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INSTIGATOR

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SOUNDING THE CLIMATE ALARM

DON'T GENE-FORCE THE FARM

Why Gene Drivers Have No Place
in Food Sovereignty

AGAINST ECO-COLONIALISM

Colonialism is alive and well and
shows up in unexpected ways

HANDS OFF MOTHER EARTH

Activists say 'No' to Geoengineering

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Contents

- 04 **Home Run**
- 05 **Sounding the Climate Alarm**
- 08 **Don't Gene-Force The Farm -**
Why Gene Drivers Have No Place in Food
Sovereignty
- 11 **Biosafety or Betrayal**
- 14 **Over 200 Global Food Movement Leaders and
Organizations Reject Gene Drive**
New Report exposes how a controversial genetic
forcing technology is targeting the farm
- 16 **Poetry - We can plant a seed!**
- 18 **The centrality of culture in the struggle for a
new world:** Amilcar and Ken Saro-Wiwa



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SPECIAL REPORTS

- 24 Community Dialogue on Food and Farming Systems in Nigeria
- 27 HOMEF Raises Alarm on the State of Biosafety in Nigeria
- 30 Hands off Mother Earth Campaign: Activists say 'No' to Geoengineering
- 32 Against Eco-Colonialism
- 35 National Fishworkers Forum Stands Firmly Against the Proposed Shipping Corridors in India
- 37 Restorative Justice: A Suitable Response to Environmental Crime (Part II)
- 41 Let the Campaigns Continue!
- 45 India combating Climate Change: Kerala's Flood push to educate people about Green Social Responsibility
- 48 UN Human Rights Council adopts the Declaration on Peasants' Rights and Other Rural Workers
- 50 **Upcoming Events**
- 51 **Books You Should Read**

Home Run



NNIMMO BASSEY,
Director, Health of Mother
Earth Foundation

Someone said that you
don't mop the floor
with the tap running.
We agree. Tackling
climate change requires
that we stop the very
things pumping Green
House Gases into the
atmosphere and focus
on transiting to 100%
renewable energy.

Climate change is here! The impacts are everywhere - sea level rise, flooding, droughts, hurricanes, typhoons, weather irregularities, increased atmospheric temperature and so on. Climate change directly impacts food systems and adds to the challenges of feeding burgeoning populations.

It is worrisome that at this time nations are still begging the very question of the causes and how to combat the effects of climate change.

Someone said that you don't mop the floor with the tap running. We agree. Tackling climate change requires that we stop the very things pumping Green House Gases into the atmosphere and focus on transiting to 100% renewable energy.

In this edition, we serve you articles on climate change, food issues and reports from our projects. We are happy to bring you an article- Sounding the Climate Alarm which clearly advocates for the need to stop digging up more coal, more crude oil and the need to stop fracking. The issue of climate change induced clashes between herders and farmers is also brought to perspective.

Well-meaning individuals and
Civil Society Organizations

(CSOs) have continued to advocate for the role of Agroecology to ensure food security in Nigeria and Africa at large. We share a declaration by which over 200 Global leaders and organizations reject gene drive, stating that the technology may drive species to extinction and undermine sustainable and equitable food and agriculture. We are also happy to serve you a peep into our farmers' dialogue which focused on Food and Farming Systems in Nigeria and defined the pathway to Food Sovereignty.

There are must-read articles written by Firoze Manji, Femke Wijdekop, Sonali Narang, Bobby Peek and Mariann Bassey-Orovwuje in this edition. They are loaded!

In our poetry section, we give you a poem written by yours truly at a conference of the African Food Sovereignty Alliance which took place at Saly, Senegal in November 2018.

As usual, we suggest a couple of books that you should read to keep you primed for the struggle for ecological justice and the rights of Mother Earth.

Until Victory!

Sounding the Climate Alarm



BY NNIMMO BASSEY

and abated in the past, what has happened since the industrial revolution is a vertical climb that shows no sign of reversion. It is also generally agreed that the catastrophic rise is largely systemic - caused by the exploitative economic system that the world is locked on. It is this rigged system that blocks the routes to the needed climate action.

Is it not known that the problem is about the continual burning of fossil fuels that stokes the atmosphere with greenhouse gases? Why is the world reluctant to stop the extraction and burning of fossil fuels even though these are known to be detrimental? The answer is simply that the powers-that-be prefer profit to people and the planet. So, business as usual continues and disaster brings even more profit through displacement of poor people and the grabbing of resources that the poor and the vulnerable are unable to access or return to.

The world will cringe at the dire prognosis of the report, and then go right ahead to dig up more

The Climate alarm could not have been much louder than the special report (SR1.5) that has just been released by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). While the Paris Agreement presented the famous target of limiting global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius, or well below 2.0 degrees, the special report shows that such a range may actually be political wishful thinking.

The Special Report clearly shows that a temperature rise of 1.5 degrees above preindustrial levels will bring about severe changes compared to current extreme weather events.

Professing a diagnosis is easier than providing a solution, especially when you do not wish to ruffle feathers. Most scientists and laymen agree that although global warming has risen

coal, more crude oil and proceed with more fracking. Governments will still dig for coal and destroy forests in the process, despite loud alarms raised by forest protectors such as the ones at the Hambach Forest in Germany. In Nigeria, the flaring of associated gas will continue and the dream of a superhighway through the last pristine forest will persist in Cross River State.

Happily, the appeal court at The Hague sided with Urgenda in the case against the Dutch government and declared that the government has a duty to take adequate climate action as a means of protecting the citizens from climate impacts and for securing the human rights. Interestingly the court also discounted the Dutch government's argument that the carbon being pumped into the atmosphere today will be sucked out in future. We note that SR15 also acknowledges that the carbon-sucking technologies being bandied about are unproven.

Catastrophe is inevitable if we don't wake up from slumber and face reality. Life style changes and alternative investment patterns can no longer be delayed. Investment in socialized forms of renewable energy cannot be postponed.



The IPCC report diagnosed the problem and raised the alarm urging politicians and economic leaders to act. However, some of the suggested actions are equally alarming and will likely add more problems for the poor, the unprotected and the vulnerable in the unfolding climate chaos.

We are told that the window for halting the chaotic climate march is a narrow twelve years. It is stated that by 2030, the global emissions of carbon dioxide must be cut by 45 percent from the levels in 2010. It is also estimated that by 2050 renewables should be able to provide 85 percent of global electricity.

So, what is to be done? When the IPCC says that action must be taken to ensure that the store of carbon in the atmosphere is brought to net zero, what is meant is that the amount of carbon released from excessive consumption and burning of fossil fuels and the like must be equal to the amount of carbon that is

captured and stored somewhere, locked in sinks or deflected by some other means. These proposed actions, the hallmark of market environmentalism, are the real alarm bells that we should wake up to.

We cannot forget that about 7 million square kilometres will be needed for so-called energy crops. That sounds nice, no? The more understandable names for those crops are biofuel and agro-fuel crops. These are crops grown to feed machines or to provide biomass for some synthetic processes. An uptake of that massive size of land away from food crops will definitely bring profit to industrial farmers; promote genetically engineered crops and attendant agrotoxics while raising global hunger and diverse social malaise. Also, more forests will be designated as carbon sinks with corresponding exclusion of communities from enjoying and managing their common heritage.

It is estimated that up to \$2.4 trillion would be needed to invest in energy systems in the next two decades to limit global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius. This is at a time that the world cannot raise \$10 billion for Climate Finance.

Polluting and capturing and locking up pollutants in some carbon prisons, is not a new idea. It is a brilliant marketing spin. It allows business as usual, permits climate irresponsibility and delivers heavy cash to the polluters. For example, oil companies that use associated gas to literally scrape the bottom of oil wells will claim they are engaged in carbon capture and sequestration - even though they release the carbon in the first instance by drilling for oil. Companies engaged in geo-engineering will don their beautiful badges as climate engineers and work to deploy an array of climate-interfering planetary experiments - including cloud whitening, solar mirrors in the sky, other forms of solar radiation management as well as ocean fertilization. Yes, with net zero carbon targets we can keep cranking up global temperatures but hope that “we have the technologies” to handle the problems. Humanity’s techno optimism gives policy makers that assurance and also that the oceans and genetically engineered trees can suck carbon from the atmosphere. It assures them that we can ape volcanoes and release particles into the sky that would block the sun and cool the earth. Suddenly it is as though

our planetary systems are not interconnected and one part can be tweaked without a corresponding result elsewhere. But, who would really care if the negative impacts can be deflected on those destined for the slaughter?

Catastrophe is inevitable if we don’t wake up from slumber and face reality. Life style changes and alternative investment patterns can no longer be delayed. Investment in socialized forms of renewable energy cannot be postponed. Fossil fuels must be seen as stranded or bad assets and left in the ground. Agroecological food production cools the planet, so investment and support must be extended to that and to small scale producers.

The cost of inaction or bad action is extreme. Temperature increases will make it impossible for certain crops, including maize, rice and wheat to be cultivated. Millions more will be hit by flooding. Sea level will rise and coastal erosion will be more dramatic. With the suite of negative changes, the tide of climate refugees will rise.

The voluntary, nationally determined contribution of the Paris Agreement is clearly not the solution. It is time for nations to step up and accept legally binding emissions reduction based on historical and current carbon emissions. The alarm has been sounded. It is no more time to sleep.



Don't Gene -Force The Farm

Why Gene Drives Have No Place In Food Sovereignty

**BY: MARIANN
BASSEY-OROVUJE,**
Chair, Alliance for Food Sovereignty
in Africa (AFSA)



First, agribusiness came to take our land and our food systems with synthetic pesticides, fertilizers, proprietary seeds and GMOs. Now industrial agriculture's hired helpers are fashioning a new tool for their use – a deliberately invasive technology known as 'gene drives'. On World Food Day, October 2018, the network of over 30 African farmers organisations, operating in 52 out of the 54 countries in Africa, the African Food Sovereignty Alliance, joined with hundreds of leading voi-

ces representing millions in the global food movement to say a firm NO to the use of gene drives. We have called on the United Nations and other bodies to enact a global moratorium on any release of engineered gene drives – particularly in food and agriculture, since they represent a new and serious threat to our lands, biodiversity, human rights and food supply.

Gene drives have been described as 'genetic forcers' – in that they force genetically en-

Gene drives threaten natural systems. If released into the environment, including for experimental purposes, they may spread engineered genes uncontrollably through wild and domesticated species.

This concept of a gene-driven farm is an unwelcome extension of the industrial approach to agriculture. This failed model is increasingly being rejected around the world in favour of an agroecological model, which often uses the principles of autonomy developed by peasant farmers around the world, ones that we call “food sovereignty”.

gineered traits through entire populations of insects, other animals, plants and fungi. Gene drives take what genetic engineers previously dismissed as an unlikely if not frightening, scenario for genetically modified organisms - the uncontrolled spread of engineered genes harmful to nature - and turns it into a deliberate strategy. In the laboratory, functioning gene drives have already been created in which “engineered selfish genes” spread themselves automatically in two species of insects. These elements are designed to spread their artificially-created genetic changes across whole populations. Normally, offspring of sexually reproducing organisms have a 50% chance of inheriting a gene from either parent. If it works, the invasive nature of gene drives will make it almost 100% certain that, within a few generations, all of an organism’s offspring carry the engineered gene.

Gene drives threaten natural systems. If released into the environment, including for experimental

purposes, they may spread engineered genes uncontrollably through wild and domesticated species. This could alter food webs, eradicate beneficial organisms such as pollinators and disrupt the ecosystem. Gene drives could disrupt land, water, food and fibre economies and indigenous agroecological practices and cultures. The researchers behind gene drives have only just begun to ask what would happen if the genes are not as well behaved as their theoretical models have assumed. What if genes for female sterility, for instance, become transferred to species that pollinate our crops or are a food source for birds, reptiles, even humans? What if genes that were beneficial became disabled, or if genetic disruption caused outbreaks of new diseases?

Gene drive developers have spent millions of public relations dollars trying to sell the idea as a techno-fix to achieve ambitious health and conservation goals of the sort set out in the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals

– particularly that of malaria. In my part of the world, West Africa, UK scientists with over a hundred million US dollars from Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation are aggressively pursuing a plan to release gene drive mosquitoes under the banner of ‘Target Malaria’. Indeed, they are on the brink of releasing a quantity of bioengineered mosquitoes as a test run and would later release them in full force if they succeed at the test run. We feel we are being used as lab rats and will be subject to an as-yet unproven experiment in human disease control that could among other threats devastate the ability of African farming families to feed themselves and their communities. Malnutrition can be a strong contributory factor in deaths from malaria. Feeling that their control over their own health and ecosystem is under threat, farmers using agroecology in Africa, such as La Coalition pour la Protection du Patrimoine Génétique Africain (COPAGEN) and Terre À Vie, along with other member groups of AFSA, are among those leading the campaign against the field experiments with GM mosquitoes.

