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INSTIGATOR

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Straight from the Strait of Hormuz

**Decarbonisation as
Economic Defence**

**Food Systems are not
Neutral**

**Towards Decommissioning
and Accountability in the
Niger Delta**

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HOME RUN

This June edition of the Eco-Instigator comes at a time when the world is increasingly bedeviled by overlapping crises: wars, ecological collapse, displacements, and deepening inequalities. Across continents, these realities continue to expose the fragility of systems built on extraction, militarism, and concentrated power. Yet, amid these fractures, communities continue to resist, organise, and imagine pathways towards justice and collective wellbeing.

The ongoing conflict involving Iran has once again reminded the world that war is never disconnected from ecological realities. Beyond the immediate violence associated with this avoidable war are damaged ecosystems, disrupted livelihoods, polluted environments, and diverted attention from urgent climate responsibilities. These realities reinforce an important truth we have echoed for years: there can be no climate justice in a world where unilateral powers continue to shape global realities through domination, resource control, and violence.

It was against this backdrop that the 4th Environmental and Social Justice School in Lomé, Togo, created a critical space for reflection and movement-building. Participants from across Africa interrogated dangerous climate “solutions” such as geoengineering, carbon markets, and other techno-fixes that fail to address the structural roots of the climate crisis.

Discussions revealed how most of these approaches merely reproduce colonial patterns under green branding, shifting risks to vulnerable communities while allowing polluters to continue business as usual. The School reaffirmed that

real climate solutions must be rooted in justice, democratic participation, ecological responsibility, and people's sovereignty.

This quarter also witnessed the successful hosting of the Niger Delta Alternatives Convergence (NDAC) in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The convergence, which brought together activists, community leaders, youth groups, scholars, and movement builders committed, advanced people-centred alternatives for the Niger Delta. At the heart of the conversations was the urgent need to halt the continued abandonment of the region and resist the normalisation of environmental devastation in the name of profit. NDAC strengthened collective calls for ecological restoration, accountable governance, sustainable livelihoods, and justice for communities whose lands and waters have long been treated as sacrifice zones. Important insights and learning from this edition of NDAC are reported in this edition.

Our engagements this quarter equally highlighted the defence of ocean rights and coastal livelihoods. Across many African communities, offshore extraction, pollution, and exploitative maritime activities continue to threaten marine ecosystems and the survival of fisherfolk. Some of the reports included in this edition show that oceans are not simply economic frontiers for exploitation; instead, we're reminded that they are living ecosystems that sustain cultures, histories, and livelihoods. Defending ocean rights therefore remains inseparable from defending community dignity and environmental integrity.

Amid these difficult realities, we also found necessary spaces for healing, creativity, and cultural resistance. Through the work of our Cultural and Environmental Desk, we gathered at events designed to rekindle the creativity in us, including poetry readings, book

conversations, and the EcoComedy event. These moments, reported in this edition, reminded us that resistance is not sustained by outrage alone. Art, storytelling, humour, and creativity remain essential tools for political education, collective healing, and movement-building.

Across all our programmes, we remain committed to confronting systems of exploitation while nurturing alternatives grounded in justice, care, solidarity, and collective power. This edition of the Eco-Instigator captures stories of resistance, reflection, and renewal.

We invite you to read, reflect, and continue building with us. 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!

Nimmo Bassey.

Director, Health of Mother Earth
Foundation (HOMEF)

STRAIGHT FROM THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ

Nnimmo Bassey

No matter the reason for warfare, the environment and the innocent end up bearing the brunt of the inevitable destruction.

This fact is clearly illustrated by the several ongoing smouldering and open conflicts that have led to this era being described as one of endless conflicts and violence. Many of these conflicts and wars have crude oil footprints, suggesting an underlying connection between energy grabbing and wars. The most glaring recent examples are the situations with Venezuela and Iran.

In all these situations of conflict, the war waged by the USA and Israel on Iran highlights many distinct concerns. First, the shifting explanations as to why the first shots were fired suggest to some observers that crude oil and gas

are major motivations. It turned out that crude oil, not democracy, was the major reason for the US assault on Venezuela. For Iran, we are told they must not develop an atomic bomb. Indeed, no nation should develop atomic bombs. The reality is that there are already about 13,400 nuclear weapons in the world today, and these have a combined explosive yield of more than 360,000 times than the bombs detonated in Hiroshima during the Second World War. Second, it is much easier to find funds for destruction than for construction or building of lives. This explains why wars gulp close to \$3 trillion a year while the budget for development and for tackling the climate chaos and loss of biodiversity is just a few billions of dollars.

Unfortunately, a common attribute of warmongers is that they know how to start wars but hardly how to end them. Rarely do they stand in the line of fire themselves; the gravest costs are borne by ordinary people and the environment. The conflict involving Iran is already illustrating this reality.

Those costs are visible in the grotesque misplacement of global priorities. At a time when the world should be investing in climate adaptation and mitigation, funds are being gulped by the weapons industry and the oil moguls. At a time when talks should be on how to recover our collective humanity, public discussion is focused on complaints that missiles, suicide drones and sundry weapons of mass destruction are running out. We are seeing the bombing of civilian infrastructure, chemical factories, hospitals, and schools. We are seeing ecocide planned, executed and bragged about without consequence.

The tourniquet introduced by Iran at the Strait of Hormuz should send a strong message to every nation — that we live in a common ecosystem of interdependences. The Strait gets shut, and straightaway the world feels the shock. While the missiles fly and sorrow, blood and tears afflict the innocent, but the oil companies and other players in the military-industrial complex smile to the bank. It is estimated that U.S. oil companies may garner up to \$63 billion in excess profits from the price increases this year driven by the Iran war. Experts also estimate that the U.S. may gain additional federal revenue of approximately \$600 million/day from its output of 20 million barrels of crude oil per day. With a war that may end up costing an estimated \$200 billion, would oil cushion the impact of deaths and environmental destructions?

The paradoxical situation for Nigeria is that the sharp rise in the price of

oil does not suggest more revenue for social services for the population. With a poor capacity in local refining, the nation depends on the importation of refined products and is thus totally exposed to the shocks related to global oil conflicts. Privately owned Dangote Refinery that could have cushioned the shocks is forced to import crude oil due to insufficient receipts of locally extracted crude, which stands at less than the nation's OPEC quota. Moreover, according to reports, 400,000 barrels of the 1.5 million barrels of Nigeria's daily crude oil production go to paying debts owed to international oil majors, banks and traders. Thus, the hike in the pump price of petroleum products immediately translates to rising costs across the board in an unregulated and evidently inefficient economic environment.

Added to the economic quagmire facing Nigeria is the reality of the violence inflicted by crude oil extraction and refining on the environment of the Niger Delta. The region experienced an equivalent of one Exxon Valdez oil spill annually for close to 70 years. This level of violence is an undeclared war against the people and the environment.

Back in the Middle East, the increasing use of missiles guided by artificial intelligence illustrates the artificiality of warfare presented as precise, intelligent and accountable, without any sense of accountability. However sophisticated the technology, the result is still civilian fear, environmental damage and political impunity. All the unfolding events show is that it is a season of barbarism.

The shutting of the Strait of Hormuz (and possibly others) should wake the world from slumber. It should point us to the urgent need to phase out fossil fuels and invest in ecologically sensible alternative energy sources. The release of huge strategic reserves of oil by members of the International Energy Agency may bring a small respite, but the increasing price of oil has not appeared to abate.



Photo Credit: **Planet-volumes** // **unsplash**

How many more barrels will be released when the reserves run dry?

Moreover, experts have noted that the current energy instability introduced by the war against Iran will not easily be overcome even after the last missile has exploded. Reasons for this include the huge reconstruction that will be needed to restore damaged or obliterated infrastructure and to rebuild confidence in challenged geopolitical alliances and among sectoral players.

The famous invisible hands of the market have been exposed by the apparent open manipulation of oil prices by statements made by political leaders, sometimes on social media posts. This underscores the need for energy democracy and an

end to dependence on energy resources that plunge the world into conflicts, financial turmoil, social disruptions and unimaginable environmental destruction. The world needs an urgent phase-out of fossil fuels, not digging in and fighting over them. This is the lesson straight from the Strait of Hormuz.

(Nnimmo Bassey is the Director of the ecological think tank Health of Mother Earth Foundation HOMEF)

DECARBONISATION AS ECONOMIC DEFENCE

How global conflicts, fossil fuel dependence, and energy pricing expose Africa's vulnerability, and why renewable energy offers a path to stability and resilience.

Babawale Obayanju

The current escalating conflict between Iran and the United States is deepening both the climate crisis and causing the economic pressures that inflict suffering on all humans across the world. Rising fossil fuel prices, driven by instability and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz are triggering ripple effects across global economies, particularly with regard to cost of living.

The Paris Agreement, ratified by the majority of governments worldwide, commits nations to limiting global warming to 1.5°C. Achieving this target requires urgent climate action and sustained investment in low-carbon energy systems such as wind and solar.

To reach net-zero emissions by 2050, large-scale, systemic

transformation of the global energy system is essential. To this end, every sector must contribute to rapid and consistent decarbonisation.

This piece focuses on the consequences of continued dependence on fossil fuels, particularly gas, often framed as a “transition fuel”, and the broader economic implications of the ongoing conflict involving Iran.

We are already seeing oil prices jump by 10% as tensions escalate across the Middle East. Brent crude has surged past \$82 per barrel, with projections suggesting it could rise significantly higher if the Strait of Hormuz remains closed, completely or partially.

According to Fatih Birol, Executive Director of the International Energy Agency, the current disruption could exceed the combined impact of the 1970s



oil shocks and the fallout from Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

To put this into perspective:

- Around 5 million barrels per day were disrupted during each of the 1973 and 1979 oil crises.
- Russia's 2022 invasion reduced global gas supply by roughly 75 billion cubic metres annually.
- The current crisis has already

disrupted an estimated 11 million barrels per day of oil and 140 billion cubic metres of gas, largely due to the strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz, through which about 20% of global oil supply passes.

This moment highlights the gains made by countries like Spain and Portugal, which have significantly reduced their dependence on fossil fuels, especially gas



for electricity generation. Drawing lessons from the Ukraine crisis, they invested heavily in renewable energy, particularly wind and solar.

As a result, they are less exposed to current price shocks.

In contrast, countries still tied to gas-linked pricing systems, such as Germany and Italy, are experiencing significantly higher electricity costs. This is not temporary; it reflects structural differences in how energy systems are built and priced.

There has been a long-running debate: renewable energy is necessary but expensive, while fossil fuels are cheaper and more reliable. This assumption is increasingly being challenged.

In many systems, electricity prices are still determined by fossil fuels. This means that even large volumes of low-cost renewable energy do

not automatically lead to lower prices. However, when wind and solar dominate supply, prices begin to reflect their low-operating costs rather than the volatility of imported fuels. These systems are not entirely detached from global markets, but they are far less vulnerable to them.

This is why renewable-heavy systems can deliver relatively stable and lower prices even during global energy shocks. It is not because they are artificially subsidised, but because once built, they generate power at very low marginal cost. To electrify Africa is cheaper than allowing the crisis of the world to impact us with changing fuel prices given our continuous dependence on fuel.

Now imagine a different reality:

If 70–80% of vehicles across Africa were electric, powered by decentralised solar systems; if businesses ran on solar or wind instead of diesel generators; if households cooked with clean energy; how much would global oil disruptions really matter? Prices would stabilise. Inflation would ease. Economic resilience would improve.

Yet this remains a distant vision, as many African governments remain knee-deep in fossil fuel economies. Gas is often described by them as a transition fuel. But it is still a fossil fuel – one that emits significant amounts of carbon dioxide, methane, and other greenhouse gases across its production lifecycle.

Green Energy Investment

Green energy investment in Africa holds immense potential. Over 600 million people on the continent still lack access to reliable energy for lighting, cooking, and heating. Renewable energy offers a pathway not only to expand access but also to decentralise ownership and empower communities.

Africa also has a strategic

advantage: it possesses many of the critical minerals required for renewable energy technologies. This positions the continent not just as a supplier of raw materials, but as a potential leader in the global clean energy value chain. According to PowerShift Africa, developing renewable energy systems could generate savings of between \$3 trillion and \$5 trillion by 2050 - equivalent to roughly \$150 billion annually. These savings could be reinvested into climate action and broader development goals.

Community-led energy models are particularly promising. Across Africa, communities have already demonstrated the ability to co-own and manage energy infrastructure, from transformers to distribution networks through their community cooperatives. Renewable energy builds on this foundation.

Many African businesses are small-scale and require reliable, affordable power, something solar energy can readily provide. Likewise, household energy needs are well-suited to decentralised renewable systems.

Nigeria offers a compelling example. Even before the current crisis, about 40% of electricity consumption came from petrol and diesel generators.

Following the removal of fuel subsidies in 2023, there was a surge in investment in rooftop solar systems, adding approximately 1.6 GW of capacity. This brought total installed solar capacity in the country to 3.4 GW by 2024.

This shift has helped many households and businesses reduce exposure to fuel price shocks, unreliable grid supply, and rising tariffs. Decarbonising and decentralising national grids is not just an environmental priority; it is a matter of national security.

