executive Director of Network of Women and Youth in Agriculture) – assessed the chefs based on the presentation of the food, taste, flavour and the chef's ability to convey the uniqueness of the food. South-West and North Central emerged as the first and second runners-up respectively. All the competitors were given very substantial prizes. Although one region emerged as the overall winner, all the meals were delicious and evoked a strong sense of our cultural roots, and were all memorable for their richness, flavour, and cultural significance.

In the end, the participants acknowledged a positive change in behaviour with regard to their food choices while they called on the government to enforce policies that ensure the preservation of foods, food culture and diversity.

The 2025 edition of the Nigerian Food Festival was attended by children, youth, farmers, artists, CSOs, chefs, journalists, and representatives from the Ministries of Education, Health, Agriculture and Food Security. The event was organised by Health of Mother Earth Foundation in collaboration with the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa, Bread for the World, Agroecology Fund, Environmental Rights Action, Corporate Accountability and Public Participation Africa, Women Environment Programme, Youth for Environmental Sustainability and Development and a host of other partners.

(Joyce Brown is the Director of Programmes and Lead for Hunger Politics work at Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF), Nigeria. She is on the Board of the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa and coordinates the youth platform of the Alliance. She also co-coordinates the Alliance for Action on Pesticides in Nigeria).

USED & DUMPED

A. S. Afereno

Lady Oloibiri was a beautiful Angel
Her wings so high above the sky
She was so fertile and green

In her womb were all sorts of produce
Cassava, Yam, Plantain and the fishable rivers
Her children were never hungry birds

Lady Oloibiri was the most sought-after
Her beauty attracted men from across the Atlantic

She was an irresistible, ripe mango
Many men bid for her bride price
Until Mr Shellingham Darcey got her hand in marriage, And did not live happily ever after

She was promised so many good things
Golden roads, Silver bridges, Diamond schools
Platinum scholarships
But all to no good end

She gave birth to millions of barrels
She nurtured kilograms of the gas
A thousand pipes
Buried under her fertile ground

Only if she had
known this 1956 tale
That these were a
death trap

Now, Our beautiful
Oloibiri Can no longer show her face

She is now uglier than Pinocchio
Now dirtier than a pig's abode
What an irony

Oloibiri
Now littered with black blood
Gas Flaring at will
She is always a topic for the headlines
But this time For the bad news of her ugliness

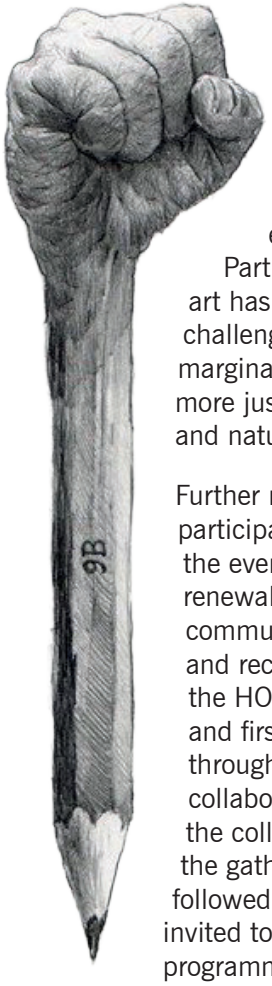
Who shall come to her rescue?
Where is her handsome woo master?
Who will cater for her children?
Who will cleanse her ugliness?

A pathetic story it is
That of Lady Oloibiri
Once top of the news, now a forgotten story

(Stanley Egholo is the fossil politics desk lead at Health of Mother Earth Foundation. He is a poet, author and climate justice advocate

Poetry, Storytelling and Music

HOMEF Team



The Poetry, Storytelling and Music Day marked the first event of 2026 in the HOMEF Environment and Culture Series, an initiative curated by the Community and Culture Desk of HOMEF. Designed as a space for reflection, creativity, and dialogue, the event was held in collaboration with a youth-led environmental network and brought together artists, activists, and community members committed to socioecological transformation.

The gathering opened with warm welcome remarks that set the tone for the day, introducing the theme and emphasizing the enduring power of poetry, storytelling, and music as tools for cultural expression, resistance, and environmental advocacy. Participants were reminded that art has long served as a vehicle for challenging injustice, amplifying marginalized voices, and reimagining more just relationships between people and nature.

Further reflections welcomed participants into the new year, framing the event as both a beginning and a renewal: an opportunity to strengthen community ties, deepen collaboration, and recommit to shared values among the HOMEF community. Both returning and first-time participants were guided through the vision and mission of the collaborating organizations, reinforcing the collective purpose that underpinned the gathering. An interactive icebreaker followed, where participants were invited to share their expectations for the programme or mention environmental terms that resonated with them most.

These contributions, ranging from familiar concepts to deeply personal reflections, were documented and later woven into poetry as the session progressed, which was aimed at highlighting the power of collective participation and co-creation.

To encourage early arrival and active engagement, selected participants received copies of a “Akamba Mfina” written by Dieworimene Koikoibo and Onome Olive Etisioro on climate change and environmental disruption within the animal kingdom. Readings from the book drew heavily on African folklore, particularly stories that extend moral and ecological consciousness beyond the human experience.

Familiar narratives, such as tortoise folklore, were reinterpreted to foreground environmental degradation and its cascading effects on animals, plants, and ecosystems, often driven by human desire and neglect. Each reading was followed by moments of quiet reflection, which provided an opportunity for participants to absorb and interrogate the themes presented.

Musical interludes punctuated the session, including a song created during a recent environmental camp in under 24 hours. The performance, accompanied by reflections on its creative process, showcased the immediacy and emotional resonance of music as a form of advocacy.

With rhythmic depth and layered lyrics, the song quickly energized the room, drawing participants into dance and collective expression while reinforcing the message that art can mobilize, educate, and inspire action.

As the programme unfolded, in-house poets shared selections from their collections, offering works that explored themes of race, climate, identity, memory, and environmental injustice. These readings sparked vibrant discussions, with participants offering diverse interpretations shaped by their lived experiences. The poets later reflected on the inspiration behind their work, creating a meaningful dialogue between the artists and the audience.

Additional poetic performances addressed the intersections of social inequality, ecological harm, and political systems, thematizing how environmental issues are inseparable from broader questions of justice and power. The atmosphere remained deeply engaged, with participants attentive and responsive throughout.

The highlight of the event was a featured talk on the role of arts and creativity in socioecological transformation.

The session examined the intentional use of creativity as a tool for change, stressing the important role of arts in breaking down complex environmental and social issues into accessible and compelling narratives. The discussion also interrogated how contemporary social media trends and algorithms can limit or distort creative expression, often prioritizing virality over substance. Drawing from examples across music, film, and storytelling, the session reflected on how artists have historically used their platforms to confront oppression and demand accountability. This prompted

participants to critically assess the role of creatives today and the responsibilities that come with visibility and influence.

During the question-and-answer segment, participants raised concerns about the realities facing creatives and activists, particularly within the Nigerian context, where economic hardship often forces individuals to choose survival over purpose-driven work.

While acknowledging these pressures, the discussion emphasized the importance of purposeful creativity even in small, localized forms, such as documenting everyday experiences in marginalized communities.

One particularly sobering exchange centered on the risks associated with activism, including social exclusion, institutional sanctions, and threats to personal safety. Personal reflections shared on this topic added depth and urgency to the conversation, reminding participants of the courage required to speak truth to power.

The session concluded with a final round of poetry focused on climate injustice and environmental degradation, leaving the audience with a renewed sense of urgency and reflection.

Closing remarks made by Ukpono Bassey expressed gratitude to participants for their presence, openness, and active engagement.

With an attendance of 40 participants, including staff and community members, the event stood as a powerful opening to the 2026 Environment and Culture Series. It reaffirmed the role of art and culture as vital tools in environmental discourse and highlighted the importance of collective spaces where creativity, resistance, and hope can coexist.

ECOCAMP/ ECOFESTIVAL: A GATHERING OF KINSMEN

Dibie Ifeakachukwu Augusta

"In the words of the literary icon Chinua Achebe, "we come together because it is good for kinsmen to do so."

Who are kinsmen?

Tunnelling back through centuries, kinsmen have always been understood to play vital roles in sociocultural and political systems, bound by ancestry, community and shared goal. If a group of people believe in and share a common dream, work towards it, and lean on one another for support to advance and actualize that dream, they are kinsmen.