It is now clear that mosquitos and malaria are not the end game, just the first step in a Public relations war. A new report, “Forcing the Farm”, written by investigators at ETC Group and Heinrich Boell Foundation – reveals that gene drives are likely to make their biggest impact on agriculture itself. Behind the hype, leaders in the gene drive field have quietly stated that, of all the sectors in which it is used, agri-business will make the most use of gene drive organisms. The economics of the patents and initial research investments show that this technology is set to switch how corporations usually

control the farm. Where once the biotechnology industry sought to alter the crops that farmers bring to harvest, now with gene drives, they may seek instead to genetically change all the other parts of the agricultural ecosystem-- the pollinators, the weeds and the pests.

Some researchers have claimed that the invasive nature of the resulting gene drive organisms (GDOs), which enables engineered genes to eliminate a species in a few generations, could help control agricultural pests, reduce the need for pesticides and speed up plant breeding programmes. Some of their proponents even claim that GDOs could be compatible with agroecological approaches, such as organic farming. Seeing gene drives as a possible magic bullet for on-

farm challenges, Agragene Inc., the world's first agricultural gene drive company, has now been joined by a clutch of crop commodity groups such as the California Cherry Board and the US Citrus Research Board as well as livestock breeders. Meanwhile, major agribusinesses such as Monsanto-Bayer, Syngenta-ChemChina, DowDuPont (now Corteva Agriscience) and Cibus lurk in the shadows of gene drive policy discussions, advised by scientists and PR advisers to keep a low profile, at least for now.

This concept of a gene-driven farm is an unwelcome extension of the industrial approach to agriculture. This failed model is increasingly being rejected around the world in favour of an agroecological model, which

often uses the principles of autonomy developed by peasant farmers around the world, ones that we call "food sovereignty". This approach, recognised by the UN Human Rights Council, emphasises the need for farmers to share their existing knowledge and seeds with each other.

In November 2018, 196 governments will meet in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt for the Fourteenth Meeting of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. Language is already on the table for government to put a brake on gene drive technologies and ensure full consultation of farmers and local and indigenous peoples. We hope governments will commit themselves to the task of protecting our food supply, farmers' rights and life on earth.



**WELCOME WORDS
BY NNIMMO BASSEY,**

at a Round Table
with Lawyers on
Promoting Biosafety
in Nigeria – held on 26
September 2018 in Abuja,
Nigeria

Biosafety or Betrayal?

Applications for the introduction of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) into Nigeria started flowing literally before the ink with which the bill was signed into law had dried. Promoters of modern agricultural technology, notably the agency set up for that purpose before the law was dreamt up were ecstatic. In less than a year, the controversial biotech and chemical company, Monsanto, had collected the first three GMO permits to ever be issued in the country. This was very significant, not because of the recipient but because they were applying to introduce a crop that had just failed spectacularly in Burkina Faso - the Bt cotton that had nearly ruined cotton growers in that country. The Nigerian regulatory agency,

National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA) apparently believes that Monsanto was too big to fail and that they would do better in Nigeria. The bad news for them is that just as they were not too big to be swallowed up by Bayer, the German chemical company, they are not strangers to failure.

Farmers trust government to support their efforts to feed the nation. This implicit trust was built in the days before the so-called structural adjustment programme imposed on the nation by international financial institutions decimated the ranks of extension officers and other support mechanisms. The trust was also built by public research institutes providing sound agricultural

advice, seeds and roots to farmers. Government and farmers were partners in progress. Today the faith of farmers that government would always extend the best support to them is being betrayed in obnoxious ways.

The betrayal happens because farmers are being sold the idea that genetically modified crops provide the best options to ensure high yield, enrich the farmers and abolish hunger from the land. Farmers are equally not warned of the harmful impacts of agrotoxics that they must apply as they grow the genetically modified crops. Superficial roadshows advertising GMOs are falsely construed to be consultations with the public. Glossy brochures, television and radio pro-



The argument that Africa needs GMOs in order to feed her population is nothing but a commercial narrative that on scrutiny holds no water. For more than two decades that GMOs have been around, they have not halted the upward rise of hunger in the world.

grammes with tilted and dubious information have become the order of the day. Equally, they use local and foreign movies to add to their arsenal of falsehood.

The rapid evolution of the subversion of our food system is accelerated by the opening of the gates for an influx of genetically modified grains – like maize- thus constricting the market space for local farmers. We believe that it is time that our people begin to look the proverbial gift horse in the mouth, no matter who is presenting the gift.

The argument that Africa needs GMOs in order to feed her population is nothing but a commercial narrative that on scrutiny holds no water. For more than

two decades that GMOs have been around, they have not halted the upward rise of hunger in the world. Indeed, the yields from GMOs do not surpass those of natural crops. Instead of reducing the use of herbicides and pesticides, GMOs have created super weeds and super bugs requiring stronger doses of the toxic chemicals.

The absence of adequate biotechnology expertise in the development and regulatory sphere makes it inescapable that the biosafety discourse is shaped to suit the preferences of the actual developers who stand to gain from the technologies. The genetically modified maize (NK603 and MON 89034 x NK603) varieties for which Monsanto got

permits were not developed in Nigeria. The Bt cotton that has been approved for placement in the market was not developed in Nigeria. The GMO cassava being field tested at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in Ibadan was developed in Switzerland. All the GM maize and soybean being approved for various purposes in the country were developed elsewhere.

In addition to being developed elsewhere, the required risk assessment before they are brought into Nigeria is a perfunctory exercise. The National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) that should safeguard the foods on our market shelves is busy playing the ostrich while the land is flooded with the products. Indeed, NAFDAC is expected to give a bill of health to any GMO product or seed before importers can apply to bring the GMOs into the country. At present it is doubtful if NAFDAC is providing such a cover for Nigerians. We say doubtful because the agency is yet to respond to an enquiry HOMEf sent to them on 1 Fe-

bruary 2018 seeking to know if they granted a clean bill of health to enable NBMA issue permits to WACOT Nigeria Ltd. to import genetically modified maize for feed processing. The murky process through which the permit was issued to the company raises red flags over the entire regulatory architecture demanding closer scrutiny. WACOT's application was based solely on the fact that certain genetically modified maize varieties had been approved for use in the European Union (EU). However, it is our position that the approval of anything in the EU does not confer automatic endorsement for entry into Nigeria. Biosafety requires case by case risk assessment in each jurisdiction that any of the artificial organisms are taken.

As legal experts, the Nigerian people need your help in fashioning out means of ensuring

that we are not ambushed into eating anything without knowledge of their makeup and safety. Our people require your help in ensuring that our food system is protected and that our biodiversity is protected. Our people will be happy to receive an understanding of the provisions of the law governing biosafety in Nigeria as well as if what exists is sufficient to protect them. We also hope that you will keep an eye on unfolding events in other jurisdictions where for example, Monsanto has been asked by a court to pay \$289m to a citizen of the USA for cancer attributed to the use of that company's weed killer, Roundup.

In all, Nigerians want to know the legality or otherwise of the roughshod march of the GMO train in our land.

Our people require your help in ensuring that our food system is protected and that our biodiversity is protected



Over 200 Global Food Movement Leaders and Organizations Reject “Gene Drives”

New Report exposes how a controversial genetic forcing technology is targeting the farm

To mark the World Food Day, over 200 global food movement leaders and organizations gathered in Rome on October 16, 2018 to openly express their opposition to gene drive – a controversial new genetic forcing technology. Their call for a stop to this technology accompanies a new report, *Forcing the Farm*, that lifts the lid on how gene drives may harm food and farming systems. These global food movement leaders and organizations represent hundreds of millions of farmers and food workers who oppose “gene drives” technologies.

Gene drives are a genetic engineering tool that aim to force artificial genetic changes through entire populations of animals, insects and plants. Unlike previous genetically modified organisms (GMOs) these gene drive organisms (GDOs) are deliberately designed to spread genetic pollution

as an agricultural strategy – for example, spreading ‘auto-extinction’ genes to wipe out agricultural pests. Agri-research bodies now developing these extinction-organisms include the California Cherry Board, the US Citrus Research Board and the private California company Agragene Inc. In November, the United Nations Biodiversity Convention will meet to discuss measures to control this technology, including a possible moratorium.

“There is no place in a good food system for these deliberately spreading organisms,” said **Mariann Bassey, chair of the African Food Sovereignty Alliance**, whose 34 member organisations are among the 200+ groups and individuals who have signed the call against gene drives. “Gene drives may drive species to extinction and undermine sustainable and equitable food and agriculture,” Bassey continued.

Those launching the call for a moratorium on gene drives in food and agriculture include all past and present UN Special Rapporteurs on the Right to Food; the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements; IUF (the International Union representing Food and Farmworkers); and La Via Campesina, the largest network of peasant movements representing 200 million peasants in 81 countries. Signatories also include well-known commentators on food matters including seed activist Vandana Shiva, World Food Prize winner Dr Hans Herren, International President of Friends of the Earth International, Karin Nansen, Activist cum Food entrepreneur Nell Newman, and environmentalist and geneticist, David Suzuki.

“Applying gene drives to food systems threatens to harm farmers’ rights and the rights of peasants as enshrined in international treaties,” explains **Dr Olivier De Schutter**, who served as the UN Rapporteur on the Right to Food from 2008-2014. “Gene drives would undermine the realization of human rights including the right to healthy, ecologically-produced and culturally appropriate food and nutrition.”

“La Via Campesina is firmly positioned against the gene drive technology. It is a threat to peasant economies, to people, countries and even the world’s food sovereignty – a technique which threatens life, biodiversity and social systems,” said **Genevieve LaLumiere, a Canadian young farmer of La Via Campesina**. “This uncontrolled technology is dangerous and can contaminate our seeds, our animals and our soil; destabilize our ecosystems; and destroy our fundamental resources.” **Marciano Da Silva from Brasil Peasant Organisa-**

tion (also of La Via Campesina) continued, “gene drive technology is, fundamentally, a tool for patentability of native traits of our peasant seeds.”

The Forcing the Farm report, researched and produced by ETC Group and the Heinrich Böll Foundation, details several ways in which gene drive technology is being readied for application in agriculture (see box). The report exposes how gene drive developers are deliberately keeping from view agricultural applications while trying to focus public interest on high profile health and conservation projects. Reports from closed meetings with a US defence committee show that agribusiness firms such as Monsanto-Bayer and Cibus Bioscience appear to be engaging with gene drive development.

“Applying gene drives to food and agriculture turns biotech in-

dustry strategies on their head,” explains **Jim Thomas, Co-Executive Director of ETC Group**. “Previously, GMO companies engineered the food crops. Now that consumers won’t buy GMO food, companies are coming to engineer the rest of the agricultural system instead – the weeds, the pests and the pollinators.”

“If spreading gene drives were to be released, they could pose an existential threat to organic, non-GMO and agroecological agriculture,” explains Peggy Miers, International Chair of IFOAM – Organics International, the umbrella organization for organic agriculture worldwide with close to 800 affiliates in 117 countries. “Any government who cares about protecting organic agriculture and the organic food market should move quickly to contain this threat.”

