



**ROSA
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Reflections On
Eco-Feminism,
Resilience And Resistance
In West Africa

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Resilience And Resistance
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ISBN: 978-978-775-022-3

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Preface

Rosa Luxemburg Foundation West Africa organized a forum on the 3rd to 5th of May 2023 with the theme: Eco Feminism as a tool for protest against the capitalist economic system.

The forum was held at the Iris Hotel, Toubab, Dia Law Dakar Senegal. Over fifty participants drawn from the West African sub region and from various fields of endeavour such as women working in agriculture and small and medium scale processing, human and women's rights activists as well as women in research and academia were in attendance.

The objective of the forum was to create a framework for exchanges between women on issues of eco feminism.

The articles collated in this publication are the views and perspective of selected participants of the Eco feminism forum. The articles focus on the lessons learnt from the excursion embarked upon by participants on the last day of the forum, to women fish processors and small and medium scale entrepreneurs in the rural area of Bargny. The contributors share their views and perspectives about what they learnt from the visits and compare it to the situation of women in their home countries as well as share the realities and challenges of women in their home countries.

This publication is therefore meant to share these views and perspectives in a permanent book form and make it accessible to people who will lay hand on it in print or electronic format.

Angela Ogodo Odah

Programme Manager Nigeria

Rosa Luxemburg Foundation- Nigeria

January 2025

Introduction

The publication of this nine-chapter book is coming out of a forum on eco-feminism organized in May 2023 by the West Africa office of Rosa Luxemburg Foundation in Dakar, Senegal. Some of the participants felt moved by the experience of the field visit that they resolved to put down a comparative account of challenges women in their countries face vis-à-vis what they witnessed in the fishing village in Dakar.

Chapter One entitled “where women trade...” by Kadishi Oliseh presents an examination of the intricacies of fishing villages, with a specific focus on the Senegalese village of Bargny and the Nigerian village of Epe. The author adeptly highlights the pivotal role that women play in these communities, underscoring their multifaceted involvement in fish processing, marketing and trading. A salient aspect of the chapter is the meticulous identification of the myriad challenges that women in these fishing villages confront. These challenges include:

- The pervasive influence of patriarchal system and gender roles, which serve to marginalize women's participation in decision making processes.
- The limited access to financial services and credit facilities, which stymies the economic empowerment of these women.
- The ever-present threat of land grabbing and displacement that hangs precariously over the lives of the people.

The article furthermore examines the deleterious impact of climate change on these fishing villages. This includes:

- The inexorable rise of sea levels and the attendant phenomenon of coastal erosion.
- The increased frequency and severity of flooding, which wreaks havoc on the lives and livelihoods of the people, and
- The alterations in temperature and weather patterns, that disrupt the delicate ecological balance of these communities.

To address these challenges, the chapter proffers a number of pragmatic solutions, including:

- The implementation of environmental and climate policies at the local level, that would serve to mitigate the effects of climate change.
- The provision of support and development programmes for fishing villages and markets, which would enhance women's economic empowerment; and
- The advocacy for women empowerment and equal access to fishery resources, which would serve to redress the existing power imbalance.

The chapter is a compelling examination of the challenges confronted by women in fishing villages.

Chapter Two on women's organizing and resistance against corporate capture provides an analysis of women's struggles against corporate capture in Ghana and Senegal. Bashiratu Kamal the author examines the impact of neoliberal policies on women's livelihoods, highlighting their displacement, marginalization, and resistance. The article sheds light on the experiences of women salt miners in Ada Songor, Ghana, and women fish processors in

Bargny, Senegal, who are fighting to protect their livelihoods and communities.

Kamal demonstrates how women organize and resist corporate capture, using diverse strategies and alliances. The article highlights the importance of women's collective action and solidarity in challenging corporate power and advocating for their rights. The author also critiques government complicity in facilitating corporate capture, prioritizing corporate interests over citizen's rights. The article raises important questions about the impact of neoliberal policies on women's livelihoods and the need for alternative development models that prioritize social justice and human rights. The article is a powerful testament to women's resilience and resistance in the face of corporate capture.

Chapter three of this book, written by Betty Abah, paints a picture of how the threats of climate change, industrialization and urbanization - the last two been government's direct policies - contribute to turning the ancient fishing Bargny Community in Senegal into a ghost of its glorious past. She chronicled in the chapter that this situation which, like the fishing community of Badagry in South West Nigeria, mirrors the plights of other communities across West Africa, and that it is women that are at the worst receiving end of these changes.