Every year, The Young Environmentalists Network (TYEN) recognises the art of coming together to camp and express brilliant, practical ideas to tackle environmental mayhem. Last year, 2025, TYEN brought together youths in a three-day camp to share their visions and enthusiasm towards our collective earth, with our agroecology-based theme: "My Food is African."

The camp experience culminated in a culturally rich festival showcasing beauty, creativity, fashion, storytelling, music, African food and heritage. This three-day camp began with a novelty football match between the TYEN team and the All-Star Football Team of the Department of Environmental Management and Toxicology (EMT), University of Benin which ended in a four-goal-to-nil victory in favour of the EMT team. A little brute for a friendly game.

Armed with purpose and a quest for true connection, the kinsmen bonded over the Barefoot Guide to Agroecology and shared lived experiences of food. This session resulted in deeper conversations that challenge preconceived notions of African foods and their aesthetic appeal. One remark, in particular, recalled the time when *ukwa,* a local Igbo delicacy, was easily within reach

Credit: freepik.com/medium-shot-men-playing-music.j

and lamented its growing scarcity.

On the second day, the campers were grouped for art, culture and activism activities involving paper mâché, mosaic, music, dramatizing, upcycling old clothes, and cooking local dishes. These activities showed that art remains one of the most expressive ways to portray issues in the ecological, social and political domains. It deconstructs complex ideas through different forms. Through visual form, performance, and reuse of materials, the campers translated complex ideas about African food systems into concrete cultural expression. This was evident in the work of two groups. One produced a mosaic portrait brought to life by several colourful beads, colouring, pencil strokes, and sand, telling a story of an untainted African farming system. The other group displayed indigenous fruits and soup bowls moulded into form by paper mâché from waste papers, creating forms that asserted the value of African food and agroecology.

Art forms like music, storytelling and dramatizing were not left out, where words became shapers and tools to instigate the minds of people and a reminder that a stance must be taken with regard to agroecology and environmental justice. These words were woven intentionally to educate and empower the minds of their consumers.

In recent times, one of the major factors influencing deviations from an eco-centric and agroecology-based farming system has

been dependence on forests for other forms of resources, which include timber, wood products and non-timber resources. Industries like the textile industry rely on forests primarily for natural fibres. Given recent fast fashion trends, a huge proportion of forests is being chopped down annually to feed the fashion needs of the industry. This has led to deforestation, loss of biodiversity, and carbon release. It is also of concern that of all textiles produced, roughly 92 million tons of waste are generated globally every year. That is to say, approximately 85 percent of all textiles produced end up in landfills or are incinerated annually, according to UNEP. There is an overproduction crisis to meet fashion trends, which is a devastating global concern.

How do we solve this problem?

In a bid to foster solutions and present upcycling as a means of addressing some of these waste problems, the campers were given considerable amounts of textile waste, which they transformed into new, handmade clothes in less than 24 hours, and were exhibited during the EcoFestival.

Another exciting (perhaps the most exciting) activity was the preparation of local delicacies by each group. Each group was made to choose from the long list of rich local delicacies across over 250 ethnic groups in Nigeria. There were four major dishes on display, telling a story beyond just mouthwatering tastiness and aromatic goodness.

"of all textiles produced, roughly 92 million tons of waste are generated globally every year. That is to say, approximately 85 percent of all textiles produced end up in landfills or are incinerated annually"

A table marked by the presence of boiled white yams and native sauce made from palm oil, native spices, indigenous fish, onions and salt to taste. Afang soup, indigenous to the Efik people of Cross River State, made from a variety of vegetables and protein, was also prepared and accompanied with fufu (fermented cassava processed into swallow).

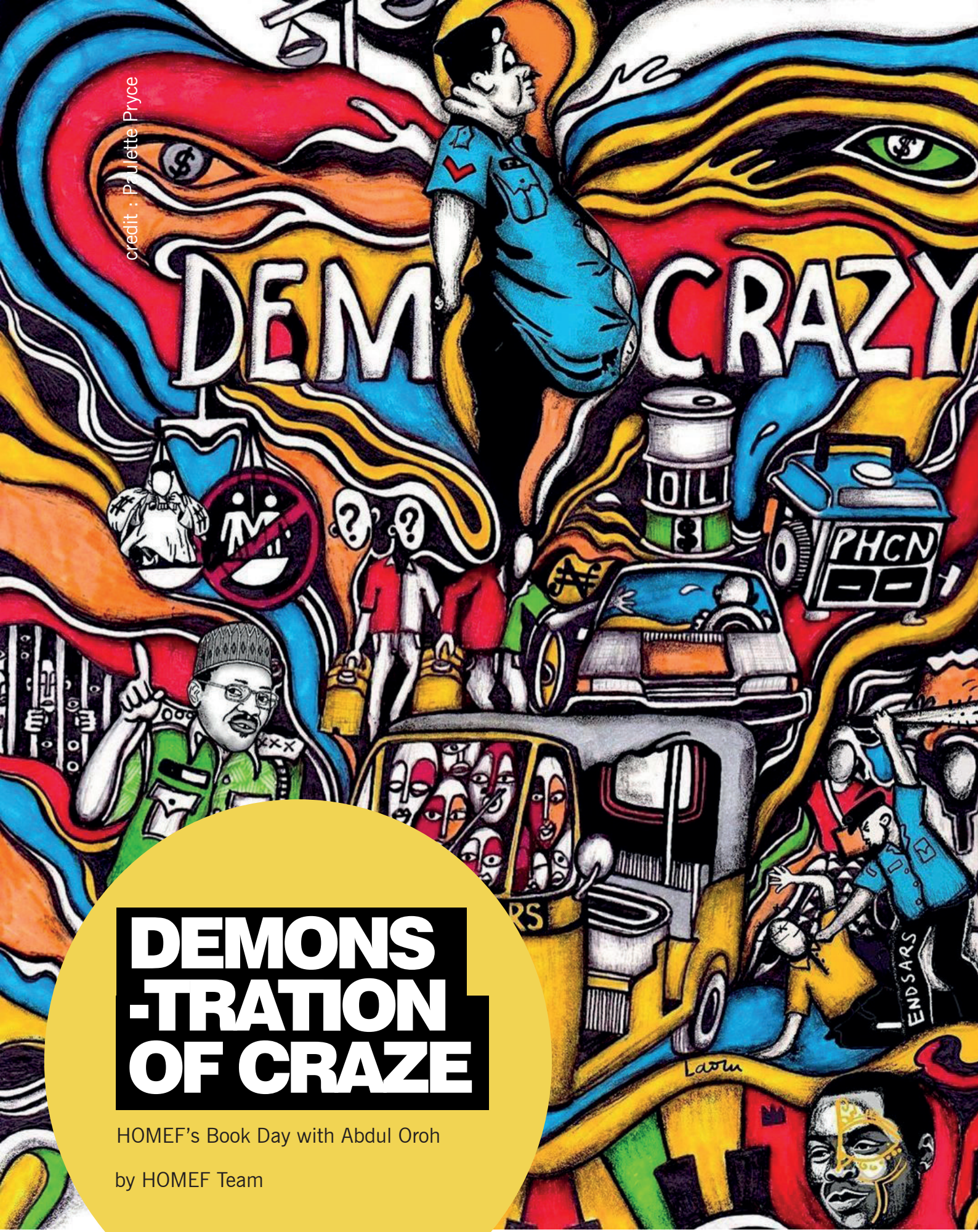
Fisherman soup, a protein-rich delicacy from the Niger Delta, was also served and accompanied with pounded yam. Nigerians also have a reputation for having rice as a staple and have since made it into several African rich delicacies. One of such, which was also prepared and savoured, is the Nigerian native rice. The food was judged to promote a healthy level of competition and excitement.

Finally, the D-Day came, the EcoFestival, bringing together the outcomes of the camp and opening up space for wider participation. Young people from different spheres of life were in attendance. During the festival, the artworks produced by the campers were exhibited. There was also an eco-fashion walkway where models from each group displayed the upcycled fabrics and explained the inspiration behind each piece. Audience members were invited to ask questions at intervals, and these were duly answered

The music group also performed and carried the crowd along, which again reaffirmed that beyond entertainment, art inspires. To further encourage participation, gifts and prizes were awarded and, finally, several interview sessions were granted to gauge participants' experiences.