“Decarbonising and decentralising national grids is not just an environmental priority; it is a matter of national security.”

Africa continues to export crude oil while importing refined products at higher costs, leaving economies vulnerable to global disruptions like the one unfolding today.

Renewable energy changes this equation. While it may require significant upfront investment, it delivers cheaper and more stable power over time, free from the volatility of global fuel markets. Beyond environmental benefits, investing in low-carbon energy systems will drive technological innovation, create jobs, strengthen energy security, and build more resilient economies.

A high-renewable energy system supported by the right policies and market structures can deliver both affordability and stability. Electrification, in this light, is not just a climate strategy. It is a safeguard against economic volatility.

(Babawale Obayanju is Host of TellThatStory, writer and was a Campaign Strategist with Oil Change International, he is based in Nigeria)

rebeuss

Ibrahim Thiam

Born under the rubble of the First
World War, Raised in the heart of the
roaring and restless capital.

Like a dish forgotten on a boiling fire,
Nights and days merge to the rhythm
of the drums,

Under the grip of a neighbourhood
that seems to coil upon itself. The sea
borders the west, where one plunges in,

The breeze fans it, and there one
struts. Young and old scramble for a
place on the shore of Koussoum;

Some, despondent, seek refuge
intemples and mosques. A radiant sun
has appeared, and we celebrate it To
the frenetic pace of Asikos and Sabars.

Rama passes by with her meal, going
to see Yamar, Who, though imprisoned
in Rebeuss last year, still claims his
innocence.

A young girl with fair skin wanders
with grace, carrying the world on her
shoulders;

A boastful young man, chest puffed
out, believing himself the sole master of
destiny

Forgetting that Kumba, his aunt,
suffers today from dementia. Suley
spent the day at the bar, Now sleeping
under the burning sun.

Today, no one shall sleep; then Rosa
is throwing a party . Niaye Thioker
lost yesterday's final, accusing
Khandalou of red fetishes.

Yes, who will dare speak of it? For
fear of being called a poser. Unsanitary
streets, narrow roads, lack of sleep
He who wishes to escape must look
elsewhere.

Everything is celebrated, unless one
accepts martyrdom; To seek grace
is to exhaust oneself at the Quranic
school. Like a beast lurking in the
shadows,

It is hard to live in Rebeuss.

*(Ibrahim Thiam is a writer and poet.
He works with Rosa Luxembourg
Stiftung, Dakar, Senegal)*



ENERGY: FOUR FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS FOR A CHANGE OF DIRECTION

Alberto Acosta

*“The mind is like a parachute... it only works
if we keep it open.”*

Albert Einstein

There are problems in Ecuador's electricity supply... again. This is hardly a surprise. The undeniable mediocrity and massive corruption among those responsible for the sector — who see energy as no more than a way to make money— continue to take its toll on the lives of ordinary Ecuadorians.

The blackouts during the first stage of President Noboa's administration were avoidable. At the beginning of 2023, the arrival of a severe dry season was anticipated, and a plan was drawn up to deal with it. However, even though resources were available to finance the plan, the government of banker Guillermo Lasso did nothing to make it happen.

Later, under the newly elected government of Daniel Noboa, that emergency plan was not only ignored, but funds were actually withdrawn from electricity companies to reduce the fiscal deficit. Immediately afterwards, in an openly corrupt operation, tens of millions of dollars were squandered on the contracting of obsolete thermoelectric equipment, at the same time as system maintenance was neglected. In this

scenario, and now without access to electricity from Colombia due to the "trade war" unleashed by Noboa, privatisation is now being promoted by the passing of economic legislation designated as 'urgent'.

The underlying problem, however, is not a lack of electricity. While future projected blackouts will cause havoc in the general population and also severely compromise the manufacturing sector, the real issue is the way we understand and organise energy: as a short-term business with permanent patches, rather than as the material foundation of a national project.

Given the many problems caused by the government itself, which are further compounded by predictable environmental issues, there is an urgent need for greater electricity supply and a much more reliable system. That is pretty much obvious. But the matter is far more complicated.

Solving the problem of lack of electricity is not simply a matter of increasing supply to meet growing demand, although in the short term this may be necessary, nor will diversification or cutting-edge technology prove sufficient. Nor can the issue be resolved

“ Solving the problem of lack of electricity is not simply a matter of increasing supply to meet growing demand... What is needed is a process of change that transforms energy structures across the economy and society itself.”

by temporary fixes, or by privatisation or state-control dogmas; it requires structural, tough political decisions that can deliver long-term impact.

What is needed is a process of change that transforms energy structures across the economy and society itself. This implies decentralising energy to the greatest possible extent but doing so without being trapped by mega-projects that, among other difficulties, are susceptible to high levels of vulnerability. The process must also assume the responsibility of decarbonization by gradually and systematically overcoming the use of fossil fuels.



A fundamental element of this structural change is understanding energy as a right, not as a commodity or mere input, implying the planning and building of an energy system that is high quality, sustainable, economic, reliable, as well as democratic and socially equitable. The task must begin by combating “energy poverty” that exists among broad segments of the population, while simultaneously confronting energy waste; for example, the huge amounts of electricity allocated to mining megaprojects that are neither socially nor environmentally

sustainable nor financially beneficial for the country.

If energy is a right, efficiency in its use, transformation, transmission, and consumption is therefore essential, as is diversification of sources and technologies. Achieving energy sovereignty is indispensable: that is, maximising self-sufficiency without undermining food sovereignty or harming communities and Nature, including water cycles.

With regard to cities, a crucial point is that energy use is both extremely complex and unavoidable.

Simply abandoning fossil fuels and promoting private electric vehicles — which may reduce air pollution — will not solve transportation problems. Rising demand for metal-intensive electric cars increases the need for rare earths and resources such as Lithium, expands mining frontiers, especially in the Global South, and leads to what is known as “green colonialism.” The real solution lies in reducing the demand for private vehicles by providing efficient, high-quality public transportation systems: subsidised mainly and necessarily by municipalities. Cargo transport systems using truly renewable energy sources are also needed.

As well as energy use, efficient and sustainable transportation systems also lead us to value the capacity to build/rebuild cities participatively, reconnecting them to rural areas, while considering population density, productive structures, and consumption patterns. Amongst the many actions needed are a change in the paradigm of architecture and housing construction, as well as urban road organisation and the provision of more green spaces full of life and biodiversity — such as more parks and urban gardens — which will help discourage consumerist

logic and the frantic pace of urban life. The challenge here is to displace private vehicles, reducing their use while at the same time strengthening public transport and reclaiming urban spaces for people. This is an indispensable, concrete option already being utilised in several countries.

Other possibilities include encouraging solar energy use in homes through municipal policies that support panel installation, potentially manufactured locally.

At this point, for Ecuador, a new long-term horizon of regional integration with Colombia and Peru seems necessary, as is an adequate energy pricing and subsidy policy with an integral vision — social, productive, ecological, and energy-focused — with which to overcome the fiscal adjustments tied to International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditions.

The viability of the energy system must be planned democratically and aligned with social and ecological justice and the strengthening of institutions, but not through mere legal reforms. State energy companies must be fortified, allowed to function effectively and independently, and given sufficient guarantees to secure external funding.

In summary, we must promote the highest level of national energy self-sufficiency, involving not only companies but also communities. The transition must be based on energy democracy, which means empowering consumer participation in decision-making, supporting community and cooperative electricity generation, and ensuring active involvement of municipalities, provinces, and the central government.

A key point is that in the face of the dual challenge of efficiency and sufficiency, energy consumption must be recognised as an energy source in itself. Together with the previously mentioned aspects, recognising efficiency as an energy source would shape the elements of a democratic or democratizing energy transition that is broad-based, fair, and sustainable. The goal must be to benefit the majority, not to consolidate a process that allows economic elite to continue accumulating wealth while destroying the environment. The implication is a rethink of the energy (and economic) system from its foundations upwards, and enact a new one which, without neglecting technical issues, prioritises equity, democratic

participation, and respect for Human Rights and the Rights of Nature.

To achieve this, the fundamental questions are: energy for what? energy for whom? energy controlled by whom? what kind of energy? how is energy obtained, distributed, and consumed? At all times, we must also consider this crucial point: redesign requires participation, not imposition. As a consequence, this is a political (not partisan, to be clear), rather than simply a technical issue.

Ultimately, the energy debate is not only about megawatts or infrastructure. It is about the kind of society we want to build: one that guarantees life? Or one that remains subordinated to capital accumulation? In current circumstances, with mediocre and corrupt governments — such as the present Ecuadorian version — that see energy as a business opportunity, these questions find no place and will not find the right answers.

(Alberto Acosta is an economist specialised in energy economics in Germany. President of the Ecuadorian Constituent Assembly (2007–2008), Minister of Energy and Mines (2007), Ecuadorian State Petroleum Corporation (CEPE—now PETROECUADOR) executive, and advisor to the Latin American Energy Organisation (OLADE) in the 1980s).

An Elder's Reflection: The End of Unilateral Power

**Contemplating the Transformation of Power and
Justice in the Modern World**

By Jayaseelan (Jay) Naidoo



The End of Outdated Ideologies

We are living through the end of an insane and outdated idea. The long-held belief that a single nation could dominate the world, that one race could claim superiority, or that any people could declare themselves 'chosen' above others. All these represent the 'original sins' of the past two thousand years.

Power and Its Modern Manifestations

For centuries, power has been wielded unilaterally through empire, conquest, and economic control, often disguised as progress or democracy. Today, this logic continues to persist and manifest itself in extreme inequality, in a world where hunger persists despite

abundance.

The rise of a billionaire class, whose wealth, influence and platforms shape markets, media, and elections, is a modern aristocracy. This group, produced by the 'feudalistic arrogance' of colonial patriarchs, continues to believe in their 'divine rights to rule.' Their reach now extends beyond Earth, spreading chaos even to other locations in our planetary system.

Oligarchs and the Expression of Power

Figures such as Jeff Bezos, Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, Peter Thiel, and Elon Musk are not the creators of this system but are its clearest expressions in today's world order. Never before has so much wealth and power been concentrated in so few hands. The concentration of wealth and power in this oligarchic class echoes older systems of hierarchy and domination, such as the racial and economic ordering associated with apartheid in South Africa.

The Adaptation of Power

What we are witnessing today is not accidental. It is the re-emergence of an ancient pattern: power

concentrating, extracting, and reinventing itself to remain dominant. When threatened, it adapts, seduces, and captures the language of change, turning it into an instrument of control.

We see this in how capital reshapes activism. Philanthrocapitalist foundations, suddenly invested in poverty and inequality, now seek to harness indigenous spiritual networks for self-reinvention. Philanthropy becomes a gateway to influence, control, and hegemonic survival.

Systems promising reform often end up reproducing the very structures they claim to challenge.

The Issue of Imbalance

This is not simply about success; it is about imbalance. In a world of extraordinary capacity, millions go hungry. Food is wasted or destroyed to protect profit, while children lack nourishment. Economies reward accumulation over dignity, extraction over care, and unlimited growth over balance.

Meanwhile, power quietly converges among corporations, political systems, and financial interests, moving across borders beyond public accountability. Decisions

affecting billions are made far from those who must live with their consequences.

The New Unilateralism and Its Unsustainability

There is a 'new form of unilateralism,' not only between nations but also within them. It is unsustainable because our interconnectedness makes such imbalance impossible to endure. Inequality breeds instability, hunger fuels conflict, and concentrated power erodes trust, all causing the system to turn against itself.

Reckoning and the Path Forward

This moment in history is not accidental; it is a reckoning. Excesses that have become the pathology of a global economic system built on exploitation and extraction are being shaved away. Humanity now stands on the precipice, facing war, ecological collapse, and the threat of annihilation.

The escalation of conflicts worldwide, including illegal wars such as that against Iran, reflects how quickly the logic of domination can spiral out of control. This global crises mirror the chaos within countries and

individuals, as governance becomes unrecognisable from struggles for freedom and peace.

The Meaning of Peace

Peace cannot exist in such a chaotic world. It will emerge from the trenches of mass struggles and absolute honesty about past mistakes.

Peace is not the absence of war. It is the presence of justice. It is the presence of dignity.

It is the assurance that every human being has enough food, shelter, and opportunity to live fully.

The Rejection of Unilateral Power and Extreme Inequality

The future is rejecting both unilateral power and extreme inequality. It is calling for a different order, a world where leadership is shared and accountable, where wealth serves life, and where no individual or institution holds disproportionate influence over history.

Restoring Balance and Building a New Covenant

This is about restoring balance. The future will not accept a world where a few live in unimaginable excess while many struggle for survival, nor systems that manufacture scarcity amidst abundance.

We are being asked to choose: to continue the path of concentration, control, and division, or to step into a new covenant rooted in equity, cooperation, and shared humanity.

(Jayaseelan Naidoo is a South African politician and businessman who served as the founding general secretary of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) from 1985 to 1993.[2] [3] He then served as Minister responsible for the Reconstruction and Development Programme in the first post-apartheid cabinet of President Nelson Mandela (1994–1996)[4] and later as Minister of Post, Telecommunications, and Broadcasting (1996–1999).

The Courage to Shape What Comes Next

The age of unilateral power is nearing its end.