On the climate change situation, she quotes a woman activist from Bargny, thus: "the ocean keeps encroaching every single year and the people keep fleeing, keep moving backwards until there is barely anywhere to turn to. The chapter also documents the plight of Badagry people who are victims of displacement and pollution caused by the West African Gas Pipeline (WAGP), and its effects on aquatic life. She quotes: "Community voices", which registered

displeasure at the state of things, for example a businesswoman from the Community had this to say: "many of the women are selling fish, since they started this pipeline, there are no more fishes. The heat from their facilities is too much for our children".

Chapter Four entitles "a comprehensive review of challenges facing women in African agriculture and fisheries," is contributed by Mercy Anino Atsekurubu. This author offers an analysis of the traditional economic roles of women in African agriculture and fisheries. It sheds light on the often-overlooked contributions of women in these sectors and highlights the significant impact of climate change, oil pollution, and environmental degradation on their livelihoods. The author's emphasis on the importance of recognizing and supporting women's roles in agriculture and fisheries is a significant contribution to the discourse on women's empowerment and sustainable development in Africa.

Chapter Five is entitled "the economic effects of the farmers-herders conflict on women and 9 Girls in North Central Nigeria". The author Angela Odah provides an in-depth examination of the economic effects of the farmers-herders conflict on women and girls in North Central Nigeria. She highlights the crucial role women play in agricultural production and trade in the region, and how the conflict has led to the loss of their livelihoods, displacement, and vulnerability to abuse.

The article is structured with an introduction, literature review, and analysis of the economic effects of the conflict on women and girls. The author employs a combination of secondary data, key informant interviews, and case studies to provide an understanding of the impact of the conflict on women and girls. The piece underscores the agency and resilience of women in the face of

conflict and displacement. The article provides examples of women who have assumed new roles as breadwinners and caregivers, and who have found alternative means of livelihood in the face of displacement.

The article also provides a critical analysis of the Nigerian government's response to the conflict, highlighting its failure to protect the rights of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and to provide adequate support for their resettlement and reintegration. The author's recommendations include the provision of psychosocial support to IDPs, initiatives to monitor and protect women and girls from abuse, and the establishment of ranches and farms to grow grass for cattle.

Chapter Six entitled “lessons learnt from participation in eco-feminism forum” is authored by Angela Coutinho. As the title of the piece suggest, it is based on the lessons learnt from participation in the Eco-Feminism Forum in Dakar, Senegal. The forum's focus on the interconnectedness of women's empowerment and environmental sustainability resonates deeply and the group's efforts to shed light on these critical issues is a critical strength and contribution that this publication has made to public discourse on the subject.

The group's observation that women are disproportionately involved in domestic work, family, and children's education, perpetuated' by societal and cultural norms, is a reminder of the persistent gender inequalities that plague our societies. The fact that women in semi-urban and rural areas face greater subordination and exclusion only serves to worsen this problem.

The author also captures the group's emphasis on the importance of recognizing the pivotal role women play in environmental

preservation and sustainability. The examples cited from Niger and Senegal, where women are driving efforts to preserve the environment and promote sustainable development, demonstrate the critical role women can play in shaping a more sustainable future.

Chapter Seven on "reflection on the forum ecofeminism: a means of women's protest against the capitalist economic system and ecological challenges" was authored by Hamdiya Katchirika, one of the participants at the Dakar Forum. The article provides an exploration of the intersectionality of women's rights and environmental protection in Africa. The author's personal experience at the conference on ecofeminism in West Africa adds a unique perspective to the discussion, enriching the analysis with firsthand insights.

The article delves into the numerous challenges faced by women in agriculture and fisheries, including the impacts of climate change, oil pollution, and patriarchal domination. These challenges not only threaten the livelihoods of women but also exacerbate existing social and economic inequalities.

The author argues that women's empowerment is inextricably linked to environmental sustainability, and that promoting ecofeminism is essential for achieving sustainable development and women's empowerment. The author in this piece also called on policymakers and practitioners to improve the living and working conditions of women fish processors and promote ecofeminism as a means of achieving sustainable development and women's empowerment.

Chapter Eight entitled "a comparative article on the lessons learned from the ecofeminism forum and excursion, and the reality in any

Nigerian community" by Doofan Anaka presents an exploration of the complex relationships between women, the environment, and society. Through a combination of personal anecdotes, statistical data, and conceptual analysis, the author sheds light on the ways in which the oppression of women and the degradation of the environment are intimately connected.

The author notes that the notion that a woman is not complete without a man is deeply ingrained in African culture and lifestyle, and that this notion determines the rights and privileges that are accorded, and denied to women.

