



**A report on the 4th University of Port Harcourt Rights Livelihood
College Public Lecture –
Centre for Conflict and Gender Studies, University of Port Harcourt,
30-31 August 2018, by Fidelis Allen, RLC Coordinator**

Introduction

Natural resource extraction, social relations and conflict in Africa, was the theme of the 2018 University of Port Harcourt Rights Livelihood College public lecture, at the university's Centre for Conflict and Gender Studies on 30th and 31st August.¹ The swift threat of overcast, stormy massive and intense rain on the first day, in a fashion, experts would easily link to climate change, did not disrupt the lecture, thanks to the determination of participants from within and outside the university to attend. It had two main parts: the public lecture proper and the 11th *Sustainability Academy*, organized by the Health of Mother Earth Foundation, as part of the RLC programme this year with the topic: *Extractives, Oceans and Fisheries*.

Courtesy Call

It started with a courtesy call on the Vice Chancellor, Professor Ndowa E.S. Lale, in the early hours of 30th August, precisely at 9.am. Deputy Vice Chancellor in charge of Administration, Professor Reginald Ogali, received the team, on behalf of the Vice Chancellor.² The Registrar of the University, Mrs. Dorcas Otto, and the Deputy Vice Chancellor in charge of Academics, Professor Hakeem Fawehinmi, were equally present to receive the team.

The courtesy call happened simultaneously with registration of participants at the lecture hall. At least, a total of 500 persons attended both the public lecture and 11th Sustainability Academy. Among the participants were, university professors, students, civil society, representatives of the University Women Association (UPWA), local communities in the Niger Delta and fisherfolks from Togo.

Lecture

In his welcome remarks, the Vice Chancellor, represented by Professor Ogali, thanked the Rights Livelihood Foundation, Health of Mother Earth Foundation and Robert Bosch Stiftung for the annual

¹ The 4th in a series since 2013, when the Rights Livelihood College in university of Port Harcourt was established, to become the fifth in the world and second in Africa. Speakers for these lectures are drawn from among over 160 recipients of the Swedish Rights Livelihood Foundation Award, spread across the world.

² The team, led by the University of Port Harcourt Rights Livelihood Coordinator and Acting Director of the Centre for Conflict and Gender Studies, Dr Fidelis Allen, had the Guest Lecturer, Jacqueline Moudeina, Associate Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Professor Kalu, Executive Director of Health of Health of Mother Earth Foundation, and Rev. Nimmo Bassey.

lectures in the University. She commended the positive role these lectures are playing in promoting discourses on peace, environmental and economic justice. As she put it “ ... the contribution made by public lectures such as this one, are targeted towards growing a culture of critical engagement with social, economic and political issues that affect the development of our nation and the Africa continent.” She then reiterated the commitment of the University of Port Harcourt to ensuring to continue to play its own role to ensure these lectures continue. In addition, he urged participants to make the best of the lectures. “We are also gratified that the Centre for Conflict and Gender Studies is making great impact in its core mandate area of surveying, understanding and proffering conflict resolution strategies, especially in the volatile Niger Delta of our dear country,” was how the Vice Chancellor expressed his happiness with the event, and thanked the director of CCGS and Coordinator of the Rights Livelihood College in University of Port Harcourt, Dr Fidelis Allen, Academic Board, staff and other stakeholders for working together to organize the lecture.



Deputy Vice Chancellor, Administration, Professor Reginald Ogali and Deputy Vice Chancellor, Academic, Professor Hakeem Fawehinmi

Earlier, Dr Allen, while giving an opening speech had welcomed participants and expressed gratitude to the 8th Vice Chancellor of the university, Professor Ale, for his sustained support for the RLC in the university. He stretched the appreciation to the guest lecturer, Moudeina, for her time in Nigeria for the lecture, and thanked the director of Health of Mother Earth, Rev. Nnimmo Bassey for co-hosting the event for the fourth time since 2013. Bassey and Moudeina are recipients of the Rights Livelihood Award-2010 and 2011, respectively.



Dr Fidelis Allen, Acting Director, CCGS/Coordinator of RLC UNIPORT

The Guest Lecturer, Jacqueline Moudeina, was rightly introduced by the co-host of the University of Port Harcourt RLC, and recipient of Rights livelihood Foundation Award, Rev. Nnimmo Bassey. Moudeina received the Award--RLA in 2011-- for her struggles for the protection of human rights in her home country, Chad. She was called to the Chadian Bar twenty years ago. She is at the moment, President of the Chadian Association for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (ATPDH).