What comes next depends on whether we have the courage to let go of what no longer serves life and to build a world where peace is not an aspiration, but a lived reality.



MOTHER EARTH GOES TO COURT

Majekodunmi Oseriemen Ebhohon

I, Daughter of Dust and Drumbeat,
Widow of Wind and Maid of Moon,
enter this dock with a calabash
of curses.

Let the iron record the charge:
Mother Earth is suing her
tenants!

You, Sovereigns of Spillage,
siphoned oil from my womb
and spat soot on my skin.
You turned my brooks into
haemorrhages and christened the
carnage Progress.

My farm is a lab of mutations:
yams that trigger migraines,
cassava that screams when boiled.

You sent me digital husks from
the Valley—
“Climate-smart” seeds that
require a software update to
sprout.
Tell Bill I have no use for
encrypted beans.
Or potatoes that need two-factor
authentication from the sun.

I demand crops with ancestral
memory, not tubers that need a PhD
and a stable Wi-Fi to germinate.
My soil is a sanctuary,
not a beta-test for a
billionaire’s mid-life crisis.

I see you, Ambassadors of the
Atmosphere,
flying private jets to Geneva
to discuss the price of air,
arriving in thirty-car convoys,
farting diesel into my face,
to sign “Green Treaties” with
pens carved from my stolen ivory.

What “Net Zero” is this,
preached with charcoal fingers?

Your summits are but climate
carnivals,

where suits sweat lies and the
champagne is cooled by the
melting ice of the poles you
protect.

You preach “Sustainability”
from the balconies of skyscrapers
built on the graves of my
forests.

If Earth is not your mother,
cease digging her grave.
If the future is “Green,”
Why is your breath a thicket of
soot?

A termite is never the architect
of the house it eats.

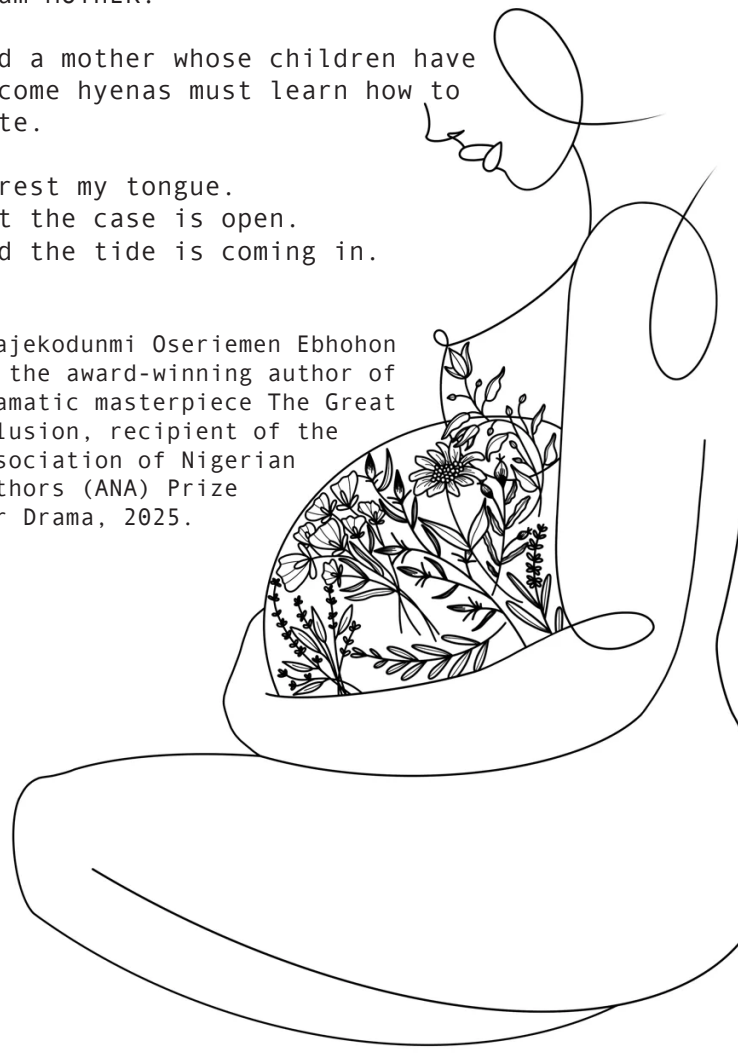
I am done with supplication.
I am not your maid,
your carbon-credit, or your
boardroom agenda.

I am MOTHER.

And a mother whose children have
become hyenas must learn how to
bite.

I rest my tongue.
But the case is open.
And the tide is coming in.

(Majekodunmi Oseriemen Ebhohon
is the award-winning author of
dramatic masterpiece The Great
Delusion, recipient of the
Association of Nigerian
Authors (ANA) Prize
for Drama, 2025.







DEFENDING OCEAN AND FISHERS' LIVELIHOODS: A HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH TO STRENGTHENING THE STRATEGIC ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

Esso-Dong KONGAH

The protection of the sea and fishermen's livelihood, a vital and legally regulated issue

Given the vastness of the oceans, one may assume that maritime space is a lawless zone, or at least less regulated than land-based spaces, especially in political contexts where regulation is weak or poorly enforced. This assumption is mistaken. Maritime space is, in fact, one of the most heavily regulated areas of international law.

In Africa, and particularly in Togo, the sea is not just a geographical space. It is a vital driver of the survival of coastal populations, most of whom depend on fishing for their livelihood, as well as a driver of the economy. According to the BBC, fishing is a pillar of food security in the sense

that it provides more than 50% of the dietary protein consumed in several countries in the sub-region. According to Jean-Jaurès Foundation, the fisheries sector employs more than 12 million people and provides food security for more than 200 million people globally. In Togo, it is estimated that this sector provides more than 35,000 direct and indirect jobs.

However, this sector, as well as the means of subsistence, is threatened not only by ocean pollution, particularly oil pollution, industrial waste, and plastics, but also by Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing. Let's unpack this!

Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing

In 2021, according to figures from

Changing Markets and Greenpeace, IUU accounted for the extraction of more than 500,000 tons of fish in West Africa, which are resources that could feed 33 million people. This represents an estimated economic loss of between \$2.3 billion and \$9.4 billion per year – and this is in the West African area alone. According to an article published in Policy Centre, the role of the fishery sector in feeding the African continent is considerable: 22% of the animal protein available comes from seafood and freshwater, and more than 50% in some African countries, particularly in North and West Africa.

Factors such as pollution, the use of illegal methods and the practice of fishing techniques that do not consider international provisions for the preservation of species and biodiversity weaken local communities due to the lack of resources, but also a scarcity of fish, which deprives fishermen of their means of subsistence.

How can civil society organisations (CSOs) effectively contribute to the defence of ocean law and the sustainability of fishers' livelihoods?

1. Understanding Ocean Law: Three Complementary Approaches

For those interested in this field, it is important to note that there is even a distinction to be made between maritime law, which deals with the management of private interests (labour, transport contracts or insurance), and the law of the sea, which defines the status of the marine space and the rules of the international maritime relationships between states.

2. A classic approach: the law of the sea

This legal architecture is mainly based on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), signed in Montego

Bay in 1982. It is considered to be the “constitution of the oceans”.

UNCLOS organises all relations between States at sea. It defines maritime zones, sets out the rights and responsibilities of each State in these areas and regulates maritime activities such as navigation, fishing, scientific research and the exploitation of resources.

One of the major contributions of UNCLOS is to transform the protection of the marine environment from a mere recommendation into a positive legal obligation. Thus, Article 192 clearly proclaims: “States have the obligation to protect and preserve the marine environment.” This article serves as the basis for a more specific set of provisions (articles 194 to 222) that require States to take measures to prevent, reduce and control pollution of the sea, whether from point sources (discharges from ships, platforms, coastal factories) or diffuse sources (air pollution, land runoff).

3. A private approach: maritime law

Maritime law focuses mainly on the management of private interests in the marine environment, by governing the relations between economic actors involved in maritime activities. In particular, it regulates contracts for the carriage of goods or passengers by sea, seafarers' employment contracts, ship lease or charter agreements, as well as charter and maritime brokerage contracts. This right aims to protect economic operators (shipowners, transport companies, insurers, shippers, etc.) against risks specific to navigation. It is based on national maritime laws and international conventions that provide a framework for the liability of the various actors, the limits of their obligations and the compensation mechanisms. In this sense, maritime law is a discipline of private law applied to the sea.

4. An ecological approach: the law of the oceans

The aim of this approach is to protect the marine environment against the “scourges” of pollution and illegal fishing, and to preserve the ecosystem and other conventions, such as the MARPOL Convention, prevent and regulate pollution from ships, whether it is oil spills, chemical spills, wastewater or plastic waste.

Nowadays, there is a real evolution on the issue as we have moved from a fairly general law on the management of resources through the Montego Bay Convention to a law specifically focused on the law of the ocean and its ecosystem. This is illustrated by the adoption of the BBNJ (Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction) treaty, even though the latter is intended to apply to areas outside state jurisdiction.

This development is illustrated by a historic change in case law by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, which issued an advisory opinion on 21 May 2024, establishing greenhouse gas emissions as marine pollution, thereby obliging states to adopt measures to reduce them.

5. The legal framework for the protection of the oceans and fishermen’s livelihoods in Togo

In Togo, the penal code punishes IUU fishing, or Law 2016-026 of 11 October 2016 regulating fisheries and aquaculture in Togo, which considers fishery resources as a national heritage and encourages government authorities to protect them. It should be noted, however, that the decrees implementing the 2016 law are still waiting to be signed, which creates a legal vacuum that weakens effective protection.

An example of good practice: the Agbodrafo Marine Protected Area
To address the need to preserve marine biodiversity and protect the ocean, Togo

launched a project to create an Agbodrafo Marine Protected Area (MPA) in 2025, covering approximately 950 km² in the Lakes Prefecture, which is considered one of the most ambitious responses ever implemented in the country.

6. The human rights-based approach: a winning strategy for CSOs

Beyond the strictly environmental approach, the defence of the oceans and the livelihoods of fishermen can be based on a human rights-based approach. This approach recognises that the protection of the sea and the livelihoods of fishermen is not just an ecological and technical issue but a matter of human rights and legal obligations for the state.

1. Protection of the ocean and the fisher’s livelihood as rights for them and obligations for states

Preserving the ocean and recognising the rights even of small-scale fishers and coastal communities is fully a human rights issue. It involves rights that are based on several international legal instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR).

The following rights may be mentioned in support of this, although not exhaustive:

a. The right to an adequate standard of living and food security

The UDHR (Article 25) and the ICESCR (Article 11) enshrined the right to an adequate standard of living, including access to adequate food. For Togolese coastal populations who depend on fish for more than 50% of their animal protein needs, the degradation of marine

ecosystems and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing constitute a direct violation of these fundamental rights.

b. The right to work and fair working conditions

The ICESCR and the UDHR recognise, inter alia, the right to work and the right to obtain freely chosen employment under fair and satisfactory working conditions. The scarcity of fishery resources, due in particular to excessive fishing and unfair competition with industrial fleets, directly affects the ability of artisanal fishermen to meet their needs and those of their families, in Togo and in West Africa.

c. The right to a healthy environment

The ACHPR (Article 24) and the emerging jurisprudence of the African Court, as well as the recent human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment recognised by the United Nations, link the protection of the oceans to respect for the human rights of coastal communities. Similarly, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP) also enshrines the right of small-scale fishers to preserve their environment and to participate in climate change adaptation policies.

d. The right to information and participation

The ICCPR (Article 19) and the UDHR (Article 19) guarantee the right to freedom of expression, including the right to seek, receive and disseminate information. In light of this provision, fishermen must be able to access data on the state of resources, management of fisheries and maritime policies. Any decision on the licensing of industrial fishing or the establishment of marine protected areas must involve their effective participation and free, prior and informed consent.

These guaranteed rights are sources of obligations for states under ratified conventions but also under the UDHR, which is a customary source of law whose provisions are binding on states (see the position of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights in the case of *Anudo Ochieng Anudo v. United Republic of Tanzania*).

These obligations include:

- The obligation to respect, which means that states must refrain from interfering in or restricting the enjoyment of human rights.
- The obligation to protect, which requires states to protect individuals or groups of persons from human rights violations.
- The obligation to implement, which means that states must take positive measures to facilitate the enjoyment of human rights.

e) The right to non-discrimination

The ICCPR (Article 2) and the UDHR (Article 7) prohibit any form of discrimination in the exercise of rights. Small-scale fishers must not be treated unfairly in accessing fishing areas or fishery resources. In Togo, for example, this means ending the marginalisation of local communities who are disfavoured because of foreign industrial fleets. It also involves ensuring equitable and inclusive management of marine resources.