GENE DRIVES AND AGRICULTURE: Six examples drawn from Forcing the Farm

- Gene drives are being engineered into flies, insects, worms and other pests to spread sterility as a biological alternative to pesticides.
- Researchers are proposing using gene drives as a breeding tool to increase meat production in livestock.
- “Auto-extinction” gene drives are being engineered into rats and mice as well as beetles that affect storage of grains.
- Patents have been sought to engineer gene drives into honey bees to control pollination patterns using light beams.
- Research is ongoing to engineer gene drives into common weed species to make them more susceptible to herbicides such as Roundup.
- Analysis of two key patents on gene drives show that they each reference around 500-600 agricultural uses including brand names of 186 herbicides, 46 pesticides, 310 agricultural pest insects, nematodes, mites, moths and others

We can plant a seed

POETRY

BY: NNIMMO BASSEY



Way back yesterday
In the glow of nighttime fires
We sat around steamy bowls
Carving up mounds of foo foo
Then dipping our hands in hot soups
Mouths long open awaited the feast
With every bite our tongues knew the source
Jolly jolly bellies, happy happy hearts
We danced our way through the night
These days we line up at the shops
Awaiting junk foods and maybe small chops
Bright coloured walls and blinding lights
We take selfies as we down deadly sodas
With loud music, we munch and munch but
hear no crunch from our plastic foods

We can plant a seed
And not eat poison

These days we go to the farm
It could also be the harvest is next to our
homes
Straight bananas
Squared up squash
Cassava tubers that don't ferment
Genetic engineers target our staple crops
Especially ones grown by women
With mythic tales they sell lies
Crops kill pests and innocent species
Like their ancestors sold beads, mirrors and
whiskies
And we are to be excited eating pesticides
And wash down with water packed in plastics

and served like drugs

We can plant a seed
And not eat poison

We live in the city
Streets blocked with cars
Every piece of land thoroughly cementified
The Earth is denied rain from the sky
You want some water, toxic drains send a deluge
We want some corn?
Go to the shop
You want vegetables?
Go to the shop
“This food is safe”
That’s what they say
Made by giant conglomerates
On the back of imperial neocolonial agencies
But they cannot even say what they sell
All they yell
Is “shut up and eat
“An hungry man has no choice”
Genetically engineered
Isolated from weeds with glyphosate

We can plant a seed
And not eat poison

All around us seeds are sprouting
Along the rivers and streams through our cities
Every city block long abandoned
Day and night we sow the seeds
Many don’t ask where magical fresh foods emerge
We labour all day to bring yet nothing to eat
Officials feed fat on our labours
Then loosen their belts
Call the bulldozers
Pull down our dreams
Level our fields
Destroy our homes
“This urban space isn’t for rats
Go back to the village unwanted migrants
Our foods are imported, packaged, some Even come as aid”



We can plant a seed
And not eat poison

The food we eat must not eat us
Mother Earth warns: we are all her children
The plants, the birds, the beasts, the worms,
the bees, the butterflies
In the soil and above the soil
On the seas and beneath the seas
Trillions of our relatives call to us
“Globalize the struggle
Globalize hope!”
Globalize the people
Not transnational corporations
Resilience
Solidarity
Hope
Power
Life
are all in the seed
And if we care we can touch the soil
We can plant a seed
We can water a plant
We can nurture life
We can raise a goat
We can connect to the soil
And allow Mother Earth to feed us all

We can plant a seed
And not eat poison

The centrality of culture in the struggle for a new world: Amilcar Cabral and Ken Saro- Wiwa

BY: FIROZE MANJI
Richard von Weizsäcker Fellow,
Robert Bosch Academy, Berlin

Keynote address at
Annual Ken Saro-Wiwa
Seminar, Maynooth University Library,
Maynooth University, 15 November
2018

There are two events in my life that have had a profound effect on my thinking and my politics. One was the assassination of Amilcar Cabral on January 20 1973. The other was the assassination of Ken Saro-Wiwa on November 10 1995.

When Cabral was assassinated, I was at university in England and active in the solidarity movement in support of the liberation movements in the Portuguese colonies. His writings were, subsequently, to transform my thinking about the nature of colonialism and what it means to struggle for liberation, emancipation and freedom. And I was to discover later that he was, in fact, gunned down by his own comrades.

And when the Abacha regime killed Saro-Wiwa and his comrades. I was the Africa Director for Amnesty international at their headquarters in London. I remember how completely helpless and outraged I felt — here I was at the head of the Africa Program of the world's largest human rights organization and yet we had failed to prevent this crime. We had appealed to Western governments and African governments to intervene forcefully to obtain the release of Ken, but had been met with responses such as 'quiet diplomacy, not overt criticism or sanctions' would succeed, a response even made by the then recently newly elected South African government (the ANC's head office was at the time, after all, located in Shell House in Johannesburg). That experience was to transform my thinking about the meaning of neocolonialism,

the complicity of transnational corporations and the degree to which our governments have become increasingly beholden to the corporations.

The two events helped me to understand the continuities between colonialism and neocolonialism, the first a product of liberalism, the second of neoliberalism

You can imagine, then, how delighted I was to be approached by colleagues at Maynooth University to help publish *Silence Would Be Treason: The Last Writings of Ken Saro-Wiwa* exactly at the time that I was editing and about to publish the anthology *Claim No Easy Victories: The Legacy of Amilcar Cabral*.

Before continuing, I would like to acknowledge here the efforts of Sister Majella and the solidarity movements in Ireland who during Saro-Wiwa's lifetime and imprisonment provided him with much needed sustenance, and since his assassination have, together with Maynooth University Library, helped keep him alive.

I want to share some thoughts about the commonalities between Amilcar Cabral and Ken Saro-Wiwa, especially in relation to culture and the centrality of culture in the struggle for freedom.

Amilcar Cabral was the founder and leader of the Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde liberation movement, Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde (PAIGC). He was a revolutionary, humanist, agronomist, poet, military strategist, and prolific writer on revolutionary theory, culture and liberation.



The struggles he led against Portuguese colonialism contributed to the collapse not only of Portugal's African empire, but also to the Portuguese revolution of 1974/5 and the downfall of the fascist dictatorship in Portugal, events that he was not to witness as he was assassinated in 1973.

Cabral and Saro-Wiwa were separated by two eras, the one involving the struggle for independence in Africa, the other dealing with the consequences of the failures of independence and the rise of neoliberalism. There were continuities between the two eras. "Cabral and Saro-Wiwa sit together in this transformative and unfinished space," wrote Helen Fallon, "asking questions that remain important in Ireland as in Africa."

Despite this separation, they had much in common.

Both sought self-determination for their people. Both were clear that self-determination, not secession, was what they were fighting for.

Self-determination and secession are often got confused and considered synonymous. Self-determination is about the struggle for justice, dignity and an attempt to establish an inclusive Universalist humanity, whereas secession is by definition an act of exclusion, defining the self through the exclusion of the other.

The tragedy for Saro-Wiwa was that the struggle for self-determination for the Ogoni came in the wake of the Biafran war of secession, the leadership of which Saro-Wiwa was highly critical. The struggle of the Ogoni people for self-determination could easily come to be seen as a continuation of that secessionist



movement, despite Saro-Wiwa's insistence against secession (although he was sometimes ambiguous about the distinction).

While Cabral and Saro-Wiwa were clearly exceptional individuals, it was the movements in which they were involved, and which they helped to create, that the credit must go for organising and for endeavouring to give birth to a new world.

We often characterise such movements as being expressions of resistance. But I think they are more than that. Let me draw on Michelle Alexander's recent article in the New York Times, We are not the resistance. These movements were not the resistance, on the contrary they sought to establish and give birth to a new world, just as the anti-fracking and environmental movements in Ireland, and the campaigns for "free, safe, legal" abortion following the pro-choice vote in the referendum in May, these are all movements seeking to give birth to a new world. We need to insist that it is the state and the corporations that are the resistance, not those seeking to give birth to a new world. It was the Portuguese colonial regime and the Abacha neocolonial regime in collaboration with Shell that were the resistance to the efforts of the movements that PAIGC and MOSSOP sought to birth.

Giving birth is always an act involving the struggle to overcome the violence of resistance. This is as true of a seedling emerging from the ground as it is for the child being born. Genuine movements for freedom never chose the path of violence, but they almost always face the violence of those that resist the birth of the world they are seeking to deliver. But in some cases, there is no choice but to use military means to defend the gains they have made. The struggle to give birth to Ireland was met with fierce, violent and terrorist resistance by the British state. There was no choice but to endeavor to defend it. But more importantly, it is community organizing, that is the basis of defence. They may have to use arms as one of their tools, but without the organizing, arms are worth nothing.

So, let us agree: The state and corporations, not us, are the resistance.

In Guinea Bissau, PAIGC had created liberated zones that, at the time of Cabral's assassination, covered some two-thirds of the country. There, completely new structures of popular democracy were established in which peasants were the decision makers. The Portuguese currency was banned, and a system of barter exchange was established in its stead. Women played leading roles in political decision making. And the rekindling of culture and pride in their own histories, languages, stories and music flourished. New health, education and other services were established. They were creating a new world. But they had no choice to ensure the movement had the means to defend the new society that had been built. PAIGC politics was not about promoting violence, but of defending the birth of a new society from the genocidal violence of Portuguese imperialism.

Both Cabral (at the hands of his own comrades, those who were to become the neo-colonial rulers of the future) and Saro-Wiwa (at the hands of the neocolonial Abacha regime) paid the ultimate sacrifice for their audacity to both think and create in their time a new world. This is what distinguishes them from so many others: it was not only having a dream that another world was possible, but also having the courage to create that world in the present. It was that which presented such a threat to those who resist new births.

I make this point because it is in the crucible of the struggle that real culture evolves as a weapon of liberation, a point that, as I will discuss, both Cabral and Saro-Wiwa make.

To be able to subject millions of humans to the barbarism of enslavement, slavery and colonial domination required defining them as non-humans or less than humans, and to do so required their dehumanisation.

That process required a systematic and institutionalised attempt at the destruction of existing cultures, languages, histories and capacities to produce, organise, tell stories, invent, love, make music, sing songs, make poetry, produce art, philosophise, and to formulate in their minds that which they imagine before giving it concrete form, all things that make a people human.

This attempt to destroy the culture of Africans, points out Cabral, turned out to be a signal failure. For while colonialism destroyed the institutions on the continent, the memories of their culture, institutions, art forms, music and all that which is associated with being human remained both on the continent and in the diaspora where the enslaved Africans found themselves. The enslavers, the slave owners, and all those who profited from these horrors, including the emerging capitalist classes of Europe, engaged in a systematic re-casting of human beings as non-humans or lesser beings, a process in which the Christian church and the European intelligentsia were deeply involved.

Whatever the material aspects of domination, 'it can be maintained only by the permanent and organized repression of the cultural life of the people concerned', wrote Cabral. The use of violence to dominate a people is 'above all, to take up arms to destroy, or at least neutralize and to paralyze their cultural life. For as long as part of that people have a

cultural life, foreign domination cannot be assured of its perpetuation'.

Such experiences must surely ring bells for people of Ireland whose own experiences of seeking freedom had so much in common with those of Africans. Famine, dispossession, displacement, attempts to silence song and language, enslavement and exile from their lands, all those things must surely resonate with you.

The most important thing for me is that I've used my talents as a writer to enable the Ogoni people to confront their tormentors.

I was not able to do it as a politician or a businessman. My writing did it. And it sure makes me feel good

For Saro-Wiwa: "The advent of British colonialism was to shatter Ogoni society and inflict on us a backwardness from which we are still struggling to escape. It was British colonialism which forced alien administrative structures on us and herded us into the domestic colonialism of Nigeria....As a result of domestic colonialism, the Ogoni people have virtually lost pride in themselves and their ability, have voted for the multiplicity of parties in elec-

tions, have regarded themselves as perpetual clients of other ethnic groups and have come to think that there is nowhere else to go but down... Yes, we merely exist; barely exist."

Culture, wrote Cabral, is 'the product of ... history just as a flower is the product of a plant. Like history, or because it is history, culture has as its material base the level of the productive forces and the mode of production. Culture plunges its roots into the physical reality of the environmental humus in which it develops, and reflects the organic nature of the society'. (You'd never guess he was an agronomist, would you!)

Culture, insists Cabral, is intimately linked to the struggle for freedom. While culture comprises many aspects, it '... grows deeper through the people's struggle, and not through songs, poems or folklore. ... One cannot expect African culture to advance unless one contributes realistically to the creation of the conditions necessary for this culture, i.e. the liberation of the continent'. In other words, culture is not static and unchangeable, and it advances only through engagement in the struggle for freedom.

In this he echoes Frantz Fanon:

"To fight for national culture first of all means fighting for the liberation of the nation, the tangible matrix from which culture can grow. One cannot divorce the combat for culture from the people's struggle for liberation'. Furthermore:

'... national culture takes form and shape during the fight, in prison, facing the guillotine and in the capture and destruction of the French military positions. ... National culture is no folklore

... [it] is the collective thought process of a people to describe, justify, and extol the actions whereby they have joined forces and remain strong.’

Ken Saro-Wiwa’s identity as a member of the Ogoni people, along with his political activism is inseparable from the content of his novels, for example, *Sozaboy*. Saro-Wiwa is clear about the political role of his work: As a result of this belief, *Sozaboy* possesses a sense of urgency and reflects from the perspective and language of the dispossessed the conditions and dilemmas faced by the Ogoni (or the Dukana) . “He becomes a ‘martyr’ who transcribes the struggles of the Ogoni people in the creation of the fictional Dukana people.” The television series *Basi and Company*, for example, targeted not just corrupt individuals but rather Nigeria’s quote culture of cheating as a whole. Humorous, entertaining, the series was political commentary.

“The writer cannot be a mere storyteller,” writes Saro-Wiwa, ‘he cannot merely x-ray societies weaknesses, its ills, its perils. He or she must be actively involved shaping its present and its future.”