Jacqueline spoke on natural resources and conflict in Africa. She started by recounting her 13 years (1982-1996) exile experience in Congo Brazzaville,³ a period she referred to as boom in the oil industry of that country. Paradoxically, by the time she was leaving Congo, civil servants were being owed 10 months salaries. Stories of this nature easily characterize many oil producing countries in Africa. This, for her is one point in favour of the argument that natural resource extraction is more of a curse than a blessing in Africa. It was also the reason, when the issue of oil production arose in her country, she insisted that the right way to go was agriculture and not oil.

Chad is a country of 11 million people, with a land size of 1,284,000 km, bordered by Libya, Sudan, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroun, and the Central African Republic.⁴ Jacqueline questioned the World Bank's support of the development of the oil industry in the post-1960 era in Chad. The bank provided funds for the construction of the Chad-Cameroun pipeline, which generated several human rights violation incidents. Those living in the areas affected by the construction, were asked to vacate their ancestral land by a consortium of companies—Shell, Total, and Petronas- who paid no attention to the side effects of the construction and its human rights implications.

According to her, oil production eventually started in the Kome and adjoining areas, in August 2003, with 300 active oil wells. Doba, the country's oil capital, which receives 5% of total revenues accruing from production to the country has nothing to show for the money meant to develop the area. Instead, facilities, such as schools, hospitals, potable water, and other facilities for the improvement of living conditions are generally absent. The country failed to keep its own terms in the agreement it had with the World Bank. Meanwhile, the government channeled oil money into procuring weapons in the guise of handling threats posed by the war in Sudan. Chad now owes its creditors, in investments worth \$1.9 billion. This debt, owed to a consortium of investors (Chevron 25%; Exxon 40% and Petronas 35) in the construction of a 1070 km, Chad-Cameroun pipeline, remains a burden on citizens.

At some point, Chevron divested to the Chadian government, but the government chose to borrow from Glencore—a Swiss company and financial player in the Chadian oil industry—to finance that investment. Usually, there are damaging consequences, with fluctuating and downward trend in the global price of oil. It is even worse if, as things stand, the oil industry in Chad, produces only for the international market. The economy extremely vulnerable to varying global price and interest rates, as this, in particular, can be injurious to investment and income. This was part of the problem, with rising interest rates on money borrowed from Glencore. It rose to 7 % from a much lower figure, forcing the government into considering a loan from the International Money Fund (IMF). Moudeina argued that Chad is one of the most corrupt countries in the world today. And suggested that much of the loan was mismanaged and stolen by politicians. Typical of many oil-rich countries in Africa, her arguments reinforce the natural resource curse thesis, with corruption as a key feature in many of these countries. Below are some of the solutions she suggested to the curse of oil in Africa:

³ Jacqueline Moudeina (2018) *Natural Resource Extraction and Conflict in Africa*, paper presented at the 4th University of Port Harcourt Rights Livelihood College Public Lecture, at the Centre for Conflict and Gender Studies, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria on 30 August.

⁴⁴ Chad had her the status of political independence from France on August 11, 1960.

- African governments should deal with the problem of impunity associated with players in the industry, especially as touching violation of human rights of people.
- Promote good governance of natural resources.
- Improve on democratization by ensuring independent judiciaries and good management of elections.



Jacqueline Modeina, RLA2011, Chadian Human Rights Lawyer.

11th Sustainability Academy

Three presentations were made in the Sustainability Academy on 31st August shortly after an opening remarks by Allen, who charged participants on the value of the session and the need for them to make the best of the time. He was clear, stating the socio-economic and environmental implications of continuing abuse of natural resources such as oceans and other water bodies. He mentioned environmental conflict as a trend, for which people must be adequately prepared to deal with through cutting-edge training and capacity building. He called for support of the centre headed by him – CCGS— as a way of helping to make institutions respond better with policy relevant analysis at the local national, regional, and international fronts.



Bassey gave the initial talk on the topic, *Privatizing the Oceans through Pollution*. In line with the theme of the Sustainability Academy--*Extractives, Oceans and Fisheries*—he started by retelling the projected 2050 as the year in which plastics shall have taken over the oceans, instead of fish. As he suggested, the implications are grave. Worse, people are already consuming aquatic resources with plastics in their bodies. Not only is this catastrophic for the health of people, the teeming fisherfolks, whose livelihoods are already turning sour because of pollution, pose a threat to broader economic and political processes and security across Africa.