The article also provides an analysis of the impact of capitalism on the environment and women. It notes that capitalism has a primary goal of profit-making, and little care about environmental protection and sustenance. This has led to the destruction of animal habitats, the pollution of the environment, and the exploitation of women. This analysis provides a useful framework for understanding the ways in which capitalism perpetuates the oppression of women and harm the environment.

Chapter nine is entitled "ecofeminism connecting the dots between women and nature;" written by Hawa D. Varney. The piece makes a power statement: "we are either going to have a future where women lead the way to make peace with the earth or we are not going to have a human future at all." It also presents an exploration of the intricate relationship between women and the environment. The author weaves together personal anecdotes, statistics, and data to emphasize the importance of recognizing the interconnectedness of women's empowerment and environmental sustainability.

Chapter 1

WHERE WOMEN TRADE: A Comparative Analysis of the Fish Village in Bargny, Senegal and Epe Fish Village in Nigeria, its Realities and the Challenges of Climate Change.

Kadishi Oliseh, Nigeria

Introduction

Fishing villages or fishing towns have always been an important part of humanity, society, and country in the history of mankind, although they vary in size, structure, and aquatic produce, they are evident around the world and their economy is based on catching and harvesting fish and seafood. In these fishing villages, different genders play different roles, but most importantly, women's activities cannot be overlooked as they are important contributors to the fishing villages and towns such as auxiliary labor in fishery production, processing the fish and seafood, working in fish factories, cleaning and mending nets, marketing, distribution, and trading of the fish and seafood produces, etc.

Examples of fishing villages and towns around the world include Wanchese, Santorini a fishing town in Greece, Barfkeur fishing

village in Manche France, Cabo San Lucas in Mexico, Bayou La Batre in Alabama United States of America, Halong Bay fishing village in Vietnam, Chibu fish village in Chiburijima, Japan, Newport fishing village in the USA, Pittenweem fishing village in Scotland, Udappu Tamil fishing and shrimp farming village in Sri Lanka, Destin fishing village in USA, Salom fishing village in Idaho, Covelong fishing village in Chennai India, Hovden fishing village in Norway, Kakapir fishing village in Karachi Harbour Pakistan, Taganga in Colombia.

There are also Fishing villages in Africa such as Tanji fishing village in the Gambia, Arniston fishing village in South Africa, Cayar in Senegal, Akwidaa fishing village in Ahanta West district in Ghana, Taghazout fishing village in Morocco, and Bargny in Senegal. Examples of fishing villages and towns in Nigeria include Epe fishing village in Lagos, Makoko fishing village in Lagos

This work will focus on a comparison of Bargny fishing village in Senegal and Epe fishing village in Nigeria, The work has been divided into sections which would help to better understand the realities of both societies and compare differences and similarities with regard to how the fishing village functions, the issue of climate change and then discover if their unique activities in combating climate change and their activities as grass root Eco-feminists.

This work will adopt the use of a historical approach in gathering and interpreting data. It includes the use of both primary and secondary data. Primary data include oral interviews, newspapers, online materials, etc. It will also use secondary sources which include books, journals to mention a few.

Conceptual Clarification

Climate change

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) defines “climate change as a change which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and an addition to natural climate variability observed over a comparable time period”

Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism, also known as ecological feminism, is a subset of feminism that looks at how women and nature interact, it also shows the connection and explores the relationships between women and the natural world. French feminist Françoise d'Eaubonne coined the name ecofeminism in 1974. (Johnson, Kofi, and Oyinate, R. Babatunde, P. 2009)

Ecology

Ecology is a complicated subject that includes each organism, the physical environment, and interactions among organisms and between the environment and the organisms. (Eka Ratnasari and Ely Djulia. 2017 p 394) It is the biological study of natural systems that gives rise to the term "ecology". It looks at how disruptions happen in the environment.

Fishing Villages/ Towns

In its simplest meaning, fishing villages and fishing towns simply means a village or town located near a fishing ground or coastal area where fishing activities take place and a distinct feature across all fishing villages and town that makes it unique is the economy.

The economy is based on fishing, harvesting seafood as well and processing fish and seafood providing fishing opportunities and businesses.

Fish Markets

Fish Market is a marketplace where fish seafood and aquatic products are bought and sold, a location for marketing fish products. Most importantly it is a place where most of the wholesale trade between fish merchants, fishermen, retail fish vendors, and individual consumer meet to trade.