The EcoCamp and EcoFestival was more than just an event. It was a reminder that when kinsmen gather with shared purpose, community becomes power, and solutions become easier to drive positive change.

(DIBIE Ifeakachukwu Augusta is an award-winning writer, environmental manager and toxicologist. He's currently a social media manager with The Young Environmentalists Network, TYEN)



Credit : Pr Juliette Pryce

DEMONS-TRATION OF CRAZE

HOMEF's Book Day with Abdul Oroh

by HOMEF Team

"Go for what you want. If you do not, you have already lost, and someone less competent will take your place." - Abdul Oroh

The title of Abdul Oroh's book, Demonstration of Craze: Struggles and Transition to Democracy in Nigeria, is provocative. It immediately raises questions. What is this "craze"? Who is demonstrating it? And why?

The book uses the idea of "craze" not as madness in the literal sense, but as a metaphor of the absurdities, contradictions, and dysfunctions that have become normalized in our society. It speaks to systems that have obviously failed but continue unaddressed. It points to public projects that begin with promise but end in abandonment. It questions decisions made without transparency. It reflects leadership without accountability.

Sometimes, what we regard as normal governance is irrational. Sometimes, we accept chaos as routine public administration. When corruption thrives, when infrastructure collapses, when citizens are silenced, and when public trust erodes, is that not a demonstration of collective dysfunction and systemic failure?

Although satiric and a pun on the concept and realities of democracy in Nigeria, this book calls for serious reflection. It challenges us to rethink the systems we tolerate. It asks why citizens often withdraw instead of engage. It reminds us that participation is not optional in a democracy; it is essential.

Within its pages, the book reflects on lived experiences, moments of civic struggle, policy engagement, community organizing, and personal risks. The book narrates accounts of resistance, of advocacy, of insisting that information be made public, and of confronting structures of silence. But beyond critique, Demonstration of Craze offers something powerful: responsibility.

It reminds us that change does not come from spectators. It comes from participants. If we refuse to ask questions, we normalize dysfunction. If we ignore injustice, we sustain it. If we disengage, we empower those who benefit from opacity and apathy.

The "craze" exposed in this book is not destiny. It is a condition that can be corrected through transparency, civic courage, and ethical leadership.

The Author

When Nigeria's democratic struggles intensified, Abdul Oroh was already deeply involved in the movement for justice and civil rights. He became one of the leading figures in what was then one of the most distinguished civil liberties organizations in Nigeria, the Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO), where he served as Executive Director for many years.

But his commitment did not begin with that position. Even before becoming Executive Director of CLO, he had already endured repeated arrests and periods of imprisonment. His activism came at great personal cost.

Those years of struggle for the enthronement of democracy were not easy. They were years of uncertainty, sacrifice, and constant surveillance.

But they were also years that shaped a generation of activists. The story of Abdul Oroh's life is not extraordinary because it is dramatic; it is extraordinary because it reflects a normal pattern of struggle for those who chose to defend civil liberties during difficult political times.

The organization he led focused on documenting abuses, defending victims of arbitrary detention, challenging military decrees, and promoting democratic accountability. Much of what younger advocates take for granted today (e.g., documentation standards, legal defense strategies, and public reporting) was built during that era.

Many of the frameworks we now rely on began with painstaking documentation and advocacy carried out at great personal risk by Mr Oroh and his contemporaries.

Overview

The Book Day presentation of Demonstration of Craze convened stakeholders, professionals, community members, and civic actors to examine pressing societal challenges reflected in the publication.The event provided a platform for critical reflection on governance structures, leadership practices, public accountability, and citizen participation in democratic processes.

Key Themes Discussed

1. Governance and Systemic Dysfunction

The book interrogates patterns of institutional failure, abandoned public projects, poor oversight, and weak accountability mechanisms. It challenges

the normalization of inefficiency and mismanagement, which characterize Nigeria's democratic practices.

2. Transparency and Access to Information

Discussions emphasized the importance of transparency in governance and the role of citizens in demanding openness from public institutions.

3. Civic Participation

Participants highlighted the need for active engagement in democratic processes, stressing that sustainable reform requires consistent citizen involvement.

4. Ethical Leadership

The presentation also underscored the moral responsibilities of leadership and the consequences of governance without accountability.

5. Social Reflection and Reform

The metaphor of "craze" was discussed as a powerful framing device to expose societal contradictions and inspire reform-oriented thinking.

6. Engagement with Environment: The importance of interacting thoughtfully with one's surroundings, people, and systems was highlighted as a source of insight, resilience, and influence.

7. Impact of Small Actions: One of the speakers at the event emphasized that even minor efforts in the arts, business, education, or community work contribute to meaningful collective outcomes.

8. Curiosity and Focus: Attendees were encouraged to maintain curiosity, focus, and dedication in all endeavors, with a clear understanding that progress is often gradual but cumulative.

Audience Engagement

The event featured reflections and interactive discussions, with participants noting that systemic change requires courage, vigilance, and collective responsibility. There was consensus that silence and apathy often enable the very dysfunctions the book critiques.

The presentation highlighted HOMEF's, as well as Abdul Oroh's, longstanding commitment to democracy, civil liberties, and human rights. It served as a reminder that societal transformation begins with awareness but must progress to action.

The event concluded with a call for sustained civic engagement and ethical accountability in both public and private institutions.

CONVERSATION WITH NATURE: Session on Ogoni Struggles: Past Wounds and Future Risks

by Mercy Inegbe

Ogoniland's oil crisis is often described as a historical tragedy, but it is not merely history, as oil spills continue to occur in communities across Ogoniland. To date, land and water remain polluted, and the injurious impacts of oil exploration and exploitation are still being felt in these communities.

More than three decades after the Ogoni Bill of Rights called for environmental protection, political inclusion, and control over Ogoni resources, many of those demands remain unresolved. Cleanup efforts have been slow and inadequate, especially in the face of recurring spills and visible contamination. It is within this context that the Federal Government's proposal to resume oil exploration in Ogoniland has raised serious concerns.

Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF), in line with its thematic focus for the year 2026, Social-Ecological Transition (SeT), hosted the first session of its Conversations for the year, themed Ogoni Struggles: Past wounds and Future Risks, on the 25th of February 2026. The session examined the contradictions between ongoing pollution and the idea of resumption of extraction. The

Conversation reflected on the history of the Ogoni struggle, the foundational demands of the Ogoni Bill of Rights, and the risks of returning to oil production without first addressing unresolved environmental damage.

The session featured Comrade Celestine Akpobari as the discussant. Celestine Akpobari is a long-standing environmental and human rights advocate from Ogoniland who has been actively involved in the struggle for environmental justice in the Niger Delta. His contributions to community mobilization and grassroots advocacy have positioned him as a consistent voice on issues of oil pollution, accountability, and resource justice in Ogoni.

During the interactive session, the Moderator, Mfoniso Xael, Project Lead at Ikike Desk, HOMEF, engaged the discussant in talks about the future of the Ogoni struggle and the role of the younger generation. In response to a question on how young people can be mobilized to resist the attempt to resume oil exploration, Comrade Akpobari emphasized the need to "remove the oxygen" that fuels political manipulation within the struggle. He explained that divisions within the community often serve political interests and weaken collective resistance.

He stressed the importance of sensitization and political education, noting that young people must be able to recognize when they are being used to advance the economic and political interests that do not serve the broader Ogoni population. According to him, awareness and consciousness are essential to strengthening the movement.

He also called for courage and accountability, stating that individuals who compromise the collective interest should be openly identified. In his words, it is important to "name and shame" those who collude with the corporate and governmental bodies, as silence enables injustice.

When asked about the kind of leadership required at this time to unite the Ogoni people and build the needed resistance, he highlighted the need for individuals who are willing to sacrifice their time and resources for the collective good. He referenced the era and work of Ken Saro-Wiwa, noting that during that period, those undermining the struggle were openly confronted. While acknowledging that the present context is different, he emphasized that integrity and character must remain central.

In response to a further question on what younger activists can contribute at this moment, Comrade Akpobari stated that nothing is impossible if actions are genuinely rooted in public interest. He reiterated that integrity must form the foundation of any renewed movement and that the Ogoni people must resist the weaponization of poverty, a tactic he suggested the government and corporations use, alongside divide and rule, to destabilize the people in a bid to gain access to restart oil exploration in the land. In closing, he also emphasised that a return to oil exploration in Ogoniland would mean taking their land back to ground zero, especially in a time where the world is making an effort to transition from fossil fuels and that if that is ever allowed to happen, the sacrifice of heroes like Ken Saro-Wiwa would have been for nothing.