“The most important thing for me is that I’ve used my talents as a writer to enable the Ogoni people to confront their tormentors. I was not able to do it as a politician or a businessman. My writing did it. And it sure makes me feel good! I’m mentally prepared for the worst, but hopeful for the best. I think I have the moral victory.”

Saro-Wiwa believed that “literature is a critical situation such as Nigeria’s cannot be divorced from politics. Indeed, literature must serve society by steeping itself in politics, by intervention, and writers must not write merely to amuse... They must play an interventionist role.”

For a member of the community that produced billions of dollars of oil wealth but whose members themselves lack electricity and clean drinking water, however, “you must go into activism because if you’re not into activism, then you are irresponsible” —Silence would, indeed, be treason!

Saro Wiwa, like Cabral before him, believed that the writer “must take part in mass organisations” and “establish direct contact with the people”.

“What they (the authorities) cannot stand is that a writer should additionally give voice to the voiceless and organise them for action. In short, they do not want literature on the streets! And that is where, in Africa, it must be.”

As to language, Saro-Wiwa commented: “Furthermore, I have examined myself very closely to see how writing or reading in English has colonised my mind. I am, I find, as Ogoni as ever. I am enmeshed in Ogoni culture. I devour Ogoni food. I sing Ogoni songs. I danced to Ogoni music. And I find the best in the Ogoni world-view as engaging as anywhere anything else. I’m anxious to see the Ogoni esta-

“To fight for national culture first of all means fighting for the liberation of the nation, the tangible matrix from which culture can grow. **One cannot divorce the combat for culture from the people’s struggle for liberation’**

blish themselves in Nigeria and make their contribution to world civilisation. I myself am contributing to Ogoni life as fully, and possibly even more effectively than those of Ogoni who do not speak and write English. The fact that I appreciate Shakespeare, Dickens, Chaucer, Hemingway, et al., the fact that I know something of European civilisation, its history and philosophy, the fact that I enjoy Mozart and Beethoven – is this a colonisation of my mind? I cannot exactly complain about it.”

“Historically, the Ogoni people have always been fierce and independent. They have been known to display an exceptional achievement in their original, abstract masks”. As storytellers and in other forms of art the Ogoni are gifted and hold their own easily. The Ogoni have made contributions of the first order to modern African literature in English.”

The implicit appeal to a universalist and inclusive humanity is clear in these statements. Cabral had no hesitation in writing for a wider public in Portuguese, but he was insistent that in order to learn from the peasantry, the ability to converse in their languages.

“We must put the interests of our people higher,” wrote Cabral, “in the context of the interests of mankind in general, and then we can put them in the context of the interests of Africa in general.”

‘We must have the courage to state this clearly’, he said, ‘No one should think that the culture of Africa, what is really African and so must be preserved for all time, for us to be Africans, is our weakness in the face of nature.’

“Indeed,” says Saro-Wiwa, “literature must serve society by steeping itself in politics, by intervention, writers must not merely write to amuse or to take a bemused, critical look at society. They must play an interventionist role. My experience has been that African governments can ignore writers, taking comfort in the fact that only few can read and write, and that those who read fine little time for the luxury of literary consumption beyond the need to pass examinations based on set texts. Therefore, the writer must be *l’homme engagé*: The intellectual man of action.

“He must take part in mass organisations. He must establish direct contact with the people and resort to the strength of African literature – oratory in the tongue. For the world’s power and more powerful is it when expressed in common currency. That is why a writer who takes part in mass organisations will deliver his message more effectively than one who writes waiting for time to work its literary wonders.”

‘A reconversion of minds – of mental set – is thus indispensable to the true integration of people into the liberation movement,’ wrote Cabral. ‘Such reconversion – re-Africanization, in our case – may take place before the struggle, but it is complete only during the course of the struggle, through daily contact with the popular masses in the communion of sacrifice required by the struggle’

I have myself just returned from South Africa where I was a jurist on the Permanent People’s Tribunal on the Transnational Corporations in Southern Africa. We received moving testimony from DRC, Madagascar, South Africa, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mo-

zambique, etc. The stories we heard recounted over and over again the culture of impunity, the destructive extraction of natural resources, the collusion of governments in the reaping of super profits and theft by transnational corporations, and the systematic attempts to destroy culture through land grabbing, dispossession and displacement – for knowledge of and connection with the land is at the heart of a people’s history and culture. What took place with Shell and the Ogoni is not unique to Nigeria. It is being repeated across the continent even today.

As the writings of both Cabral and Saro-Wiwa show, culture is not a mere artefact or expression of aesthetics, custom or tradition. It is a means by which people assert their opposition to domination, a means to proclaim and invent their humanity, a means to assert agency and the capacity to make history. In a word, culture is one of the fundamental tools of the struggle for emancipation.

The efforts of Sister Majella and the Maynooth University Library to bring these writings together and make them available to the world is an inspiring cultural act. It is an act with which Daraja Press is honoured to be associated.



COMMUNITY DIALOGUE ON FOOD AND FARMING SYSTEMS IN NIGERIA

On September 21, 2018, about a hundred farmers from various communities in Edo State gathered in the conference hall of Girls Power Initiative (GPI), Ugbiyoko Community in Benin City for a one day dialogue on food and farming systems organised by Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF).

The Dialogue provided a platform for examining the challenges facing agricultural production and the special threats posed by opening of the flood gates to Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) into Nigeria and also discussion on the way forward for improved agricultural productivity with emphasis on agroecology and support for small scale farmers.



In his opening words, Nnimmo Bassey, Director of HOMEAF, stated that dialogues such as this are vital for sharing ideas, best farming practices and ways of preserving seed and our overall biodiversity.

He recounted that small scale farmers are the main food providers to more than 70% of the world's people and they produce this food with less than 30% of the resources – including land, water and other inputs. The industrial food system under which agricultural modern biotechnology thrives, however, uses at least 75% of the world's agricultural resources, is a major source of Green House Gas emissions yet provides food to less than 30% of the world's population.

Mariann Bassey-Orovwuje Chairperson of the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa, in one of the presentations that preceded the dialogue, stated that although attempts to overcome agricultural challenges have led to many innovations and have resulted in production of improved natural crop and livestock varieties, corporate industrial systems attempt to control food production and displace small scale farmers through the push for genetically modified crops.

Her presentation made it clear that a majority of small-scale farmers have no idea what GMOs are about and what threats they pose to their health, environment or livelihoods. This was obvious as about 98% of the farmers gathered had not heard of GMOs.

The food sovereignty activist pointed out the risks agricultural biotechnology poses to small scale farmers and consumers at large, included diseases resulting from the use of toxic chemicals, soil degradation, and the loss of farmers' right to save and reuse seeds.

Adeoluwa Olugbenga, senior lecturer of agronomy at the University of Ibadan, speaking on Agroecology, Securing Farmers' Income and Agricultural Productivity in Nigeria, noted that to improve productivity, there is need for proper understanding of agroecology management and practices. This also ensures the sustainability of their agro ecosystem and increase in their income levels.

This session enlightened the farmers on natural indigenous practices that can be used to combat pests and diseases, improve productivity in minimal land space and replenish the soil health in the process.

During the dialogue session, the farmers discussed in groups amongs other things the major challenges facing agriculture today. They lamented that in addition to shortage of capital, they had challenges with availability of land as it is being taken up for development projects. They also complained of bad roads and high transportation costs, unavailability of seeds, lack of processing facilities and invasions by pests and diseases. The farmers also discussed the solutions to these challenges.

The farmers which included crop and livestock producers expressed gratitude to HOMEF for the enlightenment and acknowledged that they needed more of these dialogues and training. They rejected GMOs and with one voice and called on the government to provide them with more support to improve productivity with local/indigenous varieties.

Gloria Okon, one of the participating farmers from Katsina State, acknowledged that the Community Dialogue was very useful. According to her, “it helped her as a farmer know how to farm without using chemicals and also to know the difference between GM seeds and natural seeds.” She saw the use of accessible language, especially pidgin English, as key to making the meeting successful. She added that she would organize similar dialogues for other farmers in her state.

The following resolutions were reached by the participants at the end of the Dialogue:

- The government through its Ministries of Agriculture should devise strategies to combat the use of harmful chemicals and pesticides by farmers. Focus should instead, be on promoting safe natural/traditional means of pest and weed control.
- Extension officers should be trained and stationed in farming communities to share knowledge on agroecological methods of agriculture that build on practices developed over the millennia.
- The Government should make provisions for rural infrastructure, storage and processing facilities and financial loans to assist farmers.
- There should be land access to farmers and gender equity should be enforced.
- Farmers should form cooperatives within and across communities to facilitate exchange of both ideas and inputs.
- Children and youths should be carried along in agricultural practices to ensure continuity of indigenous knowledge.
- Civil Society groups should intensify enlightenment programmes and continue to amplify the farmers' voices.
- GMOs are harmful and not needed. The government should place a ban on GMOs and urgently carry out a radical revision of the National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA) Act 2015 and install a neutral Biosafety Regulatory Agency that will put the interest of the people first.

Some of the communities represented who signed on to the resolutions include: Ugbiyokho, Utagban, Evbuodia and Uholor Communities in Edo State. Organisations represented were: The Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa, Association of Organic Agriculture Practitioners of Nigeria, Health Promotion Education and Community Development Initiative, Nigerian Women Agro Allied Farmers Association, Idama Cooperative Farm, Ibaji, Women & Children Life Advancement Initiative and Health of Mother Earth Foundation.

HOMEF Raises Alarm on the State of Biosafety in Nigeria; Trains Media and Legal Practitioners



On the 25th and 26th of September respectively, the Ecological Think Tank, Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF), held robust trainings for about 50 media personnel and legal practitioners in Abuja.

The main objectives of these trainings were to increase awa-

reness on the risks of agricultural biotechnology including new variants known as Gene Drives which target whole populations and to draw attention to the current state of biosafety in Nigeria.

In opening discussions at the media training, Nnimmo Bassey, HOMEF's Director stated that

“despite huge financial outlays in modern agricultural biotechnology roadshows, the people remain unaware of these commercially and politically driven organisms that are rapidly being released into our markets and environment. Without free and clear knowledge of these artificial organisms, it can be said

plainly that the right of our people to safe food and safe environment is being officially breached with crass impunity”.

He explained that the promises of first-generation GMOs that are being promoted in Nigeria are unraveling – with persistent failures recorded around the world. “Herbicide use has increased rather than reduce”. Nnimmo noted that farmers are trapped in debt in the cotton fields of India because of the seeds-chemicals trap traceable to GMO Shylocks and added that GMO infested South American countries are reeling from chemical poisons on farm workers and in farm-fence communities. He made reference to the case of a US citizen, Dewayne Johnson who due to exposure to Monsanto’s Roundup weed-killer was diagnosed with cancer and is to receive in damages \$289m from the company as ordered by the Jury.

Tatfeng Mirabeau, a professor of immunology and genetic markers at the Niger Delta University, in both trainings, gave a brief history of GMOs and exposed the risks (including the long-term impacts) of genetic engineering in agriculture. He noted that “the end users of this product are usually not engaged and that products are placed in the public domain with no information as it relates to their nature”. Tatfeng maintained that “our traditional ways of growing crops have not failed us; hence there was no need for GMOs. The problem with Nigeria according to him has been corruption”.

“There is cause for concern about the regulatory process in Nigeria as the agency saddled with that responsibility is obviously influenced by those that it should be regulating”

The trainings presented a sustainable alternative to GMOs. Oluwatoyin Okanlawon, an agricultural expert from the University of Ibadan spoke extensively on the principles of Agroecology and its potential for increased productivity, enrichment of ecosystems, adaptation to climate change, and support for small holder farmers.

According to her, “Agroecology is a science that draws on social, biological and agricultural sciences and integrates these with traditional knowledge and farmers’ knowledge”.

Okanlawon explained that many of the challenges facing agriculture today are based on misuse of agro-ecologies. She pointed out that for optimum productivity, farmers must understand their environment and that for ecosystems to be maximized, we need to diversify agricultural practices that build on farmers’ knowledge and innovations. One of such practices mentioned was the Push and pull system which is a means of exploiting natural enemies instead of adding chemical deterrent or toxin to repel or kill pests. It was said that this method uses no manufactured deterrents or toxins; instead, it exploits natural insect-plant and insect-insect relationships. Okanlawon added that excessive use of agrochemicals and mechanization enhances soil degradation and has negative effect on biodiversity.

Speaking on Biosafety in Nigeria: The Regulation and Concerns for our Agricultural Systems, Mariann Bassey Orovwuje, an activist and Chairperson of the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA), outlined the issues with biosafety regulation in Nigeria and the implications for the people’s health, environment and livelihoods. According to her, the National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA) Act of 2015 has fundamental flaws that must be addressed quickly; including access to information, public consultations, mandatory and clear labeling, decision making and the composition of the governing board. She noted that while the board consists of the private sector and the biotechnology promoting agency, NABDA, there was no representative of farmers or consumers.