7. Four reasons why a human rights-based approach is a winning strategy for CSOs

The human rights-based approach provides civil society organisations (CSOs) with a powerful strategic lever to strengthen their actions to protect the ocean and fishers. It makes it possible to move the debates from the purely technical or environmental dimension to a logic of legal responsibility and justice. At least 4 reasons can motivate the adoption of this approach for effective CSO action:



a. It raises the level of argumentation

Instead of limiting themselves to technical or ecological considerations, CSOs can base their advocacy on international legal obligations that are binding on the state. Issues such as marine pollution, the destruction of coastal ecosystems or the overexploitation of resources affecting the livelihoods of fishers are therefore presented not just as “environmental problems” but also as violations of human rights under international law.

b. It opens up access to redress mechanisms

This approach paves the way for the use of formal redress mechanisms, such as:

- International human rights mechanisms, including those of the United Nations, whether treaty bodies, including their individual complaints procedures, special procedures of the Human Rights Council, periodic reviews, etc.
- African regional mechanisms, including the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR), the African Committee of Experts

on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC), and sub-regional mechanisms such as the ECOWAS Court of Justice in West Africa, which has already received and ruled on environmental issues.

- National courts, based on the hierarchy of norms, according to which international treaties ratified by the state take precedence over domestic laws in most levels of jurisdiction.
- National non-judicial mechanisms, including national human rights institutions, non-contentious or hierarchical redress mechanisms, etc.

c. It reinforces the legitimacy of the demands

By relying on widely recognised international legal instruments (such as UDHR, ICESCR, ICCPR, ACHPR), CSOs can strengthen the legitimacy and scope of their demands. With this approach, their demands will no longer be perceived as mere sectoral demands or mere campaigns, but as demands for respect for human rights and the fulfilment of the state’s international obligations. This gives their pleas a solid legal basis that is

difficult to contest.

d. It protects human rights defenders

Finally, this approach helps to protect human rights defenders operating in the fisheries and environmental sector by professionalising their work. The UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders explicitly recognises their role and imposes an obligation on the state to guarantee their safety, prevent reprisals and ensure that they can carry out their duties without obstruction. Such recognition strengthens both their legitimacy and their security in a context often marked by a restriction of civic space and tensions with economic and political actors.

Towards human rights-based protection of the oceans and fishers' livelihoods: a call for commitment and capacity building
Ultimately, the protection of the oceans and the livelihoods of fishermen cannot be addressed solely as a technical or environmental issue, but should be approached as a human rights issue to which the Togolese State and states in general are legally bound, with regard to the international legal instruments they have ratified. The human rights-based approach allows civil society organisations to strengthen their actions, use strategic human rights litigation, strengthen the legitimacy of their claims, and better protect rights defenders on the ground.

The Centre de Documentation et de Formation sur les Droits de l'Homme (CDFDH), as part of its mission, supports the implementation of this approach by strengthening the capacities of natural and legal persons (CSOs, fishermen's associations, lawyers, researchers, teachers, journalists, etc.). It carries out actions for the appropriation of human rights instruments and mechanisms, so that these tools can be mastered and used by stakeholders in their commitments

for the protection of the oceans and the respect of the rights of artisanal fishermen in Togo and West Africa.

(Esso-Dong Divin Aymard KONGAH, Human Rights Defender, Executive Director of the Centre de Documentation et de Formation sur les Droits de l'Homme (CDFDH), N'fodh SANTIÉGOULARE, Legal intern at the CDFDH, LL.M in maritime law and port activities and auditor in a master's degree in law and safety of maritime and oceanic activities)

OILWATCH AT 30



Beyond the Notes from Santa Marta Oilwatch Statement on the Fossil Fuels Phase Out Conference

Nnimmo Bassey

For thirty years, Oilwatch International and its affiliates have demanded that fossil fuels be left in the ground. This call has been projected as the sensible action to take if the world is serious about moving beyond climate rhetoric to avert future deterioration of the climate crisis propelled by the extraction and consumption of fossil fuels. On this premise, it was believed that the Fossil Fuels Conference held in Santa Marta would finally do what 30 sessions of the Conference of the Parties (COPs) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) have only tangentially mentioned.

In this context, we acknowledge the success of the Conference for Territories Free of Fossil Fuels on 24 and 25 April 2026 that witnessed real exchanges of wisdom and practical strategies that are being implemented by the people to leave fossil fuels underground and develop alternatives to the current energy systems.

The official Conference also launched a Science Panel for the Global Energy Transition (SPGET) to support countries to overcome dependence on fossil fuels by helping develop roadmaps aligned with the 1.5°C trajectory.

The fear here is that these

insights, lessons, wisdom, knowledge and political agency of the peoples who know which paths to take may be disregarded, as has been the case historically. Such a scenario may give rise to a rebirth of colonial impositions that subvert the interests of people and planet.

The process to achieve a truly just transition must be led by peoples in the territories, not politicians, corporations or co-opted academics.

Noting the unholy wedlock between fossil fuels, military-industrial machinery, and warfare and conflicts, the futures we need must be based on restorative justice, with thorough checks to prevent resurgence of violence. This violent energy source, which continues to feed the greed of politicians and corporations and cause wars, must be stopped.

Oilwatch demands a permanent ceasefire and a halt to the permanent environmental genocide in communities and territories where fossil fuels are extracted. Fossil fuel extraction in the Global South is an open warfare against the people and the planet. The environmental genocide inflicted on territories, communities and nations by fossil fuel extraction must be halted. This must be followed by clean-ups, remediation, dismantling, restoration and reparation. All fossil fuel time bombs



PHOTO CREDIT: PINTEREST

must be decommissioned and dismantled. Now is the time.

The official Conference was to supposed to create a platform for a people's gathering of frontline communities, indigenous nations, social movements, and grassroots organisations for the exchange of wisdom, struggles, and strategies, as well as to share concrete, community-led approaches to keeping fossil fuels in the ground and building post-extractive futures.

However, all the weeklong meetings in Santa Marta could deliver was a pouch of meeting notes that could easily have been compiled by an AI bot. To be fair, the note takers state that the actual outcome of the conference will be made public in the future, probably during the climate weeks in London and New York later on in the year. They characterise the conference as a safe space for conversations on fossil fuel phase-down - an ignominious terminology crafted to avoid phasing out of fossil fuels. The conference also aligns with the processes of the UNFCCC, including the Paris Agreement and its package of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), which have done little or nothing to confront global warming.

Oilwatch notes that the Santa Marta conference skirted around the critical need to end dependence on fossil fuels and rather projected a process that had no aim to achieve urgent, actionable outcomes. It was a conference of convenience hinged on trade and market environmentalism.

While the conference offered a safe space, the plight of indigenous groups, communities and territories that have been turned into sacrifice zones with relentless ecocide did not even deserve to be mentioned in the notes. This blindsiding of the atrocious acts of colonial extractivism has glued the climate discourse to carbon molecules in the atmosphere while communities, territories and nations are mired by oil spills, gas flares, ecosystem decimation and related climate impacts

and socioecological devastations.

Oilwatch notes the roadblocks erected by the Colombian government's visa regime that kept grassroots and impacted groups from Africa, Asia, and elsewhere from being present and heard. A supposed "safe space" that is inaccessible to the most affected communities is a biting irony. It is an exclusion zone dressed in progressive language.

It is regretted that the voices of the victims of fossil fuel-driven extractivism were silenced, thus dampening the importance of community-led resistance and the clear rejection of false climate solutions and market environmentalism offered as climate finance. The intersectional nature of climate justice pursuits and the projection of post-extractive futures and restorative justice, which goes beyond reparations to prevent future violence, remains muted.

Oilwatch saw the Santa Marta conference as a clear affirmation that the logic of our call for fossil fuels to be left in the ground is unassailable. Now is the time to centre the drive for post-fossil futures on the notable achievements of Ecuadorians rejecting oil extraction in Yasuni Ishpingo-Tambococha-Tiputini (ITT) and the people of Ogoni in Nigeria refusing a resumption of oil extraction in their territories since they peacefully forced a cessation of such activities in 1993. Similar struggles, such as those at Standing Rock in the USA, show the global momentum of this movement. Oilwatch believes it is time to "Yasunize" and "Ogonize" the world.

For years, Oilwatch has advanced the idea of Annex Zero, a position no government conference has yet formally adopted. Annex Zero calls for certain territories, ecosystems, and communities to be permanently declared off limits to fossil fuel extraction. This means no phase down timelines, no transitional licenses, and no negotiations. Simply put: total zero extraction.

Oilwatch also reiterates that urgent phasing out of fossil fuels and real climate action must be anchored on the Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) principle, which is the key justice pillar of the UNFCCC. In this light, nations must be required to cut emissions at source at legally binding levels. The Annex Zero principle proposed by Oilwatch must also be taken on board. This principle requires that nations that keep fossil fuels in the ground be recognised as climate champions and duly compensated for helping to avoid catastrophic climate change.

The polite Santa Marta conversations emphasised financial mechanisms, benefit sharing, and other pathways constructed on the imaginary that has kicked the climate conference down the unending conferences avenue for years. It is time to recognise the intersectional nature of the climate crisis and the essential need to bring all impacted parties into the room,

with communities directly impacted by oil extraction leading the charge.

For 30 years, Oilwatch International has consistently called for fossils to be left in the ground and demanded the recognition and payment of climate/ecological debt. We stay on this path with the confidence that the futures of our dreams are attainable. It is time for a phase-out, not a phase-down of fossil fuels. That will be the real, just, and equitable transition.

Santa Marta was a great but missed opportunity.



LAUGH, RESIST, SURVIVE !!!

Report from EcoComedy Live Event
by Joyce Brown



Working within socio-ecological justice movements requires resilience, urgency, and moral courage, as activists are often expected to remain constantly alert and ready to respond to urgent and emerging issues. Often times activists are faced with traumatic experiences in the field and met by stark opposition or even failure. This leads to burnout, which can become persistent and reduce productivity/impact, as well as lower quality of life. This challenge requires personal and collective reflection on the causes of burnout and what tools can be effective in addressing it.

On 7th April 2026, Health of Mother Earth Foundation and Environmental Rights Action organised an eco-comedy live show which explored the relevance of humour and storytelling in curbing burnout and promoting wellbeing among socio-ecological justice activists.



This event, which was held in Benin City, Edo State, had in participation young, middle-aged, and experienced activists, comedians, students and media representatives. The event featured short speeches, storytelling (activists' chronicles), live comedy performances, and group discussions, all of which were infused with humour while delivering practical ideas on how to prevent and manage burnout. The event also featured a presentation of prizes to two winners of the eco-comedy short film competition which preceded the live show.

According to Dr Nnimmo Bassey, HOMEF's Executive Director, humour/laughter should inspire us to think about who we truly are and the socio-ecological issues that we need to address, stressing that comedy and humour are not neutral but viable tools for action.

Dr Nnimmo's remarks acknowledged the serious and often numerous chal-

lenges that activists face year after year, sometimes with little success owing to deep-rooted systemic disorders. But, he noted, "giving up is very dangerous. While at it, activists must look into the mirror and find reasons to laugh".

Furthermore, Dr Nnimmo noted that humour is a great tool for educational purposes and can be used to break barriers - whether personal, structural, or systemic.

The Deputy Executive Director of Environmental Rights Action, Barr. Mariann Bassey-Olsson, building on the importance of integrating humour in activism, noted that if activists lose their joy and drive, they will lose the movement. Humour allows us to stay human, without which we would lose empathy and the motivation to instigate change.

Marrian Bassey-Olsson established that humour is not intended to make light of the socio-ecological struggles but helps break tension and strengthen commitment. "We are not laughing because things are easy; we are laughing because we refuse to be broken. Humour reaches where policy papers cannot. Activism must sustain people, not consume them," she explained. Moreover, Mrs Bassey-Olsson added that "when we laugh together, we heal and reconnect. We remember why we started. This isn't a distraction. It is resistance!"





The session on Activists' Chronicles had activists from different countries and regions sharing personal experiences that were difficult at the time but have since become moments they can recall with humour. Some of the stories were rather touching, including personal sacrifices and betrayal, communication hassles/language barriers, security issues, mistakes due to inexperience, and many more. In all of the stories, one thing was clear - these challenges didn't stop them; rather, they learned, grew and became more resilient. Also, this session highlighted the personal costs that come with activism and the need for activists to look out for and support one another, as well as engage in activities that promote their wellbeing.

The group discussion session highlighted practical ways to avoid burnout and deal with trauma, including prioritising areas of engagement and maintaining focus, proper planning/time management, collaborations, delegation, infusion of art/humour in programme design, avoiding competition, prioritising rest, celebrating wins (no

matter how little) and addressing systemic socio-economic factors that contribute to burnout. On trauma, it was noted that rest and carefully chosen leisure activities can promote recovery.

Overall, the event demonstrated the integration of art and advocacy, highlighted the need for movements to adopt humour as an artistic language for ecological justice. The event also stressed the need to strengthen public engagement and build communities of eco-comedians: activists who can communicate systemic critique and propagate action with wit, clarity, and cultural relevance.



FOOD SYSTEMS ARE NOT NEUTRAL (SUSTAIN-ABILITY ACADEMY)

by HOMEF Team

Sustain-Ability Academy is the knowledge and learning platform of Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF), which creates space for critical conversations on environmental justice, food systems, and socio-ecological transformation. It brings together students, activists, researchers, and community members to examine pressing issues, challenge dominant narratives, and build collective understanding. Through various sessions, the Academy promotes awareness, encourages people-centred solutions, and supports actions that promote justice, sustainability, and the protection of communities and ecosystems.