The session concluded with the soft launch of the desktop research report titled Endless Spills: Risks of Resuming Oil Exploration in Ogoniland. The report documents recent oil spills in Ogoni communities and examines the risks and contradictions of resuming oil exploration while pollution persists and remediation remains incomplete. The research provided evidence of spill recurrence and gaps in cleanup efforts, grounding the discussion in documented realities.

The Conversation session, which had in attendance members of Civil Society groups, journalists and other concerned individuals, ended with a shared understanding that the Ogoni struggle is not history, but an ongoing concern. If environmental harm continues and justice is incomplete, proposals to resume oil exploration in Ogoniland are unfair and illogical.

(Mercy Inegbe, Project Assistant at Ikike Desk, a unit of Health of Mother Earth Foundation.)

Youth on fire: from outrage to organising for climate justice

By Jaye Gaskia

Across the world, and particularly in the more climate-vulnerable regions like the Niger Delta, a new generation stands at the edge of history with their fists clenched and their eyes wide open in readiness to take history-shaping actions. They are restless, impatient, and unwilling to inherit a broken planet as their future. Their anger is not blind rage; it is lucid outrage, the kind that emerges when injustice becomes impossible to ignore.

Victor Hugo once wrote that nothing is stronger than an idea whose time has come. Today, that idea is climate justice. And the generation carrying it forward is on fire.

Every generation must, as Frantz Fanon opined, discover its mission. For young people of today confronting a destabilised climate, poisoned ecosystems, violent extraction, and widening inequality, that mission is increasingly clear: to fight for survival, dignity, and a just world.

This awakening is not subtle. It is loud, emotional, and sometimes uncomfortable, especially for political and corporate systems that benefit from the current state of affairs. But outrage alone does not change the world. History shows that when generations transform their moral anger into organisation, something powerful happens they move from being witnesses to injustice to architects of transformation.

Why Climate Justice Matters

Climate justice goes beyond rising temperatures and melting glaciers. It is the understanding that climate change is a human story shaped by power, inequality, and deliberate political choices.

It recognises three truths:

1. Vulnerable communities are the first and hardest hit: From coastal erosion in Ayetoro to gas flares in Gbaramatu, those who contributed the least to global emissions are paying the highest price.

2. Climate solutions must redistribute power, not reinforce it: Transitioning to renewable

energy means nothing if communities continue to lose their lands to lithium mines or carbon offset schemes.

"History shows that when generations transform their moral anger into organisation, something powerful happens they move from being witnesses to injustice to architects of transformation".

3. Justice demands restoration: Communities living with oil spills, polluted water, displacement, and health crises deserve repair, compensation, and truth, not charity which is often performative.

Climate justice insists that those who bear the burden must also shape the solutions. It demands an energy transition that is fair, inclusive, and centred on people, not profit.

Political change comes in waves: #EndSARS, the Arab Spring, anti-colonial struggles, Ogoni resistance, Occupy Nigeria. These were moments of powerful surges of collective action. But moments alone are not enough. They can fade as quickly as they rise.

Lasting social transformation requires movements: organised, intentional, strategic formations capable of sustaining pressure long after the headlines have died down. A moment is emotional; a movement is architectural. A moment is a spark; a movement is a sustained fire.

For a movement to endure, it needs structure, coordination, leadership, sustainability and a shared purpose. It requires organisation that is conscious, membership that is voluntary, and mobilising energy that is rooted in collective conviction.

To change the system, movements must sometimes engage with the system by negotiating, and at other times by resisting. Advocacy becomes a form of resistance when institutions refuse to listen. Mass action becomes lobbying when streets turn into bargaining tables. Communication becomes power when movements build their own media and refuse to be silent. Engagement is not passive. It is strategic, deliberate, and often confrontational. Movements must know when to step into the room and when to walk out and build power outside it.

Climate justice cannot be achieved by (moments of) recycling campaigns or tree-planting photo-ops. It requires a deep, structural transformation of how societies are governed and how economies function. We need governance that is inclusive rather than extractive, a state that protects communities instead of corporations. Climate justice recognised that communities should control the resources beneath their feet and participate directly in climate and environmental decisions.

We need an economy that values life, sustainability, and cooperation over exploitation, pollution, and profit at all costs. Climate justice is a planetary struggle. It demands alliances across borders, linking workers, communities, activists, and social movements in a unified cause. There is no climate justice without political transformation. And there is no political transformation without a sustained global movement capable of reshaping the current order.

Strong movements are not built on passion alone. They are built on essential elements that turn raw energy into real power. Movements succeed when they combine strategic patience with tactical urgency, knowing when to wait, when to advance, and how to turn every moment into momentum.

The January Uprising of 2012 (Occupy Nigeria) stands as one of the most significant mass mobilisations in Nigeria's recent history. It showed what is possible when workers, youths, civil society organisations, and ordinary citizens rise collectively.


CREDIT: BABAWALE OBAYANJU

The uprising succeeded because relationships had been built before the spark, people organised behind the scenes, leadership emerged from within. The demands were clear, and the moment was seized with tactical courage. Its greatest lesson is simple but profound: when people organise, power shifts.

The Road Ahead

To build a climate-just future, the youth of today must do more than protest. They must organise. They must build alliances across movements from workers to farmers, women's groups to tech workers, indigenous communities to student unions. They must cultivate leadership, define their politics, and insist on autonomy.

The key to movement building is simple: be rooted in communities, be participatory, inspire both emotion and intellect, and become the embodiment of renewal.

This is the work of a generation on fire. The question is no longer whether today's young people are angry. They are. The question is whether they will turn that fiery anger into the force that finally reshapes the world. And if history is any guide, they will.

(Jaye Gaskia is a Nigerian public affairs analyst, political commentator, and veteran activist with over 25 years of experience in governance, peacebuilding, conflict transformation, and civic organizing.)

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AFRICA NEEDS A FOOD POLICY THAT PUTS FARMERS FIRST, NOT CORPORATIONS

Olive Etisioro

Africa has a food problem, but not in the sense most people might think of it. The continent is not short on agricultural policy frameworks

It has, for example, the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), the African Continental Free Trade Area, Agenda 2063, and the recently adopted Kampala Declaration of 2025.

The irony at the heart of African agriculture is one that is rather stark and painful: rural communities who produce most of Africa's food remain the most food insecure. Decades of agricultural development programmes have failed to translate into meaningful food security and sovereignty, nutrition, or prosperity for the people doing the actual work of farming. Industrial agricultural models have degraded soils, decimated biodiversity, created dangerous dependencies on external inputs, and systematically eroded the traditional food systems and indigenous knowledge systems that sustained African communities for generations.

The problem is not production, but power, access, and whose interests drive agricultural policy. What Africa lacks is a coherent Food Policy that actually serves the people who grow its food and the communities who eat it.

The Right to Food vs. The Right to Profit

Current African agricultural frameworks treat food primarily as a commodity rather than a fundamental human right, and this understanding comes with profound practical implications. When food is a commodity, agricultural policy naturally orients towards market competitiveness, export potential, value chain efficiency, and investor returns. Conversely, when food is treated as a human right, policy then prioritizes access, nutrition, cultural appropriateness, and the livelihoods of those who produce it.

CAADP, Africa's flagship agricultural development framework, exemplifies this commodity-first orientation. Its six strategic pillars sound progressive: intensifying sustainable food production, agro-industrialization and trade; boosting investment and financing; ensuring food and nutrition security; advancing inclusivity and equitable livelihoods; building resilient agri-food systems; and strengthening governance.

"What Africa lacks is a coherent Food Policy that actually serves the people who grow its food and the communities who eat it".

But a critical examination of these pillars reveals troubling patterns. The framework prioritizes export-led growth, agro-industrialization, and cash-crop value chains in ways that actively undermine food sovereignty, biodiversity, and smallholder control over food systems. The heavy emphasis on technological transformation, including improved seeds and fertilizers, artificial intelligence, precision agriculture, and biotechnology, pushes an input-intensive, technology-driven model requiring significant capital investment and external expertise.

This approach is fundamentally inaccessible to the vast majority of African smallholder farmers. Rather than building on indigenous knowledge and farmer-led innovation, it creates dependencies on external corporations and technologies. Smallholder farmers become raw material suppliers within industrialized value chains rather than autonomous food producers with agency over their production systems and livelihoods.