“There is cause for concern about the regulatory process in Nigeria as the agency saddled with that responsibility is obviously influenced by those that it should be regulating”. She gave the instance that NBMA in September 2018, advertised her national biosafety conference with major sponsors including the Open forum for Agricultural Biote-

chnology (OFAB) and the African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF). “After comments on social media as to why biotech organizations should be sponsoring a regulator’s event, OFAB was removed from the advert flier”.

She noted that the NBMA’s permits to Monsanto to bring in genetically modified (GM) cotton will only lead to increased use of glyphosate, a chemical that the cancer research arm of the World Health Organisation classified as a probable carcinogen.

Orovwuje ended on the note that “our food system belongs in the hands of many family farmers and not under the control of a handful of corporations”.

Barr Ifeanyi Nwankwere spoke comprehensively on Ensuring Biosafety in Nigeria Using the Law. He outlined the international legal frameworks on Biosafety which include the Convention on Biodiversity and the Cartagena Protocol. While the convention on Biodiversity aims to develop national strategies for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, the Cartagena Protocol seeks to protect biological diversity from the potential risks posed by genetically modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology and advises withdrawal where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage and lack of full scientific certainty. Nwankwere noted that “Nigeria is a signatory to these frameworks yet we allow in GMOs without proper risk assessments”.

Nwankwere also pointed out that challenges with ensuring biosafety through the law included flawed laws, the principle of precautionary measure vs. dis-

cretional powers of regulatory bodies and no current judicial authority/pronouncement on the application of the principle.

He noted that the suit by HOMEF and 16 other Civil Society Organisations against NBMA, Monsanto and Co over permits for GM cotton is the 1st matter filed on the issue of Biosafety in Nigeria. He said “unfortunately, the suit was struck out for exceeding the limitation period for instituting a case against public officers. It wasn’t because there was no cause of action; the real issues were never discussed.”

At the close of his presentation, Nwankwere stated that in ensuring biosafety in Nigeria, more emphasis should be on fundamental rights, precautionary principle and natural justice rather than procedural defects.

One of the participants at the Media Training, Samuel Bello, noted that the training was very educative. He said: “I was unaware of the dangers of GMOs until today and I think it is very important to do subsequent trainings on this.” Another participant, Godspower Martins noted that the training was timely; adding that “the media is better equipped and repositioned to objectively report on Biosafety in Nigeria.

From groups and general discussions, other recommendations made included that:

- Farmers should be encouraged to keep seed banks for indigenous crops
- There is need to create more awareness on biosafety especially by translating messages into indigenous languages
- That the biosafety law should be reviewed and that questionable/contentious clauses therein be amended.
- Regulatory agencies should take strictly to their duties as regulators and not act as promoters.

At the end of the lawyers’ roundtable which also rounded up the two days session on Biosafety, participants committed to rendering their advocacy and legal expertise/support to pushing the case against GMOs and promoting biosafety in Nigeria



Activists say 'No' to Geoengineering

There is need to save Mother Earth from the manipulating hands of false-solution-technology-driven climate and weather experimentalists seeking to modify and re-engineer the planet through geoengineering.

Some 110 organisations and social movements, including renowned environmental activists, Friends of the Earth International, La Via Campesina, Indigenous Environmental Network, Third World Network, Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF), ETC Group, and the Heinrich Böll Foundation on Thursday, October 4, 2018 issued a manifesto, speaking out against “the large-scale manipulation of climate and earth systems with unproven technologies – so-called geoengineering”.

Lili Fuhr of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, coordinator of the Hands off Mother Earth Campaign at the World People’s Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth in Cochabamba, Bolivia, in 2010, a broad coalition of popular movements, civil society groups and Indigenous Peoples’ organisations from around the world launched the first global campaign against geoengineering. Hands off Mother Earth (HOME) became a global campaign to defend communities and the common home and Planet Earth, against the threats of climate manipulation.

The HOME Campaign provided a common platform for organisations around the world to express their opposition to geoengineering. The HOME manifesto 2010 asserted that geoengineering “is a set of

Since geoengineering technologies have the potential to disrupt our natural ecosystems and global geophysical processes, with large impacts on natural resources, livelihoods and the survival of marginalised communities, they pose a threat with implications as serious as war.

dangerous false solutions to climate change, and that the seas, skies and soils of our home planet should not be used as a laboratory for these unjust and risky technological endeavors, that no one can or should be in control of the global thermostat and that our movements and organisations stand united to defend our lands and our rights”.

The groups added in a statement: “We believe that a re-launch of the HOME campaign is more urgent today than before. In the last few years, we have witnessed increasing support for geoengineering proposals. A small but growing group of governments, corporations and scientists, the majority from the most powerful and most climate-polluting countries in the world, have been pushing for research into and political consideration of geoengineering.

“Several outdoor experiments on Solar Radiation Management (SRM) are planned in North America, where an alliance between climate skeptics, fossil fuel interests and techno-solutionists seem to be providing a fertile

ground for this new hype. At least two of these experiments are planned on indigenous land. Other open-air, marine and terrestrial field experiments have been announced in Latin America, Asia, Canada and the Arctic.

“Carbon Dioxide Removal (CDR) technologies, which are currently being discussed and used in climate models and government plans to implement the Paris Agreement, would imply building gigantic industrial complexes and infrastructures with an excessive demand for land, water, energy and other resources. Impacts on human rights, vulnerable populations, indigenous peoples, peasant communities, as well as risk of conflict over adverse impacts and unintended side-effects are high and real.

“Until the geoengineering agenda resurfaced in the climate context in the mid-2000s, decades-long research into attempts at manipulating and controlling the weather and regional climates (‘weather modification’) has largely been pursued in government and military quarters. Today, public debates about

geoengineering in international fora such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), explore whether it is a means to combat climate change rather than combat other nations. The original interest in geoengineering and its potential as a military tool has not decreased. Quite the opposite: geoengineering remains a potential dual-use technology.

“With the onset of the growing climate crisis, the spectrum of geoengineering proposals, the number of research projects and planned outdoor experiments as well as the political appetite to consider it as ‘part of the toolbox’ to address the climate crisis has increased significantly. And since geoengineering technologies have the potential to disrupt our natural ecosystems and global geophysical processes, with large impacts on natural resources, livelihoods and the survival of marginalised communities, they pose a threat with implications as serious as war.

“We call upon you – civil society allies, popular movements, Indigenous People’s movements, ecologists and concerned citizens – to join us in filling the re-launched Hands Off Mother Earth Campaign with renewed vigour.”

Culled from: https://www.environewsigeria.com/hands-off-mother-earth-campaign-activists-say-not-to-geoengineering/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+EnvironewsNigeria+%28EnviroNews+Nigeria%29

Against Eco-Colonialism

WELCOME WORDS BY NNIMMO BASSEY,

Director of the ecological
think tank - Health of Mother
Earth Foundation at the
School of Ecology on Eco-
Colonialism held in Abuja on
16 October 2018

Colonialism is not only alive but has grown and metamorphosed into forms that subvert the rising of a truly postcolonial state.

Colonialism is alive and well and manifests in expected and unexpected forms. It started as a practice of taking political control of another country or territory, occupying it and exploiting it economically. The primary aim of colonisation was, and remains, the exploitation of resources and territories for the benefit of the colonizer. The basic impetus has always been economic and corporate entities remained firmly behind the colonial masks.

Today, most nations have obtained levels of political and flag independence. Economic independence is still a huge struggle with several factors often arising as impediments to its attainment. These include geopolitical power structures, social and cultural imperialism and institutional arrangements that ensure continued control and exploitation. This has been aided to a large extent by corporate capture and control of political levers across the globe.

Thus, Colonialism is not only alive but has grown and metamorphosed into forms that subvert the rising of a truly postcolonial state. This has partially happened because the colonised is content to take the place of the colonial master and to continue as a middle man for the old system rather than to overthrow it. As Frantz Fanon noted in *The Wretched of the Earth*, "The national bourgeoisie will be quite content with the role of the Western bourgeoisie's business agent, and it will play its part without any complexes in a most dignified manner... In its beginnings, the national bourgeoisie of the colonial country identifies itself with the decadence of the bourgeoisie of the West. We need not think that it is jumping ahead; it is in fact beginning at the end. It is already senile before it has come to know the petulance, the fearlessness, or the will to succeed of youth."

This state of affairs can also be described as coloniality – originally the state of relations in a colony but today being driven by persistent and undergirding reign of colonial mentality.

Our School of Ecology provides spaces for the interrogation of colonialism in the framework of the colonisation of Nature. We look at the exploitation and commodification of Nature in ways that subvert natural evolution and creates economic levers for the domination and control of species and planetary systems. The sessions look at the emergence of new technologies and production methods that ignore or outstrip existing regulatory frameworks and which are pushed willy-nilly without regard to the current capacity of humankind to fully understand the intricacies and interdependences of the webs of life on Planet Earth.

The present School of Ecology is looking particularly at new forms of extreme forms of genetic engineering including synthetic biology and gene drives. We are also looking at geoengineering experimentation aimed at having humans and corporations literally assume control of the planetary thermostat.

We are conscious of critical voices that have called for the restriction of these experimentations to laboratories and for diligent precaution until the harms and goods of the proposed systems can be fully evaluated, understood and accepted.

A Manifesto issued by over 110 civil society groups against geoengineering stated among other things, "Geoengineering technologies may disrupt local and regional weather patterns and further imbalance the climate, with potentially catastrophic effects for some regions, including on water availability and food production. The adverse impacts and side effects could cause more regional and international conflicts." The Manifesto calls for, "Respect and effective guarantees for the right of Indigenous Peoples and local communities to free, prior and informed consent for any geoengineering experiment or project that may impact their territories or human rights

"Respect for peasant rights, lands and territories, acknowledging that their livelihoods, including Indigenous Peoples' communities, forest dwellers, artisanal fishers and pastoralists, are a vital source of food for most of the world's population; pave the way for food sovereignty; contribute to mitigating greenhouse gas emissions; and regenerate soils and ecosystems. Their lands are particularly vulnerable to being grabbed and exploited for geoengineering experiments and deployment, and their agriculture is threatened by the side effects."

We join in the call for the maintenance of the moratorium on extreme genetic engineering as imposed by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) as they threaten to wipe out species. Extreme and even old fashion genetic engineering threaten our biodiversity, overall ecological health and our food sovereignty. We also join the call for a ban of all geoengineering experiments and deployment as they threaten our very lives. Geoengineering's side effects will obviously be deflected to already vulnerable regions and territories and Africa will be among the worst hit as present computer models show. Besides, geoengineering presents false solutions to the climate crises and will lock in polluting production systems that are driving the Earth towards catastrophic temperature rises as recently captured in the 15th Special Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IIPC).

We call for total decolonisation of Nature and for the global measures for the securing of justice and allocation of responsibilities for outlaws or neo-colonial lords. Without strict responsibility, exploitation quickly spirals into the worst forms of imperialism, according to Kwame Nkrumah. Nothing can be worse than irresponsible disruption of our life support systems.

Today we have seasoned and experienced instigators in the house. We also have eager and open-minded participants. Our target is the interrogation of our mindsets and objective realities. We stand firmly against eco-colonialism. Where do you stand? The school doors are open.

**OUR SCHOOL OF
ECOLOGY PROVIDES
SPACES FOR THE
INTERROGATION OF
COLONIALISM IN THE
FRAMEWORK OF THE
COLONISATION OF
NATURE.**



HOMEF

HEALTH OF MOTHER EARTH foundation

National Fishworkers Forum Stands Firmly Against the Proposed Shipping Corridors in India



On 30th October 2018, National Fishworkers Forum (NFF) organized protests to voice their stand against the shipping corridor proposed by the Indian government- stating that it will endanger the lives and livelihoods of all fishers in the affected regions. The protests took place in twenty three (23) ports and harbors across the coastal states. The methods of protest were varied and innovative, with symbolic

actions at sea and public meetings on shore. On the east coast of India, Fishworker Associations expressed their support through protest meetings and press conferences. The protests were organised, not just by the NFF state units, but by a wide range of organisations including other fishworker organisations, boat associations and various coastal organisations. The protest witnessed a massive turnout of

thousands of fishers, fishworkers, other sister organizations and members of the public.

According to Narendra Patil, chairperson, NFF: We know that the government is intensifying its plans to corporatise the coasts of India and we cannot let that happen and needs to constantly challenge these anti-fishing community policies. It is pertinent that we reiterate our demands as well as challenge the neoliberal agenda of the government which threatens the existence of the fishing communities.