On 19 March 2026, the Academy held a session on Food, Power and the Politics of Hunger, which brought together a diverse audience to critically reflect on local and global food systems and the

power dynamics affecting not just the rights of consumers and producers but also their socio-economic wellbeing and cultural identity. The event, which was jointly convened by HOMEF and the Centre of Politics at the University of Port Harcourt, explored the structural, political, ecological, and cultural dimensions of hunger, moving beyond conventional explanations of food insecurity to interrogate deeper systems of power that shape who eats, what is eaten, and who bears the consequences of political decisions affecting our food systems.

Nnimmo Basssey, the Director of HOMEF, spoke on Junk Foods and the Politics of Hunger. According to him, food occupies a central place in our culture. It plays a key role in religious and social activities and marks the passage of time and seasons. Food is not merely something consumed to quench hunger; it is a celebration, a cultural anchor, and a force that unites families and communities. Across societies, food varieties reflect the diversity of peoples and cultures. Food can, however, be weaponised, as seen during the Biafra–Nigerian War, where it greatly impacted the nutrition, livelihoods and lives of the peoples of Eastern Nigeria. The weaponisation of food continues to exist in today's world in carefully calculated and disguised forms of food



aid, genetic modification, bio-fortification, hybridisation and other such interventions which bring about the steady erosion of memory, dignity and identity connected to local cuisines. Food becomes a weapon when the rights to save, share or reuse seeds are suppressed in the name of novel genetic varieties that are obtained from the farmers' seeds.

He emphasised that we must critically examine the root causes or main drivers of hunger in Nigeria/Africa and resist its weaponisation to entrench a culture that does little or nothing to improve food systems but instead maximises profit for a handful of enterprises and individuals. According to him, agriculture must be understood as a way of life, not just a business. Policies that disrupt seed sharing undermine community solidarity and must be overturned.

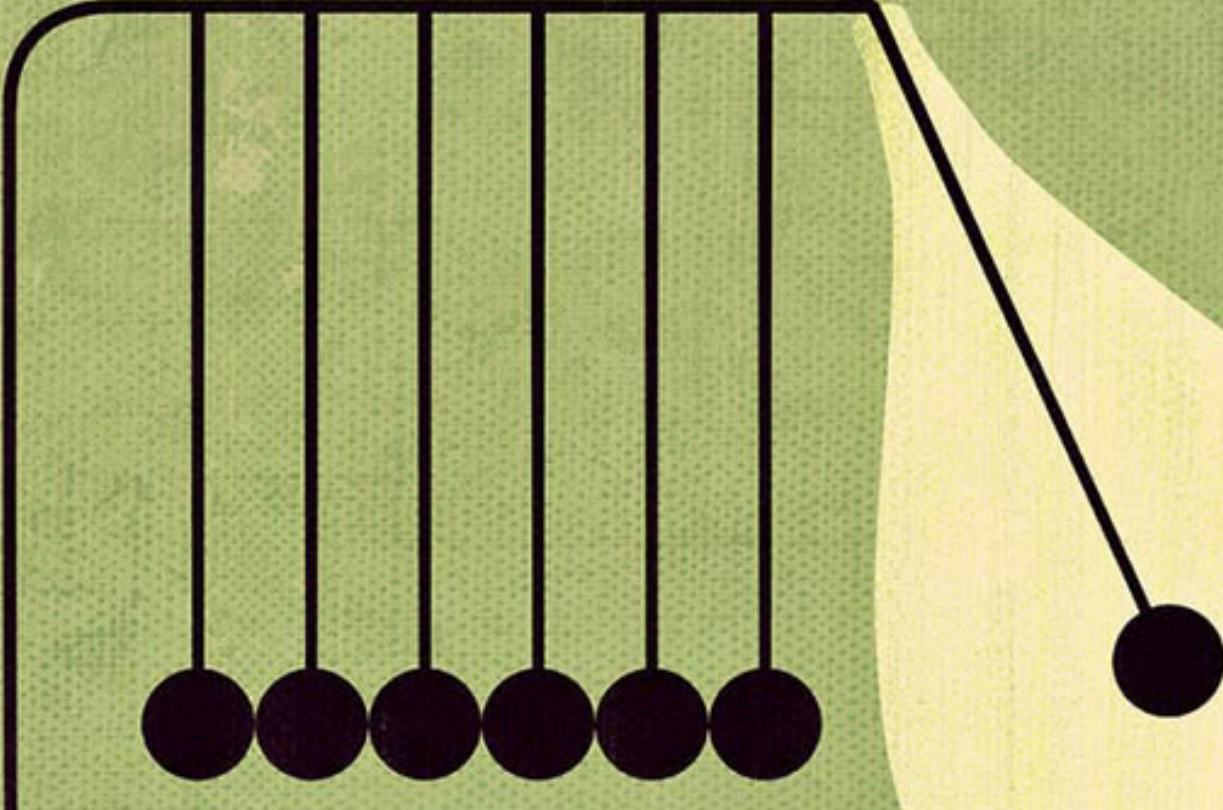
He also emphasised that the rise of fast-food culture reflects instant gratification and contributes to poor nutrition and junk culture. We must decolonise our food systems, and this requires that we liberate our tongues and taste buds. It requires that we recover lost varieties. It requires that we reject GMOs; that we preserve and share indigenous seeds and celebrate our foods. It requires that we expose the underlying market forces driving and influencing food system governance solely to their benefit and to the detriment of smallholder farmers who feed the world.

Amara Nwankpa, a climate policy analyst, spoke on Food, Power and the Politics of Hunger. In his talk, he emphasised that food connects people to land, labour, and culture. But it is power that determines how those connections are organised. And hunger emerges when power denies people access, dignity, and control. Hunger is not simply a production problem but a question of access and power. Evidence from Nigeria shows significant food waste, widespread food insecurity among farmers, yield gaps, and rising hunger levels. Evidence also shows that

hunger persists even where food is available. In Nigeria, large amounts of food are lost after harvest, while many farming households remain food insecure. This highlights that the problem is not simply one of production, but unequal access, weak support systems, and systemic inequality.

Food systems are not neutral; they are structured by power dynamics across key areas such as seeds, land, trade, and dominant narratives. Control over these areas determines who can produce food, who benefits, and who is excluded. Global systems and policies often favour large-scale actors while marginalising small-holder farmers and local communities. Reversing this trend requires redistributing power. Communities must have the right to define their food systems, preserve seeds, and ensure accountability. Ultimately, hunger is not a technical failure but a governance and justice issue. Addressing hunger requires transforming food systems by redistributing power, strengthening community control, and prioritising food sovereignty where people have the right to define and control their own food systems.

The Academy had students and staff of the University of Port Harcourt and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education in attendance, members of Civil Society Organisations, individuals from media outlets and community members. Overall, the Assembly showed that hunger is not just about food shortage, but about deeper issues of power and access. It therefore highlighted the need to include communities in decision-making and to work towards food systems that are fair, inclusive, and sustainable.

A Newton's cradle with seven balls. The ball on the far right is in motion, having just struck or about to strike the others. The background is a textured green with a large, abstract, light-colored shape on the right side.

POETRY DAY WITH PROF. NIMI WARIBOKO

Cadmus Atake-Enade

The Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF) convened a Poetry Day session on 24 April 2026, featuring Dr Nimi Wariboko, acclaimed author of the poetry collection Songs of Childhood. Over 60 participants (made up of students and members of NGOs, CSOs and CBOs) attended the event, which explored the relationship between poetry and environmental sustainability through presentations, discussions, and communal reflection.

The session began with participant introductions, followed by a screening of poetry performances from previous HOMEF poetry sessions featuring Iquo Dianne Asuquo,

PHOTO CREDIT: PINTEREST

Sankara, and others. This opening established continuity with HOMEF's ongoing cultural programming and set a tone of artistic excellence for the day's proceedings.

Dr Nnimmo Bassey, HOMEF's Director, delivered the welcome remarks in which he positioned Wariboko's work as unique in Nigerian literature. One of the few poetry collections addressing the civil war from ordinary people's perspectives rather than military viewpoints. Bassey described Wariboko's poetry as rooted in culture, history, and environment, emphasising his critical patriotism. "We need to love our country, and that means being critical about what is going on in our country," Dr Bassey said.

He articulated the strategic rationale for HOMEF's poetry programming: "If we don't understand our environment, we cannot tackle the problems in our environment. This is where we capture the imagination of a wide variety of people, we fertilise the thinking of people, and reach more hands."

Dr Wariboko's presentation, titled "Poetry and the Environment: The Sustainability Siblinghood," offered a sophisticated framework for understanding poetry's role in environmental justice. He defined sustainability as "that sweet spot between use and rejuvenation, if not 'resurrection', of nature; human beings and nature being in harmony for long-term relationship."

He then outlined five movements through which poetry promotes environmental sustainability: priming conscience (awakening environmental justice consciousness in passive citizens), enabling self-knowledge and empowerment, practising ana-poiesis (creation again—reassembling scattered connections between humanity and nature through language), generating sustainable psychic energy for healthy human-environment relationships, and providing

energy for daily resurrection of ourselves and our environment.

"just as the environment gives gifts and creates connections, poetry also works through language to reveal that 'human life is a subsidiary of the environment in its full sense of the matrix of living and non-living things.'"

Wariboko also grounded his argument theologically, invoking Romans 8:22 where Paul describes creation groaning in pain, awaiting liberation. Environmental justice, he argued, involves not only liberating nature from suffocation but "redeeming the time." He introduced a striking metaphor: "Time itself is gasping for air. We need to free the time—that remains from slow diminution or strangulation, so it can grow without limit; so it can flourish." This temporal urgency emphasises that scientific predictions impose real deadlines—we do not have eternity to solve environmental problems.

He characterised the present environmental moment as Holy Saturday, the liminal space between Good Friday's horror and Easter Sunday's liberation. "Many environmental poets write out of this space of immense waiting and pains of hope. It seems like the waiting is unbearable, the pain is too much to bear, but we must go on." This liturgical metaphor validated the emotional complexity of environmental work, positioning it as patient endurance through difficulty rather than triumphalist certainty.

Wariboko concluded his session by exploring the mutual character of poetry and ecology. He explained that both of them discern crisis before ordinary people or ruling powers acknowledge it: ecology through environmental indicators, and poetry by naming “the elephant in the room when no one dares to talk about it.” He argued that, just as the environment gives gifts and creates connections, poetry also works through language to reveal that “human life is a subsidiary of the environment in its full sense of the matrix of living and non-living things.” He emphasised that the environment inspires poetry, and poetry serves as “the voice of the voiceless environment at the corridors of power.” He closed with a stark warning: “The earth does not speak to us in a normal way. We are the voice of the voiceless, but when we keep silent, and the earth decides to speak, we will be consumed.”

The question-and-answer session, facilitated by Kome Odhomor, revealed deep participant engagement. Mr Babawale Obayanju asked Dr Wariboko to shed more light on the metaphor of ***“time gasping for air.”***

In response, Dr Wariboko explained that climatological predictions show time will run out if we don’t act fast.

“The time of the end that is approaching us is the total of the carelessness and recklessness of our human activities that is now barrelling towards us.”

When asked to elaborate on poetry’s ecological character, Wariboko positioned poets as prophets with three gifts: foretelling (predicting), forthtelling (emphasising truth), and prosecuting the powers that be for righteousness. “A prophet that does not confront the powers that be and tells them to do the right thing is not a prophet. Poets that are environmental activists are trying to

let the powers that be understand what is going on in the environment and make them make the changes needed.”

Other participants raised questions about poets’ social responsibility and the church’s environmental role. Wariboko affirmed both, rejecting the false separation of social and spiritual concerns common in Nigerian discourse. “We Nigerians make the mistake of thinking that which is social is not spiritual and vice versa, but that is not so. Caring for the environment should be something important for the churches because God gave us the charge to care for the Earth.”

The final question addressed the legal protection for environmental poets who face risks for naming uncomfortable truths. Wariboko refused to offer false reassurance, instead framing the choice starkly: “We have to determine if we are more afraid of the government killing us, or the environment eventually killing us. So, it is a personal decision that you must make because no one has the right to tell another person to die for a cause.” He invoked the principle that “a story that needs to be told does not forgive silence,” while respecting individual assessment of risk and capacity.

The Poetry Day session successfully demonstrated poetry’s power as an environmental advocacy tool, with Wariboko’s framework (positioning poetry as a prophetic voice, restorative practice, and generator of sustainable energy for environmental action) confirming the conceptual tools HOMEf deploys across its programming. The event fulfilled its goal of fertilising thinking and reaching diverse audiences through accessible cultural programming that complements HOMEf’s legal, policy, and community organising work.

(Cadmus Atake-Enade is the Programme Manager, Community and Culture at HOMEf)

WHAT ACCOUNTABILITY MEANS FOR THE NIGER DELTA

Joyce Brown

“ The question that requires an urgent answer is who will clean up the mess they caused? Who will answer this question?”

For almost seventy years, the Niger Delta region has suffered untold devastation from the continued exploration of oil and gas, which is often underreported. Despite the heavy reliance of the Nigerian economy on revenue from this region, Niger Delta communities and peoples have little to show for it besides polluted air, rivers and farmlands, dying mangroves, abandoned pipelines and wellheads, and a stark struggle for survival. Now, as you may already know, the multinational oil companies are divesting and moving further offshore. The question that requires an urgent answer is who will clean up the mess they caused? Who will answer this question?