The emphasis on export-oriented agriculture and cash crops has systematically undermined local food economies and food sovereignty. This is not accidental; it is the logical outcome of frameworks designed to integrate African agriculture into global markets rather than ones designed to feed the African people.

Regional and continental value chains receive far more policy attention than local ones, potentially undermining the territorial markets and informal food systems through which most Africans actually access food. These informal systems aren't inefficiencies to be 'modernized away', because, for the most part, they are how people eat. They represent short supply chains, culturally appropriate foods, accessible prices, and economic opportunities for small-scale traders (who are mostly women) who keep local food

economies functioning.

When agricultural policy prioritizes distant export markets over local provisioning, the results are predictable. Farmers shift from diverse food crops to monoculture cash crops, the land that once fed communities are turned into soil that produces commodities for foreign consumers, and the food that could nourish hungry neighbours gets exported to generate foreign exchange. All of this leads to the rise of food prices as domestic production declines, and communities become dependent on imported foods.

Climate change intensifies these contradictions because export-oriented monocultures prove particularly vulnerable to changing weather patterns, while diverse agroecological systems demonstrate greater resilience. Yet existing policy frameworks continue to promote approaches that increase vulnerability.

The Seeds of Corporate Control

Africa's agricultural frameworks promote "improved seeds" that cannot be saved or replanted, forcing farmers into annual purchases from seed companies, and "modern inputs" that create cycles of dependency and debt. Precision agriculture and biotechnology require capital and corporate infrastructure, which the vast majority of African smallholder farmers simply do not have. These technologies do not offer solutions but only impose blatant exclusions, turning farmers into service providers in someone else's value chain.

Meanwhile, indigenous knowledge systems that have sustained African agriculture for millennia receive minimal policy support. Farmer-to-farmer networks, seed saving, integrated crop-livestock management, and locally adapted varieties get dismissed as agricultural traditions that must be "modernized away" rather than tested-and-proven sophisticated systems worth strengthening. Sustainability, when it appears at all in policy documents, is an add-on to industrial models rather than a core principle: industrial agriculture with some environmental safeguards is often prioritised. This framing essentially misses the point: that agroecology is not industrial agriculture with green modifications, but a fundamentally different approach, and policy must treat it that way.

As hinted earlier, women produce the majority of Africa's food, yet face systematic barriers to land ownership, credit access, and decision-making. Worse off, the youth have been socialised by forces of modernity into associating farming and agriculture with backwardness and poverty, keeping them away from practising it. Any transformative Food Policy must centre on both women and youth as primary stakeholders and not just afterthoughts.

Also, that policy must recognize food as a fundamental human right, centre smallholder farmers in decision-making, prioritize agroecology, protect seed sovereignty, secure access to land and water, strengthen local markets, reduce corporate control, build climate resilience through diversity, and integrate across health, environment, and social protection sectors. These are the foundations of transformation.

What an African Food Policy Must Include

A truly transformative African Food Policy must reorient from serving corporate interests and export markets to serving the needs and rights of African peoples. Several critical elements, currently absent or marginalized in existing frameworks, make this possible.

First, food must be recognized as a fundamental human right, making food sovereignty a non-negotiable policy outcome rather than a hoped-for side effect of agricultural development.

Smallholder farmers must have genuine agency over their production systems and must be key stakeholders in decision-making and not treated as passive beneficiaries of programmes designed without them. Agroecology must be prioritized as the primary production pathway, centred on farmer knowledge, ecological principles, and biodiversity rather than monoculture. Seed sovereignty must be legally protected, with farmers' rights to save, exchange, and sell seeds defended against corporate monopolization.

Secure access to land, water, and productive resources must be guaranteed, particularly for women, youth, pastoralists, and Indigenous peoples, with land grabs from corporate/government bodies and individual actively prevented. Territorial markets and informal food systems must be strengthened rather than dismissed as inefficient; they are the infrastructure through which most Africans actually eat. Corporate control over inputs, technologies, and value chains must be actively reduced in favour of farmer cooperatives and public agricultural research, and climate resilience must be built through diverse, locally adapted agroecological systems rather than technological fixes. Finally, food policy cannot be siloed in agriculture ministries: it must integrate health, environment, trade, and social protection, with nutrition and sustainability as primary metrics.

From Vision to Reality

Articulating principles is the easy part. Translating them into concrete policy and action while confronting entrenched power is considerably harder.

It is no secret that agricultural policy in Africa privilege those who benefit from industrial models: multinational input companies, export agribusinesses, international financial institutions promoting market liberalization, and government officials who have built careers on existing frameworks. These actors fund research supporting their preferred models, sit on policy advisory committees, and shape the terms of international development assistance. Smallholder farmer organizations and civil society groups have nowhere near comparable resources or access.

Advancing a transformative Food Policy means confronting these imbalances directly through building strong farmer organizations capable of engaging policy processes, creating coalitions that link food sovereignty to struggles around environment, health, and women's rights, generating rigorous evidence that farmer-led systems deliver food security and sustainability, and mobilizing public pressure that shifts consciousness about food systems. National legislation will ultimately be required to institutionalize change: laws protecting seed sovereignty, public procurement policies prioritizing local producers, and budgets to fund agroecology rather than input subsidies.

This just alternative to the industrial agricultural model is both necessary and possible. Across Africa, farmers demonstrate daily that agroecological approaches are productive, resilient, and sustainable. What is missing is not vision or capacity but a strong policy framework that builds on what's already working, rather than replacing it with corporate-controlled alternatives. The question we must answer is whether enough political will can be mobilized to make it happen.

(Onome Olive Etisioro is a lawyer and writer whose work focus on nature, environmental justice, and the impacts of human activity on the Earth. She currently serves as Legal Officer with Health of Mother Earth Foundation).

The mythical city of "Manoa of Gold," on the shores of "Lake Parime," in a 1599 depiction. - Bridgeman Images

VENEZUELA: EN LA ETERNA BÚSQUEDA DE EL DORADO

[VENEZUELA: THE ETERNAL SEARCH For EL DORADO]

Eric Camargo

El Dorado is the myth that is most deeply rooted in Venezuelan national consciousness. It has shaped the ways in which the economy and productive activities are understood in the country. This myth has transcended mere mining activity, covering our entire view of prosperity and the economy; it is the equivalence of the North American "American Dream," which I consider the externalization of the HegelianA "volksgeist".

From the beginning of the Hispanic conquest and colonization, the territory of what is today known as Venezuela was a field of highly predatory extractions. The first city that was founded, Nueva Cádiz, on the arid and now uninhabited island of Cubagua, was sustained by the massive exploitation of pearl banks using enslaved indigenous labor, with artisanal methods. The city began to be populated between 1500 and 1515.

Despite this artisanal approach, the exploitation was so intense and massive that

by 1531 the first signs of oyster depletion were witnessed, and in 1537 the progressive depopulation began.

While this devastation was occurring in the eastern Venezuelan Caribbean, the conquerors carried out rescue expeditions, which was the term used for the unequal exchanges and looting of goods carried out by the colonisers. These rescue expeditions motivated the indigenous people to turn to stories that formed the myth of El Dorado: about a distant place where there was sufficient gold to quench the Europeans' unbridled thirst for wealth.

The Welsers focused all their energy and efforts on going to the famed El Dorado, but this desire remained unrealized, thereby breaching the capitulation delivered by the Castilian crown. This myth fueled the wildest, riskiest, bloodiest, and the most self-destructive adventures that have been seen in our territory.

El Dorado was never found.