The protests were able to call attention towards the fishing communities and their plights at the hands of a disinterested government and an exploitative corporate nexus. In Kerala, Shri. K.V Thomas, Honorable Member of Parliament inaugurated the protests, standing firmly in support of all fishing communities. MLA, Shri.M. Vincent was also in attendance. In Maharashtra, various fishing unions convened in large numbers, rallied for their livelihood and opposed the government's one sided notification. Shri Mahadev Janker, Minister of Cattle and Dairy Development, Fisheries, attended the protests and heard the fishing communities' demands. Along with him, Shri.Rahula Navekar, Shri. Bhai Jagtap, Shri. Raj Purohit, Shri Jayant Patil, all MLAs, also participated. Numerous political leaders joined the protests across all coastal states and were in support of the fishing communities and their demands.

In Goa, amidst hundreds of fishermen, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's effigy was burned as a

collective sign of dissatisfaction. With a strong opposition to the disastrous effects of the Blue Economy, including the Sagarmala project, various Goan Fishing Unions expressed their mistrust in the current ruling government. Furthermore, in West Bengal, all fishing unions submitted a memorandum outlining their fears and listing their demands to the concerned Ministry. Odisha and Tamil Nadu also saw a turnout of hundreds of fishermen standing in solidarity with each other and against the proposed shipping corridor.

Mr. Narendra Patil, The Chairperson of NFF and Mr. T. Peter, General Secretary have both pledged that if the government does not relent and continues towards establishing a shipping corridor, these protests will become nationwide and will reach Delhi too.

In this regard, protests were held in Gujarat : Kutch, Porbandhar, Veraval; Maharashtra : Mumbai Port, Ratnagiri and Malvan; Goa : Vasco fishing harbour; Karnataka : Mangalore, Karvar, Malpe harbours; Kerala : Kochin port, Chellanam harbour, Vizhinjam harbour; Tamilnadu: Colachel, Thengapattanam, Muttam, Chinnamuttam and Nagapattinam harbours and Ramnadu; Andhra Pradesh : Guntur Bapatla; Odisha : Bhubaneswar Rajbhavan; West Bengal : Contai and Diamond harbour.

If the government does not heed the demands of the fishworkers after this protest, the NFF is planning to take massive campaign across the coastal states with immediate effect.

Affiliates of the National Fishworkers Forum

1. **Machimar Adhikar Sangharsh Sangathan (MASS - Gujarat) - Usmangani Sherasiya - 09427443976**
2. **Maharashtra Machhimar Kruti Samiti (MMKS) (Maharashtra) - Kiran Koli - 09702-265813**
3. **Shramik Macchimar Kriti Samiti (Maharashtra) - Ravikiran Toraskar - 092259-00303**
4. **Goenchea Ramponkarancho Ekvott (GRE- Goa) - Olencio Simoes - 091588-75851**
5. **Coastal Karnataka Fishermen Action Committee (Karnataka) - Vasudev Boloor - 09449207805**
6. **Kerala Swathanthra Malsyathozhilali Federation (KSMTF- Kerala) - Jackson Pollayil - 09349447166**
7. **Ramnadu District Fishworkers Union (Tamil Nadu) - Paul Samy - 094423-22393 -**
8. **Vangakadal Meen Thozhilalar Sangam Tamilnadu (Tamil Nadu) - Dr. Kumaravelu - 09442867035**
9. **Karaikal Fishworkers Union (Puducherry) - Vedavalli - 09047984880**
10. **Democratic Traditional Fisher's and Fish workers Forum (Andhra Pradesh) - Debasis Paul 08555809779**
11. **Orissa Traditional Fish Workers Union (Odisha) - K. Allaya - 09437-069286**
12. **Dakshinbanga Matsyajibi Forum (DMF - West Bengal) - Millan Das - 078724-07611**

Restorative Justice: a suitable response to environmental crime? Part 2

In the previous edition of this magazine (eco-Instigator#21), we published the first part of this article. The concept of "Restorative Justice" was introduced as well as its roots and cases where it has been used to achieve justice and victim satisfaction. In this edition, we continue with the its application to environmental crime

BY: FEMKE WIJDEKOP



APPLICATION TO ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME

Restorative justice can be applied to environmental crimes and the defendants' commitment to make amends can involve restoration of the natural environment.

Environmental crime can result in the following violations of rights:

- Violations of the human right to health, of the right to clean air, water, and land, and of the quality of life.
- Violations of the right to property and amenity
- Violation of natural and cultural heritage. In these cases, often aboriginal or indigenous people are the victim. An example is the Australian case *Garett vs. Williams*, which concerned the destruction of Aboriginal artefacts during construction and exploration activities undertaken by a mining company. As part of the settlement of the case, a restorative justice conference was facilitated by the prosecutor and funded by the defendant. The Aboriginal people nominated a representative of the relevant local Aboriginal Land Council to represent them in the process. The Court appointed an independent facilitator who conducted interviews with representatives of the Broken Hill Local Aboriginal Land Council, archaeologists, representatives of mining company Pinnacle Hills and representatives of the prosecutor in preparation for the conference. The conference itself provided the opportunity for the chairperson of the Broken Hill Aboriginal Land Council and the defendant to meet, and for the defendant to apologize for the harm caused. The parties produced a document outlining the agreement that was reached at the conference, which included financial contributions to be made to the victims, future training and employment opportunities for the local community, and a guarantee that the traditional owners would be involved in any salvage operations of Aboriginal artefacts. These results of the restorative justice intervention were taken into account by the judge in the sentencing process, but the restorative justice intervention did not substitute the court sentence for the offences committed by the defendant.
- Violation of the commons held in trust by the government.
- The rights of the environment itself are violated; the environment as a victim. Increasingly, the rights of the natural world are recognized in court decisions and legislation. In restorative justice conferences, trees and rivers can be represented by surrogate victims, which happened in the *Waikato vs. Huntly* case. In this case, sediment laden stormwater was the illegally discharged from the offender's quarry affecting the river quality of the New Zealand Waikato River. The river was represented at the restorative justice conference by the chairperson of the Waikato River Enhancement Society. The conference outcome included payment of costs of the facilitator and a donation to the Lower Waikato River Enhancement Society instead of a fine.
- The rights of future generations, who can be represented 'by proxy' in restorative processes, for example by NGOs who protect the interest of future generations in their statutes.

There are several possible restorative outcomes in the case of environmental crimes: apologies, restoration of environmental harm and prevention of future harm, compensatory restoration of environments elsewhere if the affected environment cannot be restored to its former condition, payment of compensation to the victims and community service work. Measures addressing future behavior, such as an environmental audit of the activities of the offending company, or environmental training and education of the company's employees, are also possible outcomes.

Restorative Justice has been an important element in New Zealand sentencing since 2002. According to a 2012 report of the Ministry for the Environment, between 1 July 2001 and 30 September 2012, a restorative justice process was used in 33 prosecutions under the Resource Management Act in New Zealand. In Australia, the New South Wales Land and Environment Court also uses restorative processes in addressing environmental offences. The Australian Victorian Environmental Protection Agency uses restorative justice conferences in communities afflicted with environmental damage.

Finally, in the context of transitional justice, environmental restoration and conservation activities after (civil) war can help processes of reconciliation and peacemaking. Such processes took place in Mozambique in 1994, in Afghanistan in 2003 and

in Nepal in 2006. Currently, the Colombian government wants former FARC-members to assist with the environmental restoration of landscapes that suffered from the Colombian civil war.

PART II

Letting the offender – and systematic injustices – off the hook? Restorative justice has eye for the victim's emotional and material needs in the wake of crime. But does it let offenders off the hook by allowing them to take part in processes of reconciliation and rehabilitation?

This is a reasonable question to ask. What is important to realize is that restorative justice does not necessarily replace retributive responses to crime. It is a tool which can be applied alongside traditional responses, such as fines and imprisonment. In that case, a positive outcome of a restorative justice process can make the judge decide to reduce the punishment.

Also, restorative justice is only applied when both victim and offender are willing to participate. It requires that the offender takes responsibility for committing the offense. Confronting the victims and committing to time consuming projects, such as re-planting trees, doing community work or attending environmental training, may be more of a deterrent for the offender than a non-restorative sentence such as a fine.

Paying a fine may hurt financially, but it probably does not impact the offender on an emotional level, or challenge his/her assumptions about right

and wrong behavior. Meeting the victims and the community face-to-face and learning about the harm caused by the offence is more likely to leave a lasting effect on the offender. Of course, this presumes that the offender has a conscience and is not partaking in restorative justice processes purely for selfish and tactical reasons ('faking' remorse in order to get a lower sentence). Discernment will be important

Paying a fine may hurt financially, but it probably does not impact the offender on an emotional level, or challenge his/her assumptions about right and wrong behavior.

when selecting cases and offenders that are suitable for a restorative justice intervention.

Another possible point of criticism is that restorative justice legitimizes existing economic and power relations by working towards reconciliation between victims and offenders. Is not a more assertive and confrontational approach, such as the recently launched climate case against Shell, more appropriate to challenge the systemic way in

which environmental pollution is allowed – and even rewarded – by our economic system?

This is a valid point. But restorative justice can be part of an approach to environmental crime which is oriented to system-change, such as the campaign to make Ecocide a crime against peace. Polly Higgins proposes to add restorative justice processes to the sanction arsenal of a judge who decides in Ecocide-cases. She proposes to offer it as an alternative sentencing option when the victim and offender consent, and when the offender – probably a company, bank or state official – accepts responsibility for restoring territories adversely impacted by ecocide.

Another angle is that restorative justice actually empowers change from the bottom up, because it is a way for communities to develop social capital, social networks and civic interconnectedness. Participation in restorative process offers citizens the chance to mobilize their community to challenge systemic socio-economic injustice. It can encourage citizen to challenge norms and stimulate political debate. It also gives space for rights of nature-approaches to what constitutes an environmental violation and who can be a victim of such a violation. As happened in the Waikato vs. Huntly-case described above, nature itself can be represented in restorative justice conferences as a victim in its own right, and the outcome of such conferences can include the obligation to restore the harm done to the environment. The fact that restorative justice uses indigenous processes such as (peace-

making) circles can create a conducive environment for rights-of-nature approaches, which lean towards indigenous worldviews, to gain strength.

CONCLUSION

Restorative justice holds promise as an alternative response to environmental crime. Studies show that offenders are less likely to reoffend, and that restorative justice produces a high rate of victim satisfaction and offender accountability. The question if restorative justice is a suitable response to environmental crime has to be answered on a case-by-case basis, however. There will be cases which will not qualify for a restorative approach, for example because the offender does not take responsibility for the offense, or when victims do not feel safe to take part in restorative processes because they fear the offender might retaliate behind the scenes if they raise their voices publicly. In such cases the environmental offense is embedded in a broader culture of impunity and intimidation, or lack of rule of law. If the culture is more conducive to upholding environmental law and to restoration of broken relationships, restorative justice seems to have a lot to offer.

If we consider the example used in the introduction of the pollution caused by toxic mining waste, engaging in a restorative justice process can give a voice to those victims who are impacted by the crime of pollution but who would normally be excluded from its resolution. Proxies can be appointed who represent the polluted river and land. A conference offers the opportunity for the offender to directly apologize to victims, to first-hand understand how the crime has affected the victims and harmed the social fabric of the community. It can diminish the chances of recidivism and educate the offender in the norms and values of environmental law. If anything, applying restorative justice to environmental disputes that have come to a standstill might prove to be worth the try. This is what a small group of Quakers is committed to do regarding the 1984 Bhopal disaster, in which no justice has yet been achieved three decades after the disaster which killed ten thousands of people. The Quakers started a 'Restorative Action for Bhopal' and are currently trying to engage the offending company in a restorative process. It will be interesting to keep an eye on this bold initiative to hold a multinational accountable for environmental and human rights violations in a restorative way.



Let the Campaigns Continue!

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY BOBBY PEEK,

Director of groundWork to
the Oilwatch Africa General
Assembly, in Lamu, Kenya on
07 August 2018

Dear Friends and Family

Yes, I use the word family, for no matter where in the world we are resisting fossil fuels, we need to remember that we are family, and family sticks together.