The Niger Delta is known as one of the most polluted regions in the world. In 2024 alone, Nigeria recorded at least 589 oil spills, releasing about 19,000 barrels of crude into the environment, devastating rivers, forests and livelihoods across the

region.

For so long, communities and civil society groups have called for cessation of oil exploration, decommissioning of used oil wells and reparation and for so long these calls have been ignored or, at best, met with window dressing efforts. When we speak of environmental pollution, many tend to overlook the impact on the people.

We do not easily think about the people whose farmlands are degraded and cannot produce crops, or the fisherfolk who return home with empty nets, or the people, including children, bathing and drinking contaminated water because that is the only source of water available to them.

These people do not have the luxury of treated boreholes. Studies have linked oil spills in the Niger Delta to severe health complications, including respiratory illnesses, skin diseases, higher infant mortality rates, infertility, birth defects and more. Studies have found that babies

born to women living near oil spill sites face significantly higher risks of neonatal death.

At the 2024 Niger Delta Alternatives Convergence (NDAC) organised by Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF) and her partners, King Bubaraye Dakolo, Ibenanaowei of Ekpemama Kingdom in Bayelsa State, describing the region as one of the most polluted places in the universe, spoke of how the nearly 7 decades of extraction have changed the very fabric of community life and made earning a living increasingly difficult for the people of the Niger Delta. This speaks

Area of Rivers State. This spill was reported to be the second major failure of this pipeline within two months, following a previous leakage in March 2025. HOMEF and other groups called attention to the dangers of ageing infrastructure and demanded proper decommissioning rather than the expansion of fossil fuel operations. But, as ever, these calls fell on deaf ears.

Ogoniland continues to suffer from decades of oil spills from abandoned infrastructure, including more recent incidents in Kpean (August 2025) and an older incident in Eteo-Elleme (June



to a painful loss of identity and dignity. Yet, instead of a concerted effort for full remediation and justice, many communities are now helplessly watching as the oil companies exit operations onshore without accounting for decades of environmental damage and social oppression they meted out to the communities.

These companies are abandoning oil infrastructure, some of which are still sources of pollution in many communities. In May 2025, a major oil spill occurred along the Trans Niger Pipeline in B-Dere community in Gokana Local Government

2023), which have destroyed farmlands, contaminated water, and displaced residents, according to a HOMEF report titled Endless Oil Spills. Accountability in Ogoni means that plans for the resumption of oil exploration in the land while the people are still neck deep in pollution must be halted and uprooted.

The call for decommissioning is expedient given the frequency and impact of pollution and the hurried divestment moves by the polluting companies. Accountability in this era means compelling the national and international oil companies to completely and safely





shut down and decommission old oil infrastructure, clean up polluted sites, restore degraded ecosystems and put measures in place to ensure that communities are protected from future harm. Accountability means that the people are duly compensated for their lost livelihoods, that binding obligations on the polluters are enforced, that the era of extractivism without responsibility is brought to an end. This is the least they should do given the years of exploitation of the environment and the people who depend on it for survival.

It is for this course that the Niger Delta Alternatives Convergence (NDAC) was created — to build and echo collective voices and people-centred alternatives for the region. Since 2022, the Convergence has brought together activists, traditional and religious leaders, scholars, youth groups, women's groups and civil society organisations to discuss pathways towards socio-ecological justice in the Niger Delta.

The NDAC leverages the power of a unified and unrelenting voice for socio-ecological justice. It amplifies

communities' demands for accountability, highlights alternatives for development and insists on a Niger Delta where people live in dignity and in harmony with Mother Earth. The 2026 edition celebrates and spotlights the examples of communities in Ogoni in Nigeria and Yasuni in Ecuador that have successfully resisted fossil fuel exploitation for decades.

The 4th edition of the NDAC was successfully held in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State on 14th May 2026. The event was livestreamed on the YouTube page of Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF).

The Convergence brought together voices calling for accountability and justice for vulnerable communities of the Niger Delta and other impacted regions. Participants joined in solidarity, adding their voices to the movement for environmental justice and accountability.

(Joyce Brown is the Director of Programmes, Health of Mother Earth Foundation)

TOWARD DECOMMISSIONING AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE NIGER DELTA

The 5th Niger Delta Alternative Convergence (NDAC)

By HOMEF TEAM

The Fifth Niger Delta Alternative Convergence (NDAC), convened in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, on 14th May 2026, brought together environmental justice advocates, community leaders, traditional institutions, legal practitioners, academics, women leaders, youth organisers, and grassroots movements to confront the worsening ecological crisis in the Niger Delta. The convergence served as a platform for deep reflection on decommissioning abandoned oil infrastructure, environmental accountability, remediation, and the future of communities devastated by decades of extractive activities.

The gathering opened with reflections on the enduring paradox of the Niger Delta, a region enormously rich in natural resources yet deeply impoverished by pollution, environmental destruction, abandonment, and political neglect. Participants emphasised that the crisis in the region can no longer be viewed only as an environmental issue, but as a profound question of justice, governance, survival, and inter-generational responsibility. Discussions at the Convergence high-

lighted how oil extraction has left behind polluted lands, abandoned oil wells, leaking pipelines, gas flares, and degraded ecosystems across the region. Participants stressed that many oil facilities now function as ecological time bombs, threatening human health, livelihoods, biodiversity, and the future of entire communities.

Drawing from major environmental reports including the Niger Delta Environmental Survey (NDES), the UNEP Environmental Assessment of Ogoniland, the Bayelsa State Oil Environmental Commission (BSOEC) report, and the recent Health impact assessment in Otuabagi conducted by Kebetkache Women Development Centre, speakers noted that the ecological damage in the Niger Delta has reached catastrophic proportions.

The reports collectively document widespread contamination, ecosystem collapse, severe public health risks, loss of livelihoods, regulatory failures, and decades of corporate negligence accumulated regarding oil extraction.

Participants argued that abandoned oil infrastructure and polluted sites should



NIGER DELTA

ALTERNATIVES CONVERGENCE

Ensuring the environment and securing the dignity of a people





be treated as crime scenes due to their long-term environmental and social consequences. Calls were made for urgent environmental audits, comprehensive decommissioning programme, replacement of ageing pipelines, ecological restoration, and stronger accountability mechanisms involving both oil companies and state institutions.

The Convergence also reflected on the continuing environmental emergencies across impacted communities, including persistent oil well fires, gas eruptions, oil spills, coastal erosion, and contamination of water bodies. Participants described these disasters as visible reminders of systemic neglect and regulatory failure. Communities continue to endure worsening health conditions, destroyed livelihoods, displacement, and deepening poverty while remediation efforts remain inadequate or absent.

Conversations returned to the question of environmental genocide and the reality that many Niger Delta communities have effectively become sacrifice zones for fossil fuel extraction. Participants criticised the continued expansion of oil extraction

activities despite unresolved pollution, abandoned infrastructure, and decades of ecological devastation.

The issue of oil asset divestment also received significant attention. Participants raised concerns about multinational oil companies transferring polluted assets to local operators without adequate cleanup, remediation, or accountability mechanisms. This was described as a dangerous transfer of environmental liabilities that risks deepening ecological destruction and weakening oversight.

A major focus of the Convergence was decommissioning. Participants emphasised that decommissioning must go beyond simply abandoning facilities underground or underwater. Proper decommissioning, they argued, requires dismantling obsolete infrastructure, conducting environmental remediation, restoring damaged ecosystems, compensating affected communities, and ensuring long-term environmental safety.

There were repeated calls for transparent implementation of existing legal frameworks, especially provisions relating to

remediation, host community rights, environmental accountability, and restoration obligations. Participants stressed that affected communities must play central roles in all environmental decision-making processes and programmes affecting them.

Panel discussions highlighted the importance of strategic litigation, grassroots mobilisation, documentation, and community participation in advancing environmental justice. Contributors argued that legal processes must remain accessible to local communities and grounded in local realities, languages, and experiences. Participants also stressed the need to include women, youths, and marginalised groups in all stages of environmental governance and advocacy.

The Convergence further emphasised that the environmental crisis in the Niger Delta cannot be separated from broader issues such as governance failure, weak institutions, corruption, and political unaccountability. Participants argued that communities continue to bear the social, environmental, and economic costs of extraction while political and corporate actors evade responsibility.

Speakers repeatedly stressed that environmental justice requires truth-telling, and maintained that any attempts to reduce the Niger Delta crisis to technical or economic debates while ignoring the human suffering, trauma, displacement, and ecological destruction experienced daily by affected communities must be challenged. The Convergence also called for stronger solidarity networks capable of connecting struggles across communities, regions, and movements.

The event concluded with the following renewed Demands

1. That every abandoned, leaking, and undecommissioned oil well in the Niger Delta must be treated as a crime scene, given the continuing threats they pose to lives, livelihoods, ecosystems, and public health.
2. That immediate and transparent audit of all oil wells and petroleum infrastructure in the Niger Delta must be undertaken, alongside the urgent decommissioning, remediation, and ecological restoration of abandoned and unsafe



facilities in the region, with state governments leading accountability efforts and the Federal Government enforcing compliance.

3. That while we acknowledge landmark reports including the Willinks Commission, NDES, UNEP, and BSOEC reports, the Convergence insists that the future of the Niger Delta must no longer be defined by exploitation and ecological sacrifice, but by justice, restoration, environmental integrity, and development shaped by the aspirations and rights of the peoples of the region.

4. That there should be an end to reckless extractive practices and short-term economic interests that continue to undermine environmental sustainability and community livelihoods.

5. That there should be immediate identification, audit, and public disclosure of all abandoned oil and gas wells and facilities across the Niger Delta region.

6. That immediate cleanup, remediation, restoration, and reparations of polluted environments and ecosystems affected by oil extraction and abandoned facilities should be undertaken.

7. That the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) should be amended, alongside stricter enforcement of provisions relating to environmental responsibility, decommissioning obligations, and corporate accountability.

8. That a transparent and legally enforceable framework be enacted to regulate oil company divestments to ensure that liabilities are not transferred to communities or the Nigerian state.

9. That there should be increased participation of host communities, women, youth, and indigenous groups in environmental governance and decision-making processes.

10. That the federal and sub-national governments must guarantee transparency in the management of ecological funds to ensure interventions reach frontline communities and safeguarded zones.

11. That the National Assembly should review the PIA to centre community perspective on decommissioning and abandonment of oil facilities

12. That oil and gas reports of payments and management of decommissioning and abandonment funds made by all oil and gas companies be published in the annual Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative.

13. That communities and civil society should prioritise strategic litigation and avoid the pitfalls associated with weak litigation, which can set a bad precedent when a weak lawsuit is thrown out.

14. That CSOs should involve more communities in their engagement to broaden the surface area of impact

15. That the federal government should make specific details of divestment deals public, especially the liabilities inherited by domestic companies. The NDAC closed with a shared recognition that the struggle over the Niger Delta is ultimately a struggle for dignity, survival, justice, ecological recovery, and the right of communities to determine the future of their territories.



FALSE SOLUTION AND GREEN COLONIALISM



OduduAbasi Asuquo - EtiUwem School of Ecology

One of the key foci at this year's HOMEf's School of Ecology, known as EtiUwem, was false solutions to the climate crisis. At the event, which was held 18th -22nd in Benin City. The School emphasised that the global climate crisis created an urgent demand for solutions. Governments, corporations, development institutions, and international agencies now speak constantly about "green transitions," "renewable futures," "carbon neutrality," and "sustainability." Yet beneath many of these polished phrases lies a dangerous contradiction: some of the very solutions promoted as climate action are deepening inequality, dispossessing communities, and reproducing the same systems of exploitation that created the crisis in the

first place.

This contradiction formed the basis of a presentation on False Solutions and Green Colonialism, which challenged dominant climate narratives and called for a deeper interrogation of who benefits, who suffers, and who controls the so-called green transitions.

At the centre of the discussion was a simple but powerful argument: not every climate solution is truly a solution. Understanding False Solutions
False solutions are strategies that appear to address environmental problems while leaving the root causes untouched. In many cases, they merely shift harm from one place/group to another, delay meaningful action, or create new forms of



exploitation under green branding.

These approaches are often presented as technical fixes capable of solving climate change crisis without confronting the political and economic systems driving ecological destruction. They promise sustainability while preserving corporate power, extractivism, and inequality. Examples of such false solutions include carbon offset markets, REDD and REDD+ schemes, speculative geoengineering projects, greenwashing campaigns, and forms of “nature-based solutions” that commodify forests, rivers, and ecosystems. Rather than reducing fossil fuel dependence, many of these mechanisms allow polluters to continue emitting greenhouse gases while shifting environmental responsibility and its costs elsewhere.

Carbon offsets, for example, practically allow oil corporations to continue their polluting activities. Wealthy corporations or nations purchase large areas of land in the Global South to “offset” emissions produced in the Global North. While marketed as climate action, such projects often limit local communities from accessing forests, farmlands, rivers, and territories they have depended on for generations.



Similarly, large-scale technological interventions such as solar radiation management or cloud seeding are promoted as futuristic climate solutions despite uncertain ecological consequences and limited evidence of effectiveness. These techno-fixes reinforce the illusion that the climate crisis can be solved without reducing extraction, consumption, and overproduction.