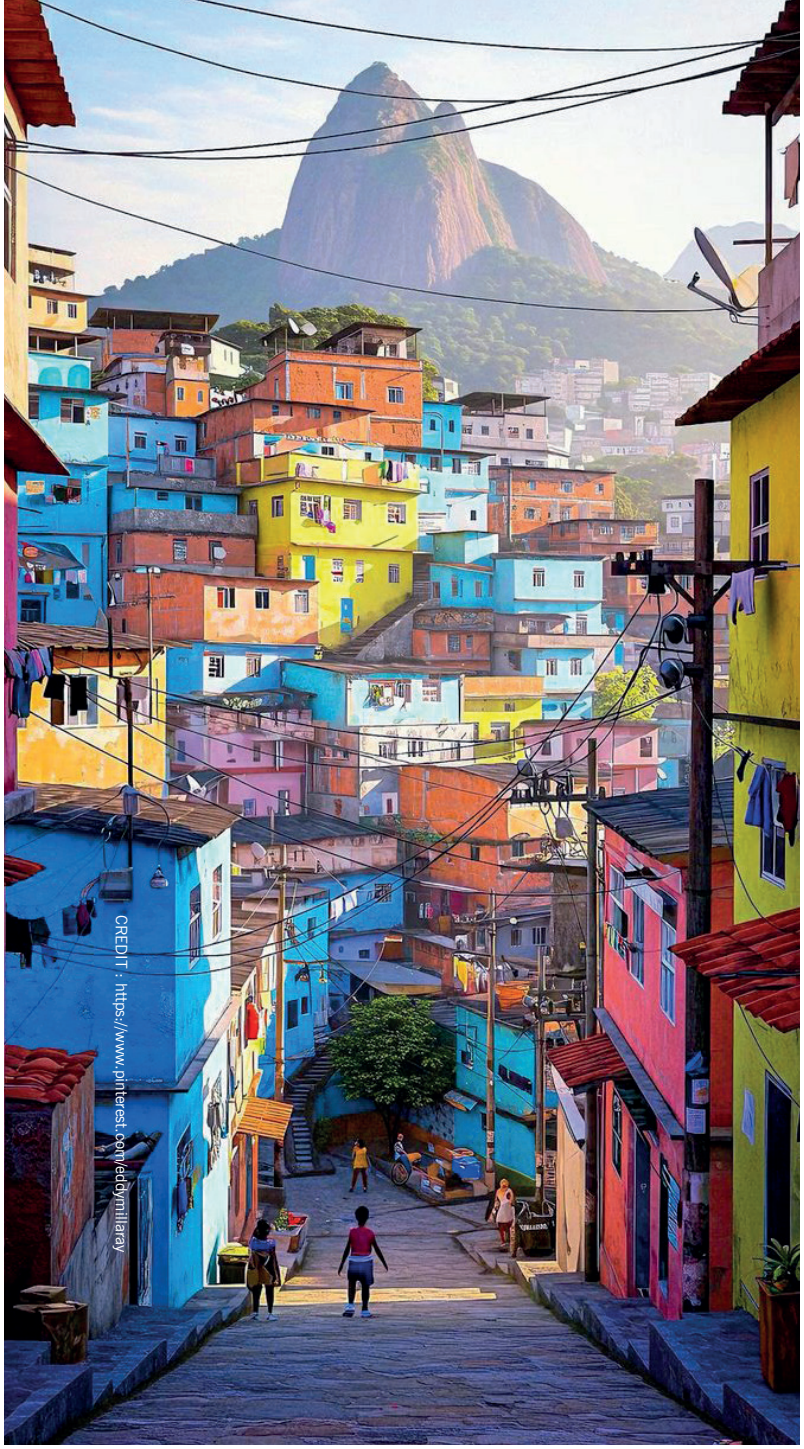
In the early years of the conquest, the meager mines of Buría, Baruta, Los Teques and Petaquire were discovered, but they were quickly exhausted. Venezuela was not the country of El Dorado; there were no fabulous riches nor complex cultures that had developed metallurgy and exploited significant mines. Thus, the provinces that would later form Venezuela were among the poorest in the Hispanic colonial empire, having more of a frontier character with other European colonies and towards the unknown, unrealistic El Dorado. Rural settlements would be formed, sparsely populated and remained quite precarious. For 200 years, economy remained stagnant, despite the territory's fertile lands said to be suitable for agricultural and livestock development. In his General and Particular Instruction, Pedro José de Olavarriaga, complains that the fertile lands of Venezuela are under-utilised due to the laziness of its inhabitants, who are content with the natural abundance provided by the land. Similar complaints were expressed by José de Oviedo y Baños, who was the first person to author a book on the history of Venezuela.

" Venezuela was not the country of El Dorado; there were no fabulous riches nor complex cultures that had developed metallurgy and exploited significant mines..."

But this situation changed in the mid-17th century with the boom of the cocoa economy, which generated significant material wealth for the few landowners and slave owners, giving rise to the popular term "gran cacao" (great cocoa) for those who are economically and socially powerful. With this development, the appearance of commercial coffee cultivation gradually gained ground, but after the economic collapse caused by the War of Independence, the coffee bush took control of the economy.

Coffee matures in about one-third of the time required for cocoa, and because it was more abundant, it commanded a higher value in international markets. Quickly, this plant became the new source of income for farm owners, but also for tenants and precarious occupants of state land or other farmers. With nearly all farmers turning to cocoa farming, there was an expansion of the agricultural frontier into marginal lands such as mountain slopes and little-exploited highlands.

It is important to observe how, during this century, the cultivation of other crops stagnated or decreased, with most people who had access to land or ownership concentrating on coffee planting. Cunill Grau, in his Geography of the Settlement of Venezuela in the 19th Century, notes that even in lands below 500 meters in height, commercial coffee cultivation was attempted. It could be said that there was a 'coffee gold rush,' despite the constant market fluctuations that caused price instability. In the publication, Compilation of Laws of Venezuela, it is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stated that both in times of peace and during civil conflicts, exemptions were granted for the importation of corn and other food products because Venezuelan agriculture did not produce enough to feed its population, but the production of coffee for export was maintained.

Here we see two interesting features. One group of the population, which comprised the landowners, a social minority led by the state and its officials, lived off the rents they charged for the use of the land. The other group had an almost compulsive preference for the crop that generated the most money, even relegating those that produced their own subsistence or served internal markets to the background. Other commercial crops will not be as successful as coffee and will gradually be relegated to the background as complementary crops. Although there are events that break this pattern, they mostly reinforce the general observation about the behavior.

Further, the prices of cotton soared at the international market, and two key factors contributed to it: the Federal War that ended in early 1863 and the United States Civil War that was on at the time. Many farmers and landowners who had land suitable for the cultivation of cotton turned to mass production of it until 1865 when the Union states defeated the Confederates in the northern nation. With that, cotton prices fell drastically and there was widespread bankruptcy among agricultural producers, who had channeled all their energies and resources to this “golden event” that generated considerable profits for them within two years.

Another curious event was observed in late 1850s with the boom of leather and dried meat as a result of the conflicts of the Argentine Confederation with France and England, re-valuating these products.

In the Geography of Venezuelan Settlement of the 19th Century, Cunill Grau notes how the herd of the eastern plains had been exterminated in 1858 in the aftermath of the Federal War, as a result of indiscriminate killings to obtain their leather and meat. A “golden event” that shows how, even against the economic logic of livestock to increase the herd for greater long-term profit, it was crushed by the perspective of immediate prosperity and wealth in a fortuitous event.

There are other examples, such as a second pearl boom in Margarita and its rapid depletion, or the more documented and brutal

rubber boom in the Amazon basin. Events that seemed to confirm that the utopian El Dorado would not be a mythical city of gold, but rather the encounter with a source of wealth that awaited to be taken, plundered, and exploited by the daring adventurers. The myth seemed to come true when it was discovered that Venezuela had abundant oil reserves (considered the new black gold of the 20th century), especially in the western part of the country. The blowout of the Barroso II well, which would cause an environmental disaster, became a national event that announced that, finally, now indeed, we had found El Dorado.

The country's economy and history changed radically as a result of the discovery of oil. Following oil discovery, people began to refer to Venezuela as "Oil Venezuela," as a metaphor for a new historical period differentiated from everything before.

This period gave birth to another powerful myth: modernity. From that moment, Venezuelans believed that the much-anticipated El Dorado had materialized. It was no longer hidden in the jungles, so one did not have to work for it in the fields; it was underground and had to be extracted. Gradually, the country turns into a new frenzy; it is not a gold rush, it is the oil rush, which uproots the peasants formerly subjected by their old masters and pushes them to the city to earn better wages. Oil regions such as Cabinas Paraguaná, Cumarebo, Casicure, the Maturín plains, and the Mesa de Guanipa begin to be populated; extensive semi-arid, sparsely populated regions began to urbanize, giving rise to disorganized neighborhoods forming around the oil fields and industrial facilities.