Historical Survey and Geographical Location of Bargny in Senegal and Epe in Nigeria

EPE

Epe is an ancient community and is one of the coastal towns in Lagos located on the northern shores of Lagos, it lies on the arms of Lagos Lagoon, (Jimoh F. O p 2) in Lagos State, South Western Nigeria. The historical trajectory of Epe is multifaceted, but it is believed that Epe was founded by Ijebu hunters. To carry out fishing and economic endeavors migrated to Epe, (Jimoh M. O, p111) they also carried out hunting expeditions in earlier times it was called Igbo Obo which means “forest of Monkey”.

Epe settlement has been traced to be a part of the Ijebu kingdom, a riverine Ijebu settlement that was and still is inhabited by the Ijebus, Ijaws, Mahin, and other farmers and fishermen who migrated. A major event in the history of Epe was the emergence of Kosoko in 1851/1852 which as it was a watershed that marked the end of an era and the beginning of another in history, (Jimoh F. O.

pp 2-3). It served as a refuge point for Kosoko and his forces and it also changed the town's socio-political and economic structure. There were several attacks on Epe by Governor Freeman in 1863, and in 1875 Epe was ceded to the British; different activities took place in Epe during the colonial rule.

With Nigerian independence from Britain in October 1960, Epe became part of Lagos, first in western Nigeria and later as part of Lagos State with the creation of states, and in recent times is known as a fishing village and collection point for the exportation of fish, corn, palm produce, and cassava to mention a few despite it being known as fishing village, it is still known to have amazing tourist centres. With regards the population, Epe has about 181,409 people as of the 2006 census(Encyclopedia Britannica) Main economic practice and employment is fishing, and fish processing as it is the source of livelihood for its inhabitants.

BARGNY, SENEGAL

Bargny is a coastal fishing village in Senegal. It is located about 35 kilometers South of Dakar and with a population consisting of about 70,000 people, Bargny was founded by the Lebou ethnic group (Fazila Bhimji, 2022). In Bargny, fishing is a way of life and family heritage. The main employment is fishing, fish processing, and marketing. In Bargny the sea is the source of livelihood and income (Uwazuruike A. 2023. p74).

Similarities and Differences between Bargny and Epe Villages

Having looked at the historical survey and geographical location of Bargny in Senegal and Epe in Nigeria, it is evident that the villages have some similarities and differences.

Small Populations and both communities are a Fishing Community

The small population of the 2 communities must be noticed, Epe according to the 2006 census has about 181,409 people while Bargny has a population consisting of about 70,000 people. Also, both towns are fishing communities with the economy and the main employment being fishing, fish processing, and fish and seafood marketing.

Gendered division of labour

Women process and sell the fish while men go fishing, women are recognized as the processors and marketers of fish, while fishermen are men. Mostly, men own the boats, and you hardly find a woman owning canoes and boats, this gender role is evident in both Bargny and Epe. The women in Bargny and Epe have made note that their fishing activities which include processing and trading were inherited from their mothers. In other words, Women do not play a major role in fish capturing, but they play a role in administration and deciding the value of the fish because they are in charge of sales.

The threat of water hyacinth, and seaweed to the fishing villages, fishing, and the fishing businesses

This is affecting both Bargny and Epe, although it is recognized as a natural occurrence, recently it has become a real threat to fishermen, and to the survival of women who sell fish and other fish traders in the community. This is because the hyacinth, when it doesn't clear, makes it hard for the men to fish, and they end up being stranded on shore without catching enough fish, this in turn

affects business and makes the viable fish expensive. The Hyacinth is known to destroy canoes and nets, the threat of the water hyacinth has been corroborated in Epe by the “Iyalaje” which means the market leader in the person of Chief Mrs. Folashade Ojikutu and for Bagny, Madame Fatou. They both contended that seaweed and hyacinth disturb the fishermen.



Madam Samba, the Rosa Luxemburg participant, showing some seaweed that washed up to the coast during the excursion held on 5th May 2023.

WHERE WOMEN TRADE: Women activities in the Fishing Village and its reality in Bargny, Senegal, and Epe-Nigeria

Women's activities in the fishing village and industries are very important, it is also the source of income for most women in the fishing villages, this income is what is used to take care of their families and children's school fees, women are involved as entrepreneurs and owners of agribusiness, workers in the fish processing sites, play a role in the marketing and trading of the fish and seafood. They also make decisions on the values of fish products and are part of the pre-harvest, harvest, and post-harvest stages.