His presentation suggested that ocean is a zone of man's limitless search for resources. Human's unrestrained and unethical view that nature exist only as a source of resources to meet industrial economic growth needs without a right to be protected, deals dangerously against the safety of oceans. Industrial fishing, for example, especially in Europe, is fast depleting fish in the oceans and lakes. Specifically, the devastating impact on the survival or protection from extinction of whales, is alarming. Worse, is pollution in Africa's coastlines, emanating from the oil industry. Bassey averred that mining in deep seabed will destroy the world's common heritage. As he argued, already, a United Nations 1970 resolution demanding peaceful use of the seabed, suggest a responsibility on the part of governments and champions of industry to be mindful of the negative impact of their business or mining activities on the floor of the ocean.

Privatization of water, sea, rivers, and oceans would suggest that pollution has made it difficult for all except the polluter in search of economic benefits.⁵ Nnimmo cited the example of Niger Delta, where as we all know, oil companies have had a long history of pollution of the environment, for which many now are no longer able to make the best use of resources such as rivers and creeks. Fisherfolks and others who previously found these resources as sources of food and income seem to have lost it all to the companies.

Nnimmo therefore called on fisherfolks all over the world to unite and tackle this threat. Apparently, many of them are unable to continue their fishing business due to lack of money to acquire sea-going boats, as fishing close to the shore is no longer productive in many parts of Africa, where water has been polluted by mining activities.



Rev. Nnimmo Bassey, Executive Director, Health of Mother Earth Foundation /RLA 2010

⁵ Nnimmo Bassey (2018) *Privatization of the Ocean through Pollution*, paper presented at 11th Sustainability Academy at the Centre for Conflict and Gender Studies, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria, organized by Health of Mother Earth in collaboration with UNIPORT Rights Livelihood College (RLC) on 31 August.



Dr Babatunde Bolaji Benard, delivering the main Sustainability Academy lecture.

Impact of pollution in the Niger Delta on fisheries was the title of Dr Babatunde Bolaji Benard's paper at the Sustainability Academy. The delta region of Nigeria, which he dwelt on, is Nigeria's oil strap. At once, it is a region severely affected by decades of oil and gas pollution. For a region constituting at least 12% of the entire landform of Nigeria, inhabited by 31 million people, of which the majority are farmers and fisherfolks, a region widely acknowledged to be rich in biodiversity, massive oil pollution due to industry activities, spanning decades, has meant progressive harm to resources that previously enriched life in the ecosystem. Benard argued that apart from disrupting the balance of ecosystem and its services, the social, economic, environmental and cultural implications of oil and gas pollution remained a cause for concern. Benard rightly suggested ways in which oil pollution has affected fisheries and called for the protection of creeks, rivers, and oceans from oil pollution in order to preserve life in the Niger Delta.

President of Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), Mr Legborsi Pyagbara, spoke on the Right Livelihood Award and the Niger Delta situation. He was of the view that oil is a curse in Nigeria, pointing to despairs arising from many years of pollution and poverty in a region where people depend on the land and water for their survival. Nevertheless, he commended the Rights Livelihood College in University of Port Harcourt and Health of Mother Earth Foundation for helping to raise awareness on these issues through the public lectures.



Mr Legborsi Pyagbara,

Evelyn Ewere Anyokwu, a Ph.D. student at the Rights Livelihood College, Center for Development Research, in University of Bonn, Germany, participated in both the lecture and Sustainability Academy session. She presented a paper based on her on-going doctoral research, on the title, *Alternative Extraction for Maritime Biorefinery*. How important is this to fisheries? Addressing this question, she acknowledged the reality of the post-industrial revolution era, depending largely on natural resources.⁶ Revenues, raw materials, energy, and transportation are areas the global economy have been impacted with natural resource extraction.



Evelyn Ewere Anyokwu, Ph.D. student, RLC, ZEF, University of Bonn, Germany.

Regarding oceans and fisheries, Evelyn argued that employment, income and Gross Domestic Product are areas in which the ocean has made huge contribution. She made explicit reference to a World Bank research that the ocean contributes \$1.5 billion to world GDP. And went further to talk about the ocean as a source of nutrients and protein from fish for man. Pollution however has emerged posing serious threat to the role played by the ocean in meeting the aforementioned needs.

Conclusion

The lectures were followed by question-and-contribution-making plenaries, that greatly enriched learning and helped to facilitate achievement of the objectives of the events. The public lecture ended with a cocktail party, offered by the office of the Vice Chancellor, where participants had time to interact for the purpose knowing one another better and establishing contacts for possible future networking. Below are some photos showing some of the participants.

⁶ Evelyn Ewere Anyokwu (2018) *Alternative Extraction for Maritime Biorefinery*, paper presented at 11th Sustainability Academy at the Centre for Conflict and Gender Studies, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria, organized by Health of Mother Earth in collaboration with UNIPORT Rights Livelihood College (RLC) on 31 August.



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