The myth of modernity, of Venezuela as a power, was beginning to be born. Venezuelans believed that this wealth would take Venezuela to the first world. Some economists warned of a problem: the countryside was being abandoned. Moreover, being that oil is limited, there was also the fear that it would overexploit like rubber, pearls, or other products were in the 19th century. To address this looming challenge, critical voices like Alberto Adriani and Arturo Uslar Pietri called for a return to agriculture and advised to 'Sow the Oil.' Others followed suit, suggesting that the big proceeds generated from oil should be invested projects aimed at improving the material conditions of the country. These voices also advised that oil production should be expanded in order to make Venezuela a first-world country.

The readaptation of the slogan becomes a national mantra, so ingrained that today it is difficult to find people (including intellectuals) who do not hold this idea. We Venezuelans are convinced that oil is salvation, despite the continuous evidence of its instability and the socio-environmental costs it has generated.

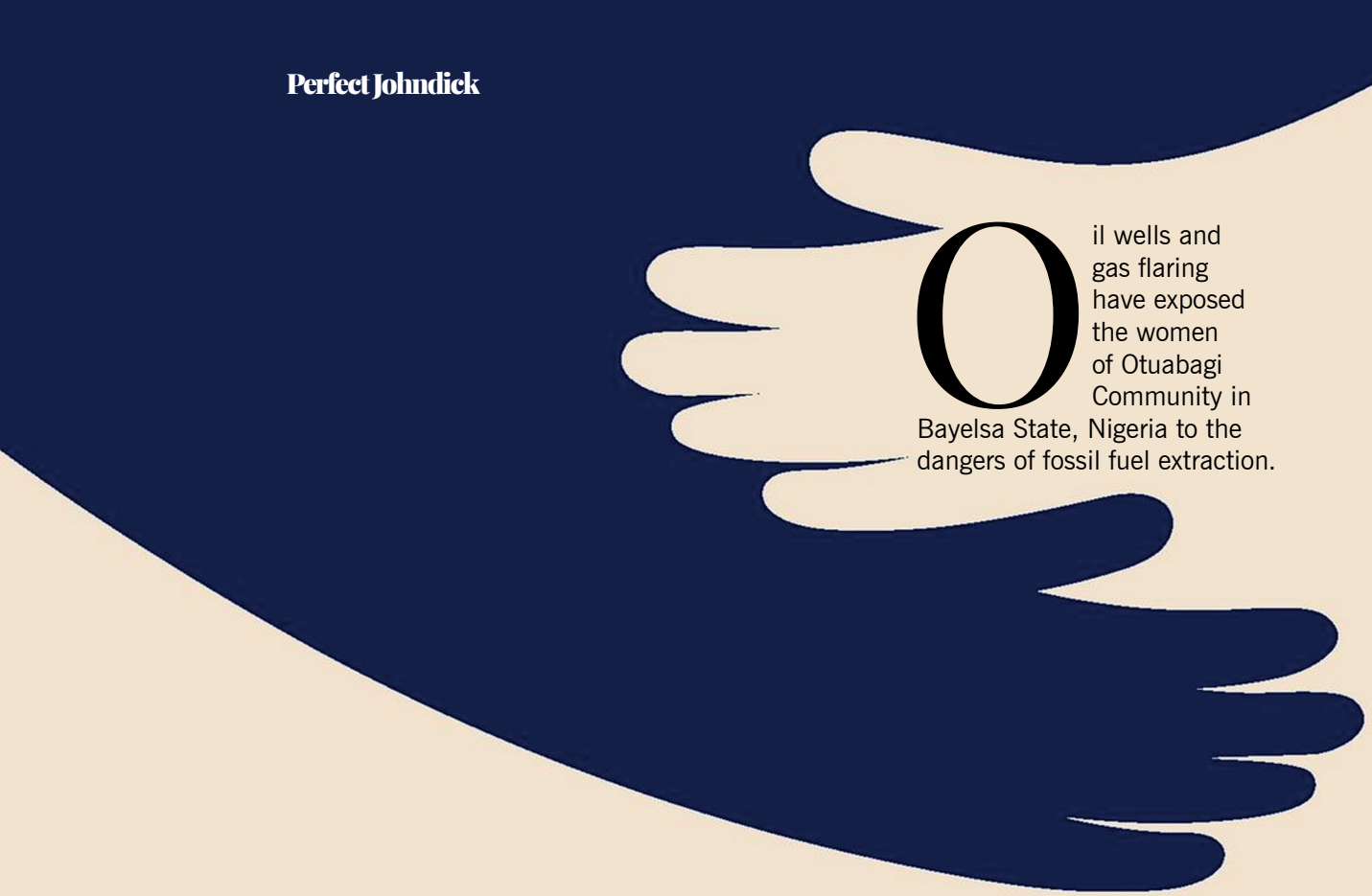
The present circumstances suggest that oil economies may be nearing their final stage, whether because politics finally responds to the climate crisis or because, within two or three decades, its consequences force us to abandon fossil fuels altogether. The myth of modernity is also crumbling before our eyes. All outcomes show that oil wealth will never lead us to modernity; instead, it accelerates the processes of social decomposition and undermines the productive forces of society. Unfortunately, the "oil/modernity" myth took hold more strongly in our worldview than the very gold-seeking myth, which was thought to have already been surpassed.

It is essential to begin to understand this situation in order to address it and be able to imagine a different Venezuela and the contingent alternatives to the world that is forming on the horizon. If we remain anchored to these illusive visions of our own country and fortune, we will hardly be able to make progress as a country.

(Eric Camargo is a correspondent at Observatorio de Ecologia Politica de Venezuela; this article was first published on the OEP website, January 27, 2026)

Flares, Fertility, and Feminist Future: The Connection between Oil Extraction and Fertility in the Niger Delta

Perfect Johndick



Oil wells and gas flaring have exposed the women of Otuabagi Community in Bayelsa State, Nigeria to the dangers of fossil fuel extraction.

This report presents the stories and testimonies of feminist resistance by these women. The report exposes the reproductive violence woven into the fabrics of Nigeria's extractive landscape, where gas flaring and oil spills cast a toxic plague over frontline communities already bearing the brunt of environmental degradation, government negligence, and petro-patriarchal oppression.

This study reported here positions, the lived realities of Otuabagi women as a

crucial lens through which we must examine the intersection of extractivism, environmental racism, and reproductive injustice across Africa. This report is grounded in the theoretical triad of feminist political ecology, reproductive justice, and Afro-feminist geography. It foregrounds women long excluded from policy spaces, corporate boardrooms, and other decision-making arenas on issues that most affect them. It is a testament to women whose wombs have been treated as collateral damage in the pursuit of a colonial energy structure.

Previous studies by “Kebetkache Women Development & Resource Centre and BothENDS (2024)” have shown levels of hydrocarbons in the blood of local women in Otuabagi communities. This has been linked to increased rates of respiratory illnesses, birth defects, cancer, and cardiovascular diseases among women. Focus group discussions and interviews with women living near constant gas flares reveal cases of miscarriages and infertility, of poisoned atmosphere and degradation of ancestral lands.

Yet these stories are not just about the costs of extraction, but of what these women are willing to fight to reclaim: public health wellness and the right to raise children in a safe and dignified environment.

In such communities sacrificed on the altar of petrodollars and fossil energy in Africa, reproductive harm is not incidental but systematic. It is entwined with capitalist greed, colonial legacies, and gendered neglect. Women have, however, shown resistance, forged solidarity, and demanded justice from across Africa. They have not only fought for compensation or mitigation but also for a feminist economy where women are centred in economic decisions and have the skills and empowerment to lead the economy of their nation and a future rooted in healing, environmental restoration, and political accountability.

This research is both a narrative revelation and a declaration. It rejects the complicity of state actors and oil companies who trade public health for barrels of crude. It calls for the enforcement of gas flare bans and policy shifts that prioritize gendered health monitoring and amplify the voices of frontline women. Most importantly, it challenges us to confront any development that equates progress with plunder, and resist any economy that prioritizes profit over people.

In sum, the fight for reproductive justice in the Niger Delta is a fight for justice where no woman is forced to choose between development and early menopause.

(This is a presentation made at the Decolonial Conference Coloniality, Extrativism and Carbon Colonialism at the University of Oregon. Perfect Johndick is an Ecofeminist, Storyteller, and Campaign Strategist. She is a co-creator of the Rooted Rising Initiative.