Odudu argued that climate action must be judged not by slogans but by outcomes.

Five Questions Every Climate Solution Must Answer

To distinguish genuine solutions from false ones, the presentation proposed five critical questions:

1. Does the solution address the root causes of climate change?
2. Does it improve people's lives and dignity?
3. Does it shift power away from corporations towards communities?
4. Does it repair historical and ongoing injustices?
5. Does it strengthen democracy and people's control over decisions affecting them?

These questions move climate conversations beyond technical language into deeper issues of justice, ownership, accountability, and power.

A climate policy that protects corporate profits while continuing to displace communities or undermine their sources of livelihood cannot be considered a just solution. Likewise, renewable energy projects that destroy ecosystems or dispossess Indigenous peoples merely reproduce extractivism while using greener discourse to hide the damage they mete out to communities and the environment.

The Rise of Green Colonialism

One of the strongest themes emerging from the presentation was the concept of green colonialism, also described as climate colonialism or green extractivism. Green colonialism occurs when wealthy nations externalise the social and environmental costs of their green transition onto poorer regions, particularly in the Global South. Although colonial administrations may no longer directly govern territories, similar power relations continue through resource extraction, land control, and unequal economic arrangements.

The global demand for transition minerals such as



PHOTO CREDIT: PINTEREST

lithium, cobalt, copper, and nickel has intensified extraction across Africa, Latin America, and Asia. These minerals are essential for electric vehicles, batteries, solar panels, and other renewable energy technologies. Yet the communities living where these minerals are extracted often experience displacement, pollution, labour exploitation, and untold ecological devastation while receiving little economic benefit. The presentation highlighted how the Global South holds the majority of the world's transition minerals but captures only a fraction of the wealth generated from them. The so-called green transition therefore risks reproducing old colonial patterns in which raw materials are extracted from marginalised regions in the Global South to sustain the lifestyles and industries of wealthier nations of the Global North.

This process goes beyond mining. Large renewable energy projects, including industrial wind farms, solar installations, and green hydrogen developments, are increasingly occupying lands and waters used by local communities. In many cases, energy generated from these projects is exported elsewhere while host communities remain energy poor.

The discussion also introduced the concepts of land grabbing and ocean grabbing. Land grabbing refers to the acquisition of vast territories by governments, corporations, or investors at the expense of local populations. Ocean

grabbing similarly describes the dispossession of fishing communities from marine spaces and resources through privatisation, conservation enclosures, or industrial exploitation. These practices reveal how environmental protection itself can become a tool of exclusion when communities are removed from territories in the name of conservation or sustainability.

The Human Cost of the Green Transition

The presentation stressed that climate policies must not treat communities as sacrifice zones. The Global South is not an empty landscape waiting to absorb the costs resulting from the production and consumption patterns of the Global North. Across many regions, communities are

already experiencing the consequences of extraction, pollution, displacement, and environmental destruction in the name of development. The danger now is that these harms are being repackaged under green language.

The discussion criticised what was described as “CO2lonization” — a new form of carbon-driven domination where wealthy nations continue high levels of consumption while outsourcing environmental burdens to poorer populations.

This reality exposes a profound injustice within global climate politics. While countries in the Global South contribute least to historical greenhouse gas emissions, they bear disproportionate environmental and social costs from both fossil fuel extraction and many proposed climate interventions.

Building People Power for Real Solutions
Rather than accepting false solutions, the presentation called for people-centred alternatives rooted in justice, democracy, and ecological integrity.

Real climate solutions, participants argued, must emerge from organised communities rather than corporate boardrooms or distant policy institutions. Community forest governance, land restitution, biodiversity protection, ecological restoration, and democratic control over resources were presented as examples of pathways grounded in justice.

Central to this process is building people power. The presentation identified four important dimensions of movement building:

- **Narrative power:** clearly explaining what communities oppose and what alternatives they support.
- **Organized base:** strengthening alliances among women, youths, workers, farmers, fishers, faith groups, and

grassroots organisations.

- **Political power:** identifying institutions and actors capable of making decisions and holding them accountable.
- **Solidarity power:** building alliances across environmental, human rights, anti-debt, and anti-extractivist movements.

The emphasis throughout was that climate justice cannot be reduced to technical expertise alone. Communities most affected by environmental destruction must lead the conversations, shape decisions, and determine the futures of their territories.

Beyond Greenwashing

She concluded with a broader philosophical reflection on humanity’s relationship with nature. Rather than viewing forests, rivers, oceans, and ecosystems merely as economic assets or carbon sinks, participants were encouraged to recognise them as living systems with intrinsic identity, value and rights.

The climate crisis, therefore, is not simply about emissions or technologies. It is about power, inequality, memory, history, culture and the struggle over how societies choose to live with nature and with one another.

Real solutions require more than green branding or market adjustments. They demand structural transformation, ecological accountability, and the rejection of systems that sacrifice people and territories for profit.

(This is a presentation made by OduduAbasi Asuquo at EtiUwem School of Ecology. OduduAbasi Asuquo is the Project Lead, Alliances and Network at HOMEf)

DEBUNKING CLIMATE FALSE SOLUTIONS: VOICES FROM THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE SCHOOL, LOMÉ

Mfoniso Xael

The climate crisis has become one of the defining challenges of our time. Across the world, governments, corporations, and international institutions continue to propose solutions aimed at reducing global warming and addressing unrelenting environmental degradation. However, an important question continues to emerge, particularly from voices in the Global South: are these climate “solutions” genuinely addressing the roots of the crisis, or are they creating new forms of injustice? This question shaped the discussions at the 4th Environmental and Social Justice School held in Lomé, Togo, from 24th to 27th March 2026, where activists, scholars, environmental defenders, and movement builders from across Africa gathered to

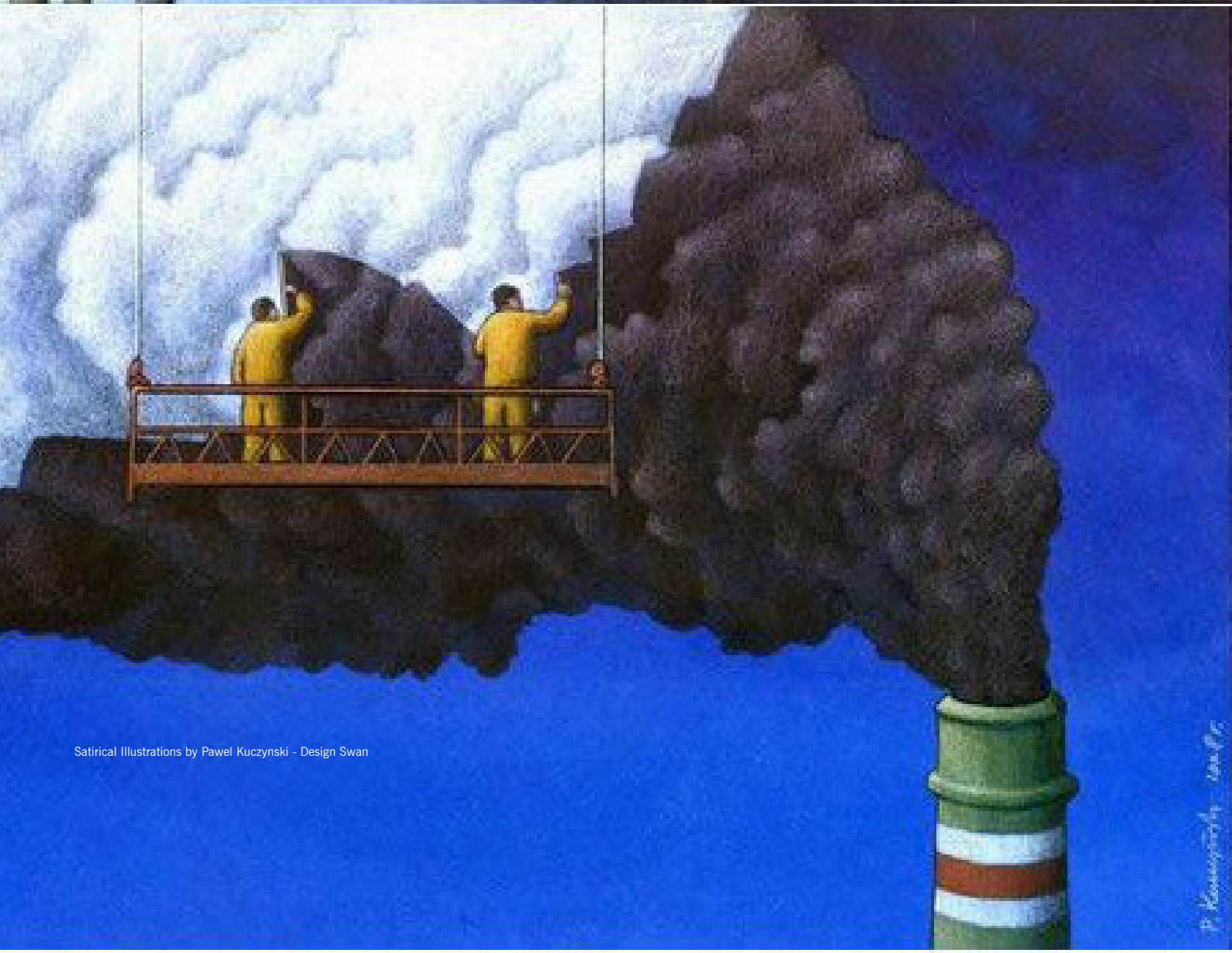
critically examine the politics behind contemporary climate interventions. The participants who came from Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, and the Democratic Republic of Congo came together not only to challenge dominant narratives around climate action, but also to imagine alternatives rooted in justice, equity, and people-centred approaches to development.

The significance of the gathering cannot be overstated. Africa remains one of the regions most vulnerable to climate change despite contributing the least to global carbon emissions. Across the continent, communities continue to experience devastating floods, droughts, food insecurity, displacement, biodiversity loss, and ecological destruction. Yet many of the





P. Kuczynski - 2012



Satirical Illustrations by Pawel Kuczynski - Design Swan

P. Kuczynski - 2012

climate policies currently promoted on the global stage and implemented vigorously across the continent fail to prioritise the interests and wellbeing of affected communities. Instead, they reproduce the same systems of exploitation that gave birth to the crisis in the first place.

One of the central themes of the School was the concept of climate colonialism. Participants argued that most proposed climate interventions, including geoengineering, carbon markets, and large-scale extractive projects for green technologies, are deeply embedded in unequal global power relations. Under the guise of sustainability, Africa is increasingly being positioned as a testing ground for these risky technologies and false solutions, a supplier of raw materials, and a sacrifice zone for the environmental ambitions of wealthier nations.

The first day of the School focused on geoengineering, particularly Solar Radiation Modification (SRM). The SRM session was presented by Dr Mfoniso Xael who defined it as the technological attempts to reflect sunlight away from the Earth in order to artificially reduce global temperatures. While proponents of SRM present the technology as an innovative response to climate change, discussions at the School revealed deep concerns about its environmental, political, and ethical implications.

Participants emphasised that geoengineering does not address the root causes of climate change, which lie in excessive greenhouse gas emissions and unsustainable systems of production and consumption. Instead, SRM attempts to manage the symptoms of the crisis while allowing polluting industries and countries to continue business as usual. More importantly, participants questioned who would control such technologies and who