Women's Role as Entrepreneurs and Workers in the Processing and Production of Fish and Fish Products

In the fishing sector, women are known to represent and participate more in the processing of the fish and sea foods, working in fish factories and businesses, and cleaning and mending nets. They are auxiliary labourers in fishery production. In Bargny during the Rosa Luxemburg excursion on the 5th of May 2023, it was evident that women are an important player in this as Madam Fatou Samba made mentioned how women entrepreneurs employ 5 to 10 women each to work on fish processing for export. This is also applicable to the women in Epe, where women constitute a large percentage of fish processors. In Senegal, men traditionally catch fish and women sell them (Uwazuruike A. 2023. p72). This also applies to most societies in Nigeria such as Epe.

Marketing And Trading, eg. Fish Traders, Fish Brokers, etc.

In both villages, women are the backbone of the fresh and dry fish, they are in charge of marketing and trading the fish and seafood

produced both locally in the fish markets and internationally through exports, etc. they are in charge of the decision on price and fish value especially through associations, cooperatives, and union.

A Comparison of Climate Change and it's Impact on the both Fishing Villages

Research has also shown that 80% of displaced people by climate change are women. In this work, it is evident that climate change is affecting the fishing village and fishing market in Bargny and Epe. Examples of climate change incidences are flooding, coastal erosion, the rise of sea level, and an increase in temperature and heat waves to mention a few.

Coastal Erosion

This effect of climate change affects the two fishing villages. In Bargny especially Bargny Guedi, and in some places in Epe like Lafiaji. Coastal erosion is the loss or displacement of land as well as the long-term removal of segments and rocks along the coastline as a result of the action of waves, currents, tides, wind-driven water, waterborne ice, or other storm-related effects.

Rise of sea level and flooding

Bargny and Epe have been affected by the rise of sea level and flooding. In Epe the level has risen and there are records of flooding. (Oyekale A.S. 2012).

Heat waves and high temperature

One of the threats of climate change is heat waves, The women processors have to work all day in high heat waves and their fish

products are affected by the heat wave and sometimes spoils quickly.

Plastic waste and dirt

Plastic waste and dirt are being washed up into the ocean and the seashores which are affecting the fish as they ingest some.



A woman processing fish in Bargny, image taking from the excursion held on 5th May 2023

A Comparison of Challenges Women face in both Fish Villages

Patriarchy, delegation through gender roles, and exploitation of women.

According to eco-feminism, the exploitation of women and the destruction and degradation of the environment are caused by patriarchy. These two problems are intertwined and cannot be handled without the overbearing male power structures being dismantled. In Bargny, it is mostly the men that fish and own boats, women are related to the processing and marketing of fish. Taxes are paid to the fishermen who in turn pay to the community, and the community leaders pay to the government on behalf of the fishing villages. Part of this apply to Epe. In Epe, men dominate the artisanal fishery and are the harvesters of fish species. (Abasilm C. F. and Onyewuchi I. V. 2020 p5127).

The destruction, displacement, and degradation of the environment and exploitation at sea by companies and industrial fleets.

The fishing villages, the ocean, seas, and women's activities are being threatened by big companies in the form of claims of land and environments, the threat of company products, and wastes affecting the ocean and fishing business. In the Senegalese waters, there are activities of European and Asian industrial fleets which is causing the depletion of fishing stocks (Fazilia Bhimhi 2022). For instance, in Bargny Senegal, the installation of the Sendou Coal Centre has affected the fishing activities and the fishing sector generally (Interview with Madam Fatou Samba). Also, industrial fishing fleets tend to pack tons of fish and destroy local fishermen's nets when they fish.

Lack of provision of basic amenities, poor sanitary conditions and equipment, and Infrastructures.

One of the challenges that has plagued the fishing villages as well as the women is the lack of basic amenities. There is limited availability of water for drinking and also processing fish products, Thus women have to go long distances to get water in the case of Bargny women to their homes which is far from the site to get water. Inadequate modernized sanitary and convenience facilities like toilets and bathrooms. In Bargny, this is evident and most recently, they have managed to have mobile toilets, (Madame Fatou Samba) In Epe, although the Lagos state government has carried out projects to build 12 convenience facilities in the market area, it is still not enough. Unstable and sometimes lacks of electricity constitute regular challenges. In Bargny, Madame Samba noted that there was no electricity in their community until the United Nations assisted in bringing electricity to the site.

Limited work, housing services, and room on the fish processing site and markets are issues that affect both Bargny and Epe, but in Epe, Lagos state has attempted to build 4 new offices for the market leaders as well as expand the fish market to accommodate 240 open stall and 5 trading areas (Olasunkanmi. 2022. Lagos state official website). However, complaints have risen that despite all these, the fish market is still not as presentable as a modern market and processing site should be.

Lack of government presence and recognition from Federal, state, and local government

In Epe, there are reports of the Lagos State government assisting women in the fishing village and market, expanding the fish

market, building stalls, and upgrading and remodeling the Oluwo fish market which was upgraded by Senator Abiru and inaugurated by Governor Sanwo-Olu (Olasunkanmi. 2022. Lagos state official website). In Bargny there is limited government presence and recognition.

The problem of access to Financial services, Financial support, Low capital, and investment.

Lack of credit and capital facilities, finances, and access to finances has always been a problem that has plagued women over time and in the case of supporting women's businesses in agriculture, business, etc. It is evident, especially for women in informal sectors. In Bargny, according to Madame Fatou Samba, neither the State nor the City Hall of Bargny helped them with their finances which has pushed the women processors not to pay their taxes.

The threat of Land grabbing and displacement

One of the challenges women face is the threat of being displaced and their land grabbed by the government or companies. In the case of Bargny, The Sendou Coal Centre is being installed on the perimeters of where the women process their fish and exploits, despite filling a complaint to the bank that financed the project, nothing was done (Madame Samba).

The challenge of technology input, modernized tools, and equipment for fish processing

Women need to buy processing machines but cannot afford to and have to work by hand, this is evident in both Epe and Bargny.

Illiteracy and lack of formal education

An important challenge that women face in both Epe and Bargny is that some of the women in these villages lack formal education which has posed a challenge overtime.

Possible Solutions

Implementation of environmental and climate policies at the local level.

State and Local government needs to pay attention and provide support and development programs to fishing village and fishing



Evidence of Coastal erosion in Bargny, image taken from the excursion held on 5th May 2023.

markets through the provision of infrastructures, loan, and credit finance system.

- NGOs and individuals carry out sensitization to educate women on the issue of climate change, ecofeminism, etc.
- Advocacy for the empowerment of women and also issues regarding the unequal access of women to fishery resources in fishing communities
- Provide more jobs and equal pay for equal work
- Improve working conditions for women
- Equal access to credits and financial services
- The government needs to tighten regulations on industrial fleets fishing on the country's coastal water.

Conclusion

Women play a key role in the fishing village and economy of Bargny in Senegal and Epe in Lagos state, Nigeria. Their roles vary from women processors to marketers etc. What cannot be overlooked is the gender roles allocated in the villages, The challenges these women face, and also the prevailing presence of climate and environmental problems, which have had the greatest impact on women and girls. Research shows that 80% of displaced people by climate change are women. In African countries and fishing communities most especially the 2 fishing villages looked at in this work, women have had to rely on natural resources for their livelihoods and have had to put in greater work to support their families through harsh weather conditions.

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Chapter 2

Women's Organising and Resistance against Corporate Capture: The Case of Women Salt Miners and Fish Processors in Ghana and Senegal

Bashiratu Kamal, Ghana

Across Africa, women continue to play significant roles in the economies of several countries in the formal and especially the informal sectors. While majority of those in the formal sector are found at the bottom of the employment ladders working as secretaries and office staff, majority of those in the informal sector are the employers whether as owners of shops, processors etc. This is especially so in the Agricultural sector where women play diverse roles. This is despite of women facing several challenges related to access, control and ownership of land and other resources, land grabbing and exposure to gender-based violence and harassment from the activities of Multi-National Corporation.

A UNESCO report in 1989 found that, women's critical role in Senegal's fisheries sector cannot not be downplayed. Today, it is estimated that over 40,000 women work as fish processors (Beatly, 2018) working as wholesale fish traders and processors. This is no different from the contributions of women in the Ada Songor area who over centuries have been key in the salt mining industry in Ghana. Despite of the massive contributions of these women to

their families, communities and economies of their countries, their livelihoods and existence in the sectors are seriously threatened by several government policies on Public Private Partnerships which is hinged on the several neoliberal policies, deregulations and gender-blind development planning efforts.

In this paper, I have done a comparative analysis of the struggles between the Khelcom Bargyn women's Fish Processors Association and the women salt miners in the Ada Songor areas of Senegal and Ghana respectively against corporate capture. These struggles are interwoven in several factors including resistance against the capture of their lands, livelihoods and their cultural and historical heritage. While, the struggles of the women in Ada Songor may differ from that of women in Bargyn, due to several factors, it is all rooted in gender-blind and corporation centered development planning and project

Women Salt Producers in Ada Songor

The 1992 constitution of Ghana and the Minerals and Mining Law Act, 2006 (Act 703) has vested non-contestable power in the hands of the government as a custodian of mineral resources for mostly large customary lands for concessions and acquisition. For this reason, the government of Ghana in 2020 leased several thousands in acres of land to the ELeCtroChem Ghana Limited (EGL) for the establishment of an industrial scale salt mining activity in the Ada Songor Lagoon (Torvikey et al, 2022). The production of salt has been noted to become the “largest salt and chlorine-alkali manufacturing company in West Africa, and one of the leading

players in the world's salt industry” (Mainoo, 2023). According to Torvikey et al (2022), the concession has been rationalized under the guise of “massive job creation potential, community development and economic growth through increased productivity in the salt sector...” Whiles this may seem good in discussions of economic development, it begs the question of “what happens to the fate of the thousands of women whose major livelihoods traditionally have been tied to the lagoon and salt production in the area? The activities of EGL have not only privatized salt production in the area, but privatization of the community, eroding small-scale mining but also exposed these women to other vulnerabilities. For the President of Ghana, the Ada Songor project “has the potential to generate the needed foreign exchange for the country whiles creating jobs, particularly for the teaming youth of Ada Songor and its surrounding communities” (Mainoo, 2023).

The Women Fish Processors in Bargny

With a staggering number of women in the fisheries sector in Senegal, they are working under several precarious conditions coupled with exposure to struggles to protect their livelihoods from being threatened by government and Multi-National Corporation who some have taken over the fish industry while others are clamoring for the lands traditionally belonging to women fish processors. As fish processors, the work of these women ranges from drying, salting and smoking fresh fish for durability. The Collaborative Management for a Sustainable Fisheries Future (COMFISH) asserts that fish continues to be an important source of protein for populations across Senegal and surrounding countries

like Mali and Burkina Faso. In 2019, a Turkish Multi-National Corporation Tosyalı Holdings entered an agreement with the government of Senegal in creating the Tosyalı Economic Zone decree towards the establishment of a production plant. The company in Senegal, the Turkish metallurgical company is working with the government to make Bargny-Sendou a special economic zone exposing the women fish processors in the area to lack of employment and income insecurities. The women in Bargyn have for several years been engaging in diverse activities in the area as occupants of the land where they engage in direct fish processing activities for survival. According to the North Africa post (2019), the company currently “manufactures in more than 20 facilities on three different continents and has become one of the biggest players of the Algerian economy with Tosyalı Algerie”.

Status of Women

Across Ghana and in other parts of Africa, the employment of women in the labour market has been characterized by low income, precarity and job and income insecurities. This is evident in both the formal and informal sectors with the informal sector accounting for about 85% (Bonnet et al, 2019) of women especially in the Agricultural sector. The informal sector across board is characterized by the lack of protection by Labour legislations and policies, lack of protection even by labour institutions, lower levels of education, expectations of women to provide traditional gendered roles, and gender-biased laws which curtail women's possibilities of working in the formal sector. Although the sector supports women's access to flexible work arrangements and

employment closer to home it may also become “a poverty trap” (Malta et al, 2019) for women. The biggest challenge of women in the sector has become the staggering emergence of corporate capture against women especially in Agriculture where governments have been leasing properties to giant Multi-National Corporations.

Women's Organising in the Informal Sector

Hugon (1989) noted in his work “Development planning is in crisis” that; whenever the formal economy experiences severe “economic regression in a context of indebtedness” the informal economy serves as the alternative for persons who have lost their employment, means of providing livelihood in totality. For a long time, women in the informal sector have been organizing either as economic groupings, market groups, community groups or in cooperatives to sell their wares, protect their means of production or as a support group. While women in the formal sector identify and join specific sector Trade Unions for their wages and conditions of work, those in the informal sector form associations mostly for welfare purposes.

In recent times, women in the informal sectors have also been organizing against unfriendly government policies, leasing of resources where women have been the original beneficiaries, health care deficits, economic regression, taxation and sanitation in their communities etc. With the changing face of developments globally, most development strategies have affected workers in all sectors where in the formal sector, it has been eroding benefits,

stagnation of wages and access to decent employment and in the informal sector the emergence of development have led to displacement, land grabbing and exposure to gender-based violence and harassment. These have been a result of the “burden of financial imbalances and foreign exchange shortages” (Hugon, 1989). The women Salt miners in Ada Songor are organized into an association with elected leadership just like the women fish processors in Bargny.

Resistance and Challenges

Since the announcement of the two concessions women in Bargny and Ada Songor have experienced several forms of abuses and violence, lack of respect for their voice and agency, exposure to income insecurities amongst many others. For the women fish processors in Bargny, they unequivocally denounced the processes Tosalı and the government have used in the acquisition which has resulted in a deep crash into not just their individual lives but the existence of the community, their history, culture and survival as a whole. The President of the Association made this known during a working visit facilitated by the Rosa Luxemburg foundation in 2023 for feminist activists. It was noted that not only did the company not consult the community it has failed to exhibit its commitment to the human rights due diligence processes in doing a gender-responsive assessment, instituting remedies and respecting the contributions of the fish processing to the lives of the community members and their activities.

In the case of the women in the Ada Songor areas, they were exposed to physical, verbal, psychological and other forms of

gender-based violence and harassment due to the invasion of the Military and Police in 2021 after the concession was granted. For the community members and Salt miners, EGL failed to also do due diligence by respecting community members and their existence in the acquisition process just as the government's failure to protect these citizens as equal stakeholders. While government has reduced the discussions to employment creation and development of salt production in Ghana, it has neglected the ancestral ties of the communities, their dispossession and livelihoods.

During the struggle, several strategies were devised by the two women's groups, the women in Ada Songor and the salt miners association embarked on series of demonstrations and street protests, media engagements, writing of petitions amongst many others. It is worth noting that, while the community and women as well as the Salt miners struggle with the company, the Chiefs and other opinion leaders supported the company against its own people. In 2023, the paramount chief of the area led a group of chiefs to the Presidency to strengthen the protection of the EGL by beefing up security with military and Police. The Paramount Chief entreated the President to “direct the State security agencies to offer protection to the company from miscreants” (Mainoo, 2023). While there have been several resistance strategies by the Association of Ada Songor Women Salt Miners, they are yet to explore legal means as a strategy to fight the battle.

On their part, the Women fish processors have equally adopted several means to litigate and resist against the government of Senegal through petitions, alliance building and in recent times lodging of a formal complaint to the Organization for Economic

Co-operation and Development (OECD). Their complaints have been hinged on the OECD using their systems to ensure that Tosyalı Holding Senegal respects the OECD guidelines since Turkey is a member. This is for the company to respect and take responsibility for their acquisition according to the human rights' due diligence laws. This process has been led by Lumière Synergie pour le Développement (LSD). With the EGL as a wholly Ghanaian owned company, and Ghana not a member of the OECD, the women can only use the national laws to seek redress.

Recognition by State Institutions

During our interactions with the Women Fish Processors and their President, it was noted that, the women have refused to pay taxes in any form to the state through any of its agencies unlike the Women Salt Miners who have been paying taxes to the government. History and evidence show that, they were noted to be one of the major tax contributors in Ghana in the 80s and that salt production if harness well will contribute immensely to the country's GDP (Torvikey et el, 2022).

Alliance Building for Resistance

In assessing efforts by the Ada Songor Salt Women's Association (ASSWA), also known as Yihi Kats?me! Or “Brave Women” (Torvikey et el, 2022) to resist the corporate capture and the struggles against government it is important to note that, they have worked with diverse groups to advance their issues. They have been working with other Community-Based Organizations, such as the

Ada Songor Advocacy Forum (ASAF) and Radio Ada, Third World Network, and as a member of the National Mining Coalition (NCOM). Through the alliances, the women have received support to organize “several consultative workshops and forums to direct national attention on the importance of salt in the lives of salt producing communities, especially among communities along the Songor Lagoon” (Torvikey et al, 2022). These organizations have supported the women with campaigns and advocacy efforts including stakeholder consultations, media stories, lobbying and petitioning authorities.

On the other hand, the Khelcom Women's group have also been engaged with diverse groups for advocacy purposes. It is out of this partnership that the LSD supported them to file a complaint at the OECD. It is worth noting that their alliance building has not been as strong like the women in Ada Songor.

Employment Charade and Public Private Partnership

In many Africa states, employment creation remains a key message used by political parties and politicians to gain mileage for incumbency or in efforts aimed at winning elections. This has always come at the cost of citizens as collateral damage when government deregulates and give companies access to resources to realize their promises. Ghana is ranked 40th with a percentage of 3.87% while Senegal is ranked 44th with 3.47% according to the Global Economy ranking (2022). Governments rely on big corporations to create jobs for their benefits and in keeping their

promises of employment creation. Kamal (2023) mentioned that, when big corporations take over resources from communities, farmers and community members may be reduced to just being company staff without adequate protection. When this happens, women are the ones exposed