DO NOT FUND THE ENERGY TRANSITION BY PROLONGING THE FOSSIL ERA

Daphne Wysham

Using fossil fuel revenues to finance their phaseout creates a dangerous fiscal trap, but there are other options available.

As governments search for ways to finance a just transition away from fossil fuels, a tempting idea has resurfaced: taxing fossil production to pay for the transition itself.

Brazil, for instance, has brought this debate to the fore. President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has asked government ministries to develop a roadmap to reduce the country's dependence on fossil fuels, alongside proposals for an energy transition fund financed partly by oil and gas revenues.

The logic is straightforward: use today's rents to build tomorrow's economy. But there is a structural flaw in relying on fossil revenues to fund the fossil fuel phaseout.

When transition finance depends on continued extraction, governments risk building fiscal dependence on the very activity they aim to wind down. The incentive becomes subtle but powerful: maintain production to maintain revenues. The results? Budgets grow accustomed to commodity flows. Social programmes become exposed to price volatility. The phaseout begins to compete with the Treasury.

If the First International Conference on the Just Transition Away from Fossil Fuels in Santa Marta, Colombia, is to advance a credible agenda, it must confront this reality: a transition fund built on fossil fuel extraction risks entrenching it.

The problem with this model is not moral; it is financial. The energy transition requires scale, predictability and speed. Fossil fuel revenues are volatile and — if climate goals are taken seriously — structurally declining.

Building workforce retraining, regional diversification and social protection on a shrinking revenue base invite delay and political backlash when prices fall.

"Durable climate finance should reduce systemic risk, not deepen fiscal exposure to fossil fuel markets."

Besides, there are more stable alternatives. For example, a modest financial transaction tax — levied at fractions of a percentage point on trades in equities, bonds and derivatives — could raise substantial revenues without locking governments into continued extraction.

The numbers are significant. In 2011, IMF estimated a global FTT could raise roughly $300bn a year. More recent modelling suggests a global tax could generate between $238bn and $419bn annually, with a baseline near $327bn.

Unlike fossil fuel royalties, this revenue would not depend on drilling another well or opening another mine. It would draw from the scale of global financial activity measured in quadrillions of dollars, which would help redirect a fraction of market turnover towards climate stability.

A just transition requires precisely this kind of stable, non-extractive funding. It cannot rely on volatile commodity prices. It cannot shift costs on to households through regressive energy burdens. And it cannot expect emerging economies to phase out fossil fuels without predictable support for workers and regions in transition.

Durable climate finance should reduce systemic risk, not deepen fiscal exposure to fossil fuel markets.

Why has such a tax model not been adopted? The barriers are political, not technical. For instance, EU efforts stalled over unanimity rules, disputes about scope and revenue allocation, and concerns that trading activity would migrate to untaxed jurisdictions.

Financial sector lobbying amplified those fears. Yet many countries already levy limited transaction taxes without destabilising markets, which shows that the obstacle is coordination, not feasibility.

Methane control

Meanwhile, the most economically urgent climate intervention remains underfunded: methane control. Methane accounts for roughly a third of current warming and traps more than 80 times as much heat as carbon dioxide over 20 years. Because methane breaks down in about a decade, cutting it slows warming within years. Only few policies have the capacity to bend the near-term temperature curve as quickly as methane control.

The International Energy Agency proposes that methane emissions from fossil fuel operations must fall by about 75 per cent by 2030 to align with a 1.5 °C pathway. Delivering these reductions would require roughly $75bn globally this decade alone: a fraction of the nearly $600bn in oil and gas profits earned in 2024 alone.

In addition, coal mine methane from active operations and abandoned mines adds a further, largely preventable source.

> ***"If fossil fuel revenues are used as a temporary bridge,they should come with clear sunset clauses and declining schedules."***

The constraint is not affordability; it is incentives. Methane leakage inflates the apparent profitability of fossil fuel assets by allowing operators to externalise costs. Subsidies and weak enforcement suppress the true price of risk. Capital is allocated (based) on distorted signals. Infrastructure that appears resilient today may not remain so under tightening standards or accelerating physical impacts.

Correcting that mispricing would stabilise markets rather than disrupt them.

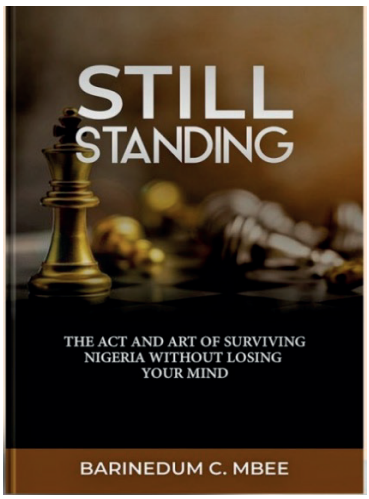
If fossil fuel revenues are used as a temporary bridge, they should come with clear sunset clauses and declining schedules. But the deeper task is to shift the fiscal base away from extraction altogether and eliminate the distortions that make methane cheap and delay capital reallocation.

Santa Marta presents a choice. Governments can recycle fossil fuel rents and entrench fiscal dependence, or they can align public finance with climate physics and fund the transition without prolonging the fossil era.

The cheapest climate insurance policy is on the table, and the revenue to fund it exists. What remains is the political will to connect the two.

(Daphne Wysham is chief executive of Methane Action and Co-ordinator of the Methane Emergency Brake Campaign. This piece was first published on Sustainable Views, a specialist service from the Financial Times Group, and can be found on) Do not fund the energy transition by prolonging the fossil era - Sustainable Views

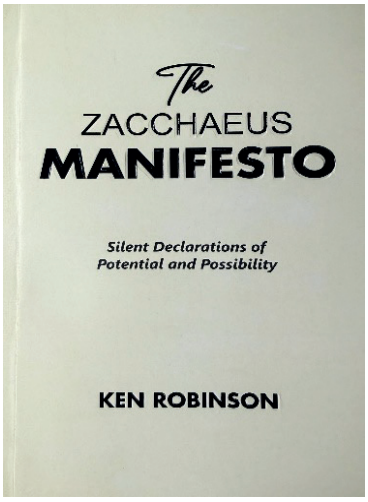
Books You Should Read



Still Standing

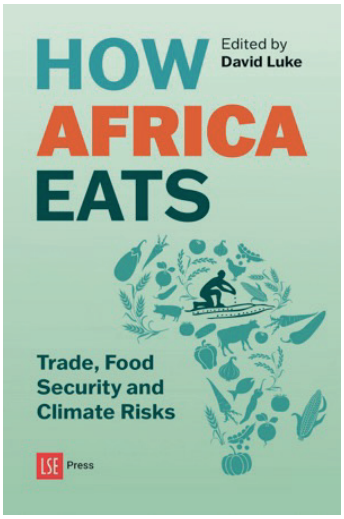
Every morning in Nigeria, millions wake up to a familiar question: "How do I survive today without losing my mind?" From fuel queues that stretch into eternity to rent negotiations that feel like boxing matches, from bread that's become a mathematical equation to healthcare that tests your faith more than your illness—this is the reality of daily life in a system that seems designed to break you.

This book is a mirror for you to see yourself in a crowded room and a window to look at the room you are in... one of the world's most suffocating rooms. Still, you are standing.



The Zaccheaus Manifesto

The Zacchaeus Manifesto is a rendition of the power of pursuit. Rooted in the story of an ancient tax collector, who climbed a tree not to avoid being seen, but to see clearly, intentionally, urgently. It reimagines his climb not merely as a physical act,but as a metaphor for humanity's desire to overcome limitations to see, and to be seen.
The Zacchaeus Manifesto is more than a retelling of a familiar biblical moment; it's a powerful invitation to reflect on your life, your path, and your pursuits.



How Africans Eat

Why do images and reports of starving and malnourished Africans appear so often in the media? What are the actual dimensions of the problem? What has trade and climate got to do with it? In How Africa Eats: Trade, Food Security and Climate Risks, award-winning author David Luke and a team of researchers seek to answer these questions, to explain why Africa struggles with food security and what can be done about it. The intersection between trade, agriculture policies, and climate risks is fundamental to this enquiry.

Introducing EtiUwem Podcast

EtiUwem podcast with Nnimmo Bassey is an unscripted podcast that features activists, wisdom holders to unravel the polycrisis and define the “good life.” The conversations share experiences and demand action on the issues that are vital to life and Mother Earth. Subscribe to Nnimmo Bassey’s YouTube channel for the episodes..