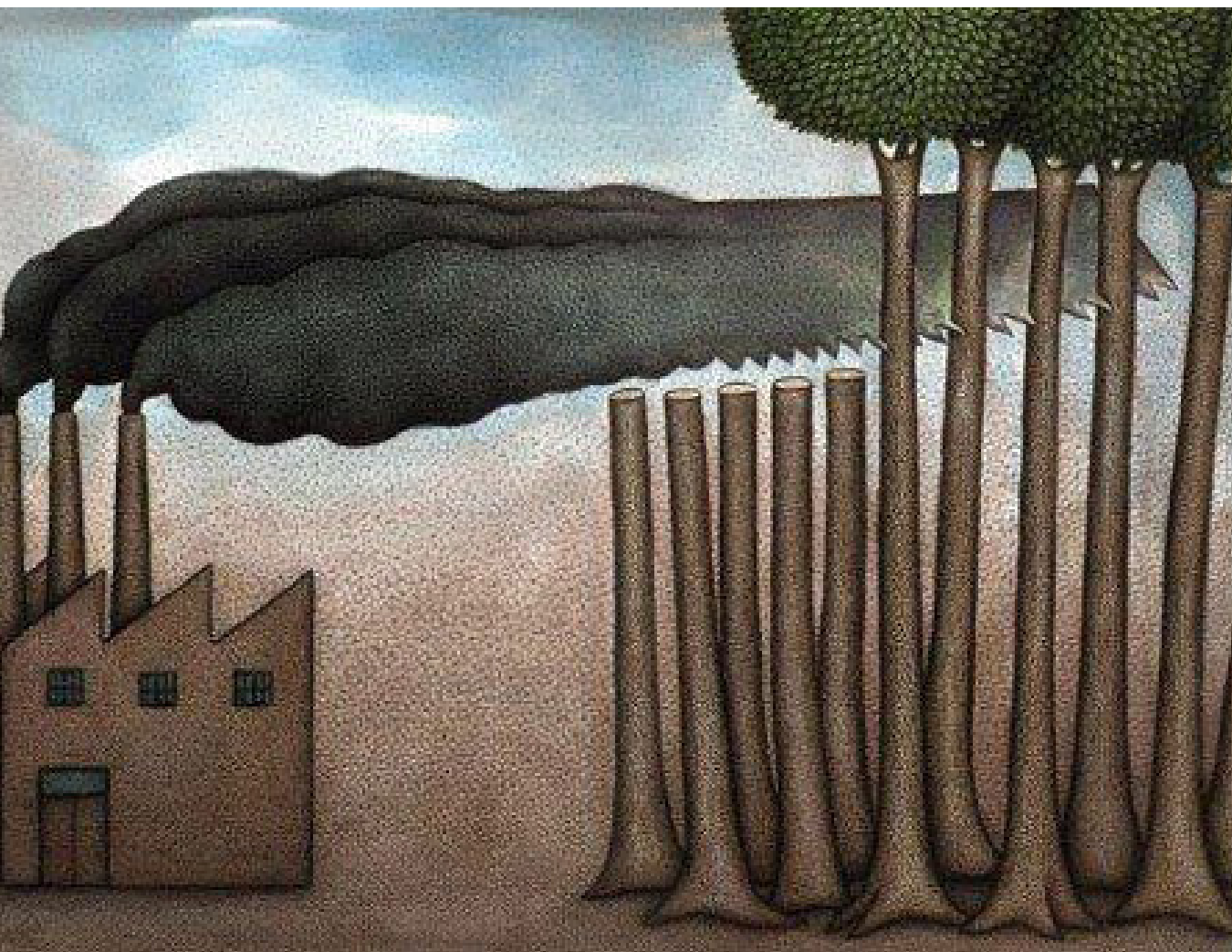
would bear the consequences in the event of failure or unintended harm. Concerns were raised that SRM could disrupt rainfall patterns across Africa, weaken monsoons, threaten food systems, and create the danger of “termination shock,” where temperatures rise drastically if geoengineering interventions are suddenly halted. The discussions also highlighted how geoengineering reinforces global inequalities by enabling powerful countries to manipulate climate systems while vulnerable regions absorb the risks.

For this reason, many African ecological movements are now advocating for a Non-Use Agreement on Solar Geoengineering. The conversations at the School also exposed the contradictions within the global green transition agenda. While the world increasingly promotes electric vehicles, renewable energy technologies, and low-carbon development, these transitions depend heavily on minerals such as cobalt, lithium, nickel, and copper—resources largely found in Africa and other parts of the Global South.

Participants argued that this new “green economy” risks reproducing old colonial patterns of extraction. African countries continue to export raw materials while wealthier nations retain control over technology, manufacturing, and profits. Communities living in extraction zones in the Global South often face pollution, displacement, labour exploitation, and ecological destruction, even as their resources power global climate solutions.

The Democratic Republic of Congo was repeatedly referenced as an example of this contradiction. Despite supplying a significant portion of the world’s cobalt, many mining communities in the country continue to experience poverty, dangerous working conditions, and environmental degradation. This reality raises a critical question: can a transition built on exploitation truly be considered just? The second day of the School focused





on carbon markets, REDD+, and the financialization of nature. Participants described these mechanisms as false solutions because they transform forests, oceans, and ecosystems into commodities to be traded for profit. Rather than forcing polluters to reduce emissions, carbon markets often allow them to continue polluting while purchasing offsets elsewhere.

This system, participants argued, creates the illusion of climate action while displacing communities from forests and land in the name of conservation. Forests become valued primarily as carbon sinks rather than as living ecosystems connected to people's livelihoods, cultures, and histories.

The result is often land grabbing, restricted access to resources, and increased inequality.

Discussions on ocean justice further demonstrated how environmental exploitation continues under climate branding. Offshore oil exploration, pollution, and extractive activities threaten marine ecosystems and the livelihoods of coastal communities across Africa. As a result, participants stressed the need to protect fisherfolk, defend ocean rights, and resist the commodification of marine environments.

One of the most instructive moments of the school came during a session led by renowned environmental activist Dr Nnimmo Bassey. His intervention grounded the entire gathering in a broader

understanding of environmental justice as a struggle for liberation and collective wellbeing. He emphasised that humanity is not separate from nature and that environmental protection cannot simply be reduced to technical fixes or market solutions.

Environmental justice, he argued, must involve restoration, reparations, and freedom from exploitative systems. He opined that climate justice is inseparable from economic justice, gender justice, indigenous rights, and democratic participation. Participants were encouraged to challenge dominant narratives, recover indigenous knowledge systems, and build movements rooted in solidarity and people's power.

The final day of the School shifted towards alternatives and practical pathways forward. Rather than relying on top-down interventions controlled by corporations, governments and international institutions, participants highlighted the importance of community-centred, bottom-up solutions. Agroecology and food sovereignty emerged as key themes, emphasising local control of food systems, sustainable farming practices, and resistance to industrial agriculture as the real solutions to the climate crisis.

The concept of a just transition was also central to discussions at the School. Participants argued that moving away from fossil fuels must not reproduce inequality or deepen social suffering. A just transition must prioritise workers, communities, and vulnerable populations while democratizing energy systems and ensuring equitable access to resources. Movement building across Africa was identified as essential for achieving meaningful change.

Participants stressed the need for stronger alliances between grassroots organisations, activists, scholars, and affected communities. They also

emphasised the importance of influencing global climate spaces and ensuring that African voices shape international environmental debates.

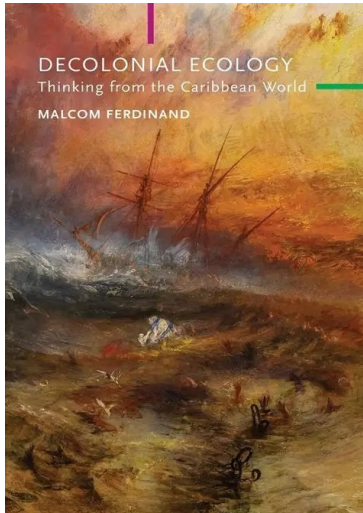
Ultimately, the Environmental and Social Justice School in Lomé served as both a critique and a call to action. It challenged the assumption that the climate solutions proposed by corporations, governments and international institutions are inherently beneficial and exposed how many current approaches continue to reinforce systems of exploitation and inequality. At the same time, it offered hope by highlighting the power of collective resistance, community organising, and people-centred alternatives.

The central message that emerged from the gathering was clear: real climate solutions must go beyond reducing emissions. They must confront the structures of power driving ecological destruction, protect communities, restore ecosystems, and prioritise justice over profit.

As the climate crisis intensifies, Africa is no longer simply being spoken about as a victim of environmental change. Through spaces like the Environmental and Social Justice School, African movements are increasingly asserting themselves as powerful, indispensable voices shaping the future of climate justice and ecological transformation.

(Mfoniso Xael is the Programmes Manager and Project Lead for Ikike, HOMEf's learning space)

Books You Should Read



Decolonial Ecology (Thinking from the Caribbean World)
by Malcom Ferdinand

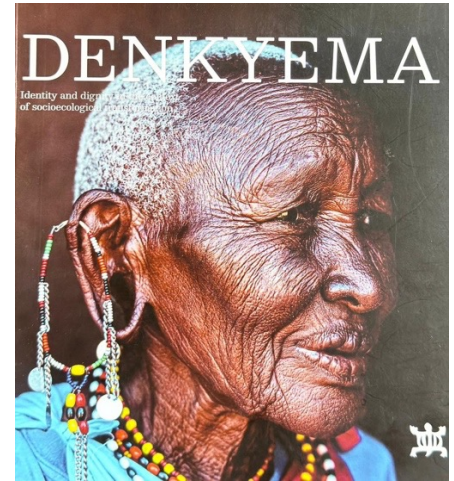
In this important new book, Malcom Ferdinand challenges this double fracture, thinking from the Caribbean world. Here, the slave ship reveals the inequalities that continue during the storm: Drawing on empirical and theoretical work in the Caribbean, Ferdinand conceptualizes a decolonial ecology that holds protecting the environment together with the political struggles against (post)colonial domination, structural racism, and misogynistic practices.

This book is an invitation to build a world-ship where humans and non-humans can live together on a bridge of justice and shape a common world.



Protest: Respect It Defend It Use It
by Annie Leonard and Andre Carothers
Afterword by Robert Reich

The book "Protest: Respect It Defend It Use It" by Annie Leonard and André Carothers is a powerful exploration of the role of peaceful activism in advancing the public good. It serves as a celebration of collective action and a reminder of the democratic right to protest. The book includes over 40 iconic campaigns from around the world, featuring guest essays from notable activists like Jane Fonda, Robert Reich, and Dolores Huerta. It emphasizes the importance of free speech, dissent, and public mobilization in advancing various causes, including environmental protection, workers' rights, human rights, self-determination, and climate, social, and racial justice. The book is dedicated to everyone who shares the vision of an inclusive multiracial democracy and works to move it forward.



Denkyema: Identity and dignity in the context of socioecological transformation
by Roland Nkwain Ngam (ed)

A dedicated photo collection and research initiative designed to showcase indigenous African knowledge systems. The title is named after Denkyem (the crocodile), an Adinkra symbol from Ghana that signifies adaptability and resilience. The crocodile breathes air but lives under water, representing a capacity to adapt to diverse environments. The project explores how local communities across the African continent maintain traditional ways of living that protect the environment. It acts as a visual and academic defense of "nowtopias" African post-growth alternatives to standard Western capitalism.

CHALLENGING

POWER: STRATEGIES FOR CONFRONTING EXTRACTIVISM AND CLIMATE COLONIALISM

Presentation by Inibehe Effiong at EtiUwem School of Ecology

“Activism is a Wilderness; you have to be willing to walk through it”

At the EtiUwem School of Ecology held May 18th-22nd, the human rights lawyer and activist, Inibehe Effiong, reflected deeply on the realities of activism, environmental justice, and confronting power in African societies, particularly within the context of climate and environmental advocacy. He emphasised that challenging entrenched systems is neither fashionable nor easy. He stressed that speaking truth to power requires deliberate personal conviction and readiness to face the consequences that come with it. According to him, anyone seeking to confront oppressive structures must first have an honest, introspective conversation with themselves and be mentally, emotionally, and materially prepared for resistance and sacrifice.

He argued that oppressive systems are sustained not only through force but also through ideology, social conditioning, and public silence. In many African societies, individuals are conditioned to conform, avoid confrontation, and preserve systems that perpetuate injustice. Therefore, those who choose to challenge such systems are often viewed as abnormal, rebellious, or dangerous. He stressed that activists must understand the nature of power before attempting to confront it because power protects itself aggressively, especially when economic or political interests are threatened.

The discussion also explored environmental exploitation and what the speaker described as “climate colonialism.” He explained that this

concept refers to the control and exploitation of environmental resources without regard for indigenous peoples or affected communities. In many cases, multinational corporations and political actors prioritise extraction and profit over environmental care, community rights, and ecological justice. He warned that environmental activism often places advocates in direct confrontation with powerful economic and political forces.

He also identified several essential qualities necessary for confronting power effectively. First was ideological clarity and knowledge. He maintained that activists must understand the issues they speak about and be able to articulate them convincingly. According to him, many people witness environmental destruction but cannot explain or analyse it because they lack the intellectual grounding to challenge systems effectively.

Secondly, he emphasised that courage is a non-negotiable requirement for activism. He recounted personal experiences, including being arrested by state forces on 27 July 2022, to illustrate the sacrifices associated with standing by one's convictions. He explained that courage is what transforms belief into action and allows individuals to endure intimidation, threats, and persecution without surrendering their principles. He criticised the tendency to spiritualize structural and political problems, arguing that many societal issues persist not because of a lack of prayer but because people are unwilling to confront injustice directly.

Another major point he raised was the importance of platforms and visibility. He argued that effective activism requires strategic communication and a recognisable public presence. Social media, public speaking, and professional consistency were described as important tools for building influence and sustaining advocacy. However, he cautioned against using platforms for vanity or distraction,

insisting instead that public engagement should consistently reflect one's values and ideological commitments.

Effiong further highlighted the role of self-development and capacity building. He encouraged participants to pursue education, personal growth, and professional competence, noting that activism without capacity can become ineffective. According to him, resources, reputation, and credibility matter because confronting power requires not only passion but also sustainability and resilience.

In his concluding remarks, Mr Effiong encouraged young activists not to underestimate themselves because of age, background, social status or societal expectations. He stressed that young people possess voices that matter and urged them to develop confidence, self-esteem, and consistency in their advocacy.

He reminded participants that systems of oppressive power often attempt to co-opt or intimidate outspoken individuals through rewards, threats, or social isolation. Nevertheless, he maintained that enduring social transformation depends on people who are willing to remain principled, courageous, and committed despite the risks involved.

“May an activist not need activism to survive... to carry placards, you need the strength”.

(Inibehe Effiong is a Nigerian human rights lawyer, activist, and public interest advocate and Principal Counsel at Inibehe Effiong Chambers. He is widely known for defending constitutional rights, promoting accountability and challenging abuse of power).



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..