In 1996 Oilwatch was established in Quito, Ecuador. As Africa we can be proud that Nigeria, South Africa, Cameroon and Gabon were amongst the first 12 countries that gave birth to an organisation that has immersed itself into the politics of many movements, and into the politics of resistance without compromise. In Oilwatch there are no “ifs” and “buts”; it is very clear: we keep the “oil in the soil”.

groundWork has been a member of Oilwatch from the very start of our existence, nearly 20 years ago. We were privileged to have one of the first international gatherings of Oilwatch in South Africa in 2000. At this gathering we came face to face with the many people and organisations resisting oil, from Thailand to Columbia, from The Netherlands to Sudan. For groundWork it was a watershed, and it built our resolve to make sure that as an organisation we stood firm in our resistance to fossil fuels and our politics of listening to what people were saying and demanding. Listening to those on the fence-lines in the host communities and who are suffering the daily injustice of fossil fuel extraction and production, is critical for groundWork. We believe these communities have to lead the way in our positions on resistance on



all fronts, from civil disobedience to policy work, and from local to international.

At the outset, I want to apologise for not making it to Kenya, and in particular Lamu. groundWork, and I personally, have had many years of interactions with the Save Lamu campaign, so it was difficult to come to the decision to not join you in person. I also want to thank those folks in Lamu who have assisted Oilwatch Africa in hosting us. A big thank you to Ikal and to Nnimmo for pushing this meeting and for the many of you who are there. I am with you in solidarity.

In June, I was asked to speak on the topic: “Time to DeCoalonize Africa”. Just to let comrades know that this has been a very Kenyan slogan, so while I can speak about the ravages of coal in Africa, the real kudos for this imaginative slogan must go to the local folk in Kenya. Viva the struggle to keep coal in the hole in Kenya, and indeed Africa.

Oilwatch has always been against the extraction of fossil fuels. While one could read that the focus was only on oil, it was the politics of the 90s, the politics of oil, and the fence-line violence and global terror of a dying US empire that focused us on oil. But fossil fuels as a collective was our resistance. Indeed, the many organisations that make up Oilwatch International and Africa, do not have the luxury to decide what they resist. It is these people who come to us for assistance that we need to support. We cannot say no and walk away with the response that very many 'professionalised NGOs give: It is not part of our strategy. To quote an oft-mentioned slogan: We Exist to Resist!

So, when in the past 20 years the impact of coal became so evident, groundWork and the many Oilwatch members such as Justice Ambiental from Mozambique and CENSAT Agua Viva from Colombia, had to respond. Before coal became 'sexy' to resist, we as members of Oilwatch were resisting. Today there is a global and African wide movement that challenges coal, which is built upon a deep foundation of resistance. Because of these foundations in very many parts of the world, we will succeed in turning the tide on coal.

I want to reflect briefly on coal in Africa, the resistance to this, and then a critical path on the way forward which responds to peoples' demands and to an approach that serves people, which is termed by many a Just Transition, but in reality, is nothing more than what development should be.

Coal in Africa is concentrated in Southern Africa. Coal has a brutal

history of being the backbone of major mining ventures that have destroyed the land, the water, the air and people's lives throughout Southern Africa as they were forced into migratory 'slave labour' to serve the growing mining expansion of the pariah apartheid state. A mal-development is how we term the Mineral and Energy Complex which sought to provide cheap energy, cheap labour, and an environmental and social justice policy vacuum that allowed for the elite accumulation of wealth on the backs of the millions of disfranchised black people throughout Southern Africa. Coal was dug out and burnt cheaply to make cheap energy for the mining conglomerates to make super profits. What is alarming is that over the past years, the World Bank has come to recognise that extractives in Africa do not lead to development, rather it results in negative savings. And coal in particular, according to a 2011 World Bank report referenced by Professor Bond, longtime ally of Oilwatch International, the estimated annual coal depletion cost to South Africa's Natural Capital, accounts for 6% of GDP. So, by World Bank terms, we are poorer. Well, we did not need the World Bank to tell us this. We have known this since our first resistance. Fossil fuels create poverty, they are not a development plan. They are an extractives plans. Plans that create wealth for the elite.

While my neighbourhood is the starting point, it is clear that Africa is not spared in relation to

coal. Nine African countries are facing their first coal plant proposal, nine African countries have at least one operating coal plant. There were 171 proposed power units in the pipeline in December 2015. Of these only nine have been successful in SA. In SA we are stalling and hoping to soon defeat more than 14 proposals, each making up numerous units. Critically, in the time since most of these pipeline projects were first considered, renewables

Today there is a global and African wide movement that challenges coal, which is built upon a deep foundation of resistance. Because of these foundations in very many parts of the world, we will succeed in turning the tide on coal.

have become cheaper in many parts of the world, including Africa. The countries in Africa that we need to remain vigilant over because of the increasing threat of coal expansion are: Namibia, Senegal, Madagascar, Mauritius, Niger, Zambia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, Mozambique, Malawi, Botswana, Morocco, Zimbabwe, Egypt and South Africa.

But besides coal fired power stations, coal's other face is mi-

ning, which comes with the associated violence of displacing people from the land. Here we talking about Jindal and Vale in Mozambique, Atha and South32, to name a few mining developments in South Africa and in Botswana, Kenya, Zambia, Nigeria and Malawi. In South Africa it is well documented by ground-Work in Destruction of the Highveld: Volume 1, how mining destroys people's lands. Critically, it also highlights how mining is facilitated by the political elite, despite the mounting evidence of its destruction.

With coal comes an enormous burden of externalities on not only polluted water such as acid mine drainage, destroyed lands and polluted air, but also have an immense burden on health. The health costs from one pollutant from coal fired power stations in SA, particulate matter of the size 2.5 microns, is \$ 2.3 billion. This is just one pollutant. Imagine if we had to consider all the pollutants.

The externalised quantification of water costs for Kusile, one of SA's biggest new coal plants, stands at as much as \$4.5 billion, according to the Centre for Environmental Rights.

While there is a global recognition that coal has to stop, in Africa there is nonetheless an expansion of coal on the cards, from mining to the building of power stations. Transition away from coal is just a gimmick for many corporates. For Anglo American, a transition is about "incremental expansion where it made sense" and "making sensible capital allocations on incremental life extensions" on thermal coal, despite all the evidence that coal and fossil fuels have to stop now. This is not a transition, let alone a

just transition. This is going back to what is best for the bottom line. At best they are off-loading their past coal developments – which have caused massive environmental damage – and future development such as New Largo to companies "majority owned and controlled by historically disadvantaged South Africans", essentially leaving the coal legacy for others to deal with. The future is bleak and affected people have to define and make their own future. They cannot depend on government and most certainly not corporates who got us into this mess.

So, it is clear that we are going to have to make the future ourselves. It is going to be difficult, especially as unions, while recognising that they have to move away from extractives and coal in particular, are caught in the bind as to what happens to the unionised workers as coal dies. But critically, we need to remember in Africa the majority of people are not in the formal working sector and, dare I say, capitalist working sector. It demands democratic practice and groundWork believes that the following can deliver on a future for the majority on the African continent.

Several elements to a just transition suggest themselves. Some elements are about urgently needed work in the coal regions while others are suggestions for a broader response:

- Building a new energy system based on socially owned renewables with jobs in manufacturing as well as construction and operations;
- Rehabilitating individual mines and the mining regions as a whole to restore and detoxify damaged land and ecosystems and use these lands to build utility-scale solar farms;
- Making people's food gardens as a first step towards creating a healthy food system under democratic control, based on ecological agriculture and ensuring enough for all;
- Reconstructing settlements in anticipation of the intensified storms and droughts that climate change will bring, fixing the broken roads, water and sewage pipes, and providing proper municipal and health services that respond to those that are in most need and ensure people's health improves;
- Building good energy efficient homes supplied with solar water heaters (with servicing after installation) so that people stay comfortable with minimal energy use;
- Planning to put work and amenities within people's reach and to make walking and cycling the easy options and developing safe and reliable public transport for longer trips;
- Creating a zero waste economy, eliminating built-in redundancy and throw-away products and developing high levels of recycling and composting of organic wastes;
- Introducing a basic income grant for all to enable poor and unemployed people, who are most vulnerable to climate change, to participate more actively in all areas of life.

For us this could be a future.

Finally, a recent African Coal Strategy meeting concluded with the following strategy which we will continue to develop with organisations such as Oilwatch International:

Finance: Focus on both the AfDB and other Development Finance Institutions as well as Chinese finance.

Renewable energy: Focus on the various African and global initiatives that seek to push various energy approaches in Africa. Some of these are Power Africa; the Africa Renewable Energy Initiative; Sustainable Energy for All; the Africa Coalition for Sustainable Energy & Access; the Africa-EU Renewable Energy Cooperation Programme; Lighting Africa (a World Bank programme); distributed energy service companies (pay-as-you-go).

Just transition: Focus on how the Just Transition approach can be adopted and worked with in Africa.

Human Rights Defenders and Closing of Democratic Space: Focus on ensuring that African governments commit to democratic practice and that people defending their lands from coal - and other mining/gas/oil exploitation - are not threatened in any way.

Fighting dirty energy/resisting coal - campaigning support: Focus on supporting national and local campaigns against coal with necessary campaigning tools, solidarity and movement strengthening, technical assistance, research etc. This is a big area.

Our struggle is big - we need to ensure that we build solidarity and maintain the links we build in this gathering.

Aluta continua!



INDIA COMBATING CLIMATE CHANGE

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Kerala's Flood push to educate people about Green Social Responsibility



Due to its geographical location, India is one of the most vulnerable nations in the world to the long-term impact of climate change. India is highly prone to climate related catastrophes like floods, droughts, heat waves and cyclones.

'Climate Change' can be closely linked with the economic growth and development of a Nation. The key areas where the impact of climate change has proved to be calamitous in Indian Sub-continent: Forests, Agriculture, Water and Biodiversity. According to a World Bank report, Rising temperatures and changing monsoon rainfall patterns from climate change could cost India 2.8 percent of GDP and depress the living standards of nearly half the country's population by 2050. This was

clearly evident in recent Kerala flood during the monsoon season of unprecedented rainfall. According to "South Asia's Hotspots: The Impact of Temperature and Precipitation Changes on Living Standards", almost half of South Asia's population, including India, now lives in the vulnerable areas and will suffer from declining living standards that could be attributed to falling agricultural yields, lower labor productivity or related health impacts. Some of these areas are already less developed, suffer from poor connectivity and are water stressed.

In India today, approximately 600 million people live in locations that could either become moderate or severe hotspots by 2050 under a business-as-usual scenario, according to the report.

States in the central, northern and north-western parts of India emerge as most vulnerable to changes in average temperature and precipitation. According to the report's analysis, by 2050 Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh are predicted to be the top two climate hotspot states and are likely to experience a decline of more than 9 percent in their living standards, followed by Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Maharashtra. Seven out of the top 10 most-affected hotspot districts will belong to the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra.

"Climate change poses significant developmental challenges, especially for developing countries. However, their capacity to translate commitments into tangible results is constrained by lack of predictable, sustained and adequate finances and technologies,"

India announced its new climate plan, also known as its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC). It is the world's third-largest emitter of GHGs—the share stands at around 4 per cent—and is highly vulnerable to impacts of climate change. India is committed to invest in tackling climate change while addressing poverty, food security and access to healthcare and education. India's INDC targets on its goal of installing 175 gigawatts (GW) of renewable energy capacity by 2022, out of this, 100 GW has been allocated to solar and 60 GW to wind. It has set a new target to increase its share of non-fossil fuel-based energy from 30 per cent today to about 40 percent by 2030 and committed to reduce its emissions intensity per unit GDP by 33 to 35 per cent below 2005 by 2030 and create an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO2 through additional tree cover. According to the BP Energy Outlook, India's demand for green energy is expected to grow by 7 times in 2035, which means the share of renewable energy in the country's fuel

mix will increase from 2 per cent to 8 per cent in 2035. However, coal and other fossil fuels will continue to play a major role in India's energy mix in the decades to come. India's emissions intensity (CO2 emissions per unit of GDP) declined by approximately 18 per cent between 1990 and 2005, and the country has already committed to reduce it by another 20-25 per cent from 2005 levels, by 2020. The new INDC target commits India to go further—33 to 35 per cent by 2030. The country's emission intensity target does not reflect the scale of mitigation that would result from its planned investments in renewable.

Climate change is posing significant development challenges especially for developing countries so therefore, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj has told to United Nations that India is willing to take the lead in combating climate change. India is the sixth largest producer of renewable energy, and fifth largest producer of solar energy in the world. According to Sushma Swaraj for its part to fight climate change, it has set a target of generating 175 Giga Watts of solar and wind energy by 2022. India has installed over 300 million LED bulbs saving USD 2 billion and 4 GW of electricity Kochi airport in Kerala is the first solar-powered airport in the world. India is willing to take lead in climate action. Swaraj argues that our commitment to combat climate change is rooted in our ethos, which considers Earth as Mother. She told the UN meeting that India will reduce the emission intensity of its GDP by 25 per cent over 2005 levels by 2020, and further by 33-35 per cent by 2030. "India is a firm believer in multilateralism," she further added that the International Solar Alliance (ISA) launched with France, has been already signed by 68 countries. The alliance aims to mobilise technology and finances to lower unit costs. "Climate change poses significant developmental challenges, especially for developing countries. However, their capacity to translate commitments into tangible results is constrained by lack of predictable, sustained and adequate finances and technologies," she said, adding that the world needs a roadmap for finance and technology, to achieve the goals set out in the Convention and its Paris Agreement. "Ancient Indian tradition conceives our cosmos as comprising of five basic elements panchbhutas. These are space, air, water, earth and fire. There is harmony among them. Trouble begins when their equilibrium is disturbed. From atmosphere to oceans; our actions are leading us into uncharted territories with possibly disastrous consequences".

In One Planet Summit on 26 September President of European Investment Bank, Werner Hoyer announced a major progress on tackling climate change globally in order to push India's International Solar Alliance (ISA). He announced to bridge urban financing gap with Global Urbis, launch the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund and expand solar energy through the International Solar Alliance. Global Urbis is a ground-breaking partnership to enhance climate action in cities around the world. The Land Degradation Neutrality Fund is a unique way to finance climate adaptation and land restoration measures through projects that will benefit some of the most vulnerable communities. Over the last five years, the EU Bank provided more than EUR 21 billion for renewable energy investment worldwide, including EUR 2.5 billion in photovoltaic and concentrated solar power projects. According to Hoyer "Multilateral cooperation is the only way to achieve success in tackling climate change and sustainable development".

KERELA'S FLOOD- INDIA SUFFERED ITS WORST MONSOON FLOOD

The Kerala state had seen the worst flooding in the living memory, due to heavy rains. The Indian Meteorological Department has declared Red Alert in the entire state, but amongst all Alapuzha, Pathanamthitta, Kottayam, Ernakulam, Wynadu, & Idukki districts continue being the worst affected. UN General Assembly President Maria Fernanda Espinosa cited the recent devastating floods in Kerala, among other natural disasters wrecking havoc across the world, to make a call to the world leaders to achieve progress on agreements aimed at slowing climate change. "In August, the state of Kerala in India suffered its worst monsoon flood in recent history, which killed 400 people and displaced a million more from their homes. Hurricanes killed thousands of people in 2017, making them one of the deadliest extreme climate disasters in history," she said. Kerala was affected by the severe floods, the worst in nearly a century, due to unusually high rainfall during the monsoon season.

Around the world, millions of people are suffering from violence, war, want and the effects of climate change, she said, we have a responsibility to slow the production and consumption policies and habits that are destroying our planet." With a call to multilateralism and shared work towards sustainable development and equality for all, Espinosa affirmed that the contribution of the UN to humani-

ty has been immense, citing the principles that govern the international coexistence emanated from the forum she leads. "The reality is that the work of the UN remains as relevant as it was 73 years ago. She argued that multilateralism is the only possible answer to the global problems we face. Weakening or putting it in question only generates instability and bewilderment, distrust and polarization". Ms Espinosa called for more attention to be paid to the needs of the most vulnerable countries, so that they can reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and ensure respect of human rights. She urged leaders gathered in the Assembly to live up to the needs of the people and to build a more peaceful, secure and humane world order that guarantees the dignity of the people. According to the Assembly President, Let us then build a United Nations that is more relevant to all people.

CONCLUSION:

Climate impacts in India are not consistent. Populace of low socio-economic status is more vulnerable to the health impacts of climate change, as they have the least adaptive capacity. Educating people about climate change is the need of the hour. Combating climate change is all about bringing a change in one's lifestyle. For India that has extensive coastline, the implications are enormous. The Union Environment Minister announced in December 2016 that India would start preparing for implementing the Paris Agreement from 2017. However, there is no major boost for climate change in Union budget 2017-18. The ministry seems confident to spend large sums in preparing to implement the Paris Agreement that comes into force from 2020. In a statement, Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, said Indian philosophy and lifestyle has long been rooted in the concept of co-existence with nature. We are committed to making Planet Earth a cleaner and greener place". He further stated that "If each and every one of us does at least one green good deed daily towards our Green Social Responsibility, there will be billions of green good deeds daily on the planet." Kerala floods have been described as "the worst in 100 years" by Kerala state's chief minister. The crisis is a timely reminder that climate change is expected to increase the frequency and magnitude of severe flooding across the world. Flooding is a challenge across individual, local, regional, and global scales, and is set to increase in the future and its impacts will become more damaging. We need solutions across each of these scales to improve individual and societal resilience.

UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ADOPTS THE DECLARATION ON PEASANTS' RIGHTS AND OTHER RURAL WORKERS.

After seventeen years of long and arduous negotiations, peasants and other people working in rural areas are only a step away from having a UN Declaration that could defend and protect their rights to land, seeds, biodiversity, local markets and a lot more



On Friday, 28 September, in a commendable show of solidarity and political will, member nations of United Nations Human Rights Council passed a resolution concluding the UN Declaration for the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas. The resolution was passed with 33 votes in favour, 11 abstentions and 3 against.

The declaration now goes before the upcoming 3rd Committee session at UN General Assembly in New York in October. From there, in November 2018, this Declaration will be up for voting and adoption by all Member States of the United Nations. Once adopted, the UN Declaration will become a powerful tool for peasants and other people working in rural areas to seek justice and favourable national policies around

food, agriculture, seeds and land keeping in mind the interests of millions of rural food producers comprising all genders and youth.

After several rounds of international consultation process, La Via Campesina – a global movement of peasants, indigenous people, pastoralists and migrant workers adopted in 2008 a Declaration of Rights of Peasants – Women and Men. With the support of civil society groups like CETIM and FIAN International, La Via Campesina presented this proposal to the Human Rights Council in 2008.

“This has been a long tough path but as peasants, as people who have seen the worst of poverty and neglect, we are tough too and we never give up”, says Elizabeth Mpofu, the General Coordinator of La Via Campesina

To be clear, today, peasants and others working in rural areas have insufficient recourse in the face of the discrimination they suffer and the other challenges they confront when seeking an adequate standard of living when subjected to forced displacement and marginalization. However, with this win in Geneva, peasants a step closer to getting their rights recognised and protected. According to Elizabeth, “This includes the right to life and adequate standards of living, the right to land, to seeds, to information, justice and equality between women and men” For her, it is a turning point for peasant struggles around the world. “Today, we are just a step away from acceptance by all member nations of the United Nations.” She added.

This UN Declaration can provide a global framework for national legislation and policies to:

- better protect the rights of peasants – women and men – and improve livelihoods in rural areas;
- reinforce food sovereignty, the fight against climate change and the conservation of biodiversity;
- take actions to implement comprehensive agrarian reform and a better protection against land-grabbing;
- realise the right of peasants to conserve, use, exchange and sell their seeds;
- ensure remunerative prices for peasant production and rights for agricultural workers;
- recognise the rights of peasant women and bring about social justice for people of all origin, nationality, race, colour, descent. Sex, language, culture, marital status, property, disability, age, political or other opinion, religion, birth or economic, social or other status without discrimination.

“While all of the member states said they are committed to human rights for all, the no votes and also abstentions are abysmal,” says Ramona Duminiciu from Via Campesina Europe. “The nos and abstentions mean that these countries are not up to the protection of human rights of peasants and rural populations. They are against a bigger picture: eradication of poverty, food sovereignty, and the effort to reduce inequalities,” lamented Ramona.

“Our campaign for food sovereignty and people’s agrarian reform in Indonesia has received an important and much-needed boost,” says Henry Saragih, the Chairperson of Serikat Petani Indonesia. Indonesia has just passed a Presidential Decree in support of agrarian reform that favours peasants.

“Once the resolution is adopted at the UN General Assembly in New York, we will take the message of the Declaration to our people back home, and elaborate its significance and how it could strengthen our struggles against privatisation, criminalisation and more. The more we educate and inform our people back home, the stronger our movements become. It will enable us to demand better policies and laws that will take into account the rural realities of the developing world” added Henry.

“This has been a long tough path but as peasants, as people who have seen the worst of poverty and neglect, we are tough too and we never give up”

“At this point, despite producing the bulk of the food we eat – peasants are subjected to extreme forms of violence. Those who resist are either murdered or arrested. This criminalisation of peasant struggles has to stop and this Declaration is a step forward in that direction”, says Diego from Movimiento Nacional Campesino Indígena (MNCI) Argentina CLOC-Vía Campesina

The adoption of such a Declaration and the recognition of rights contained in the proposed legal instrument can contribute to better protect the rights of peasants and improve livelihoods in rural areas in the long term and at the global level. It will fill existing normative gaps in protection and should also be forward-looking to deal with emerging gaps and thus end discriminatory practices by giving them more visibility and coherence.

Culled from: <http://www.cadtm.org/UN-Human-Rights-Council-passes-a-resolution-adopting-the-peasant-rights>

UPCOMING EVENTS

Community Dialogues



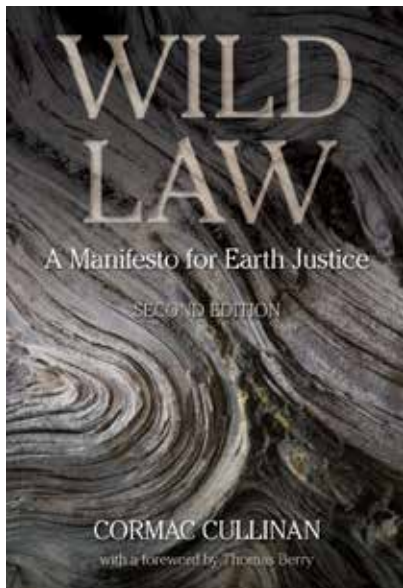
Biosafety Conference

Ogoni Clean-Up Training



Dialogue with students

Books You should Read

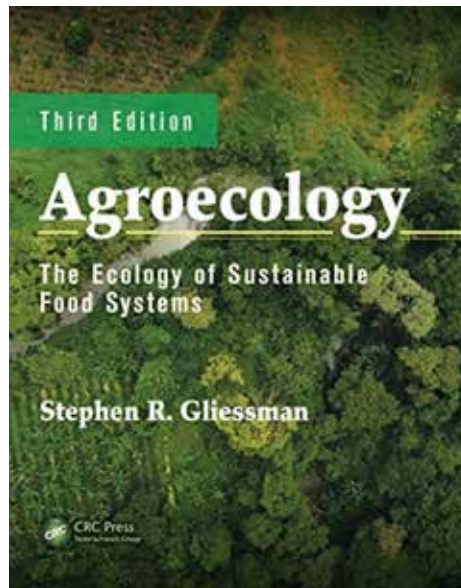


Wild Law: A Manifesto for Earth Justice

Cormac Cullinan

We are rapidly destroying our only habitat, Earth. It is becoming clear that many of the treaties, laws and policies concluded in recent years have failed to slow down, let alone halt or reverse, this process. Cormac Cullinan shows that the survival of the community of life on Earth (including humans) requires us to alter fundamentally our understanding of the nature and purpose of law and governance, rather than merely changing laws.

In describing what this new 'Earth governance' and 'Earth jurisprudence' might look like, he also gives practical guidance on how to begin moving towards it. Wild Law fuses politics, legal theory, quantum physics and ancient wisdom into a fascinating and eminently readable story. It is an inspiring and stimulating book for anyone who cares about Earth and is concerned about the direction in which the human species is moving.



Agroecology: The Ecology of Sustainable Food Systems

Stephen R. Gliessman

Agroecology is a science, a productive practice, and part of a social movement that is at the forefront of transforming food systems to sustainability. Building upon the ecological foundation of the agroecosystem, Agroecology: The Ecology of Sustainable Food Systems, Third Edition provides the essential foundation for understanding sustainability in all of its components: agricultural, ecological, economic, social, cultural, and even political. It presents a case for food system change and why the current industrial model of food production and distribution is not sustainable.

The book begins with a focus on the key ecological factors and resources that impact agricultural plants and animals as individual organisms. It then examines all of the components of agroecosystem complexity, from genetics to landscapes and explores the transition process for achieving sustainability and indicators of progress. The book then delves into power and control of food systems by agribusiness, and the need to develop a new paradigm that moves beyond production and explores issues of food justice, equity, food security and sovereignty. The book concludes with a call to action so that research and education can link together for transformative change in our food systems.

Groundbreaking in its first edition, respected in its second edition, this third edition of this standard textbook has evolved along with the field. Written by an expert with more than 40 years of experience, the third edition begins with a strong ecological foundation for farming practices and ends with all of us thinking about the critical importance of transitioning to a new paradigm for food and agriculture, and what this means for our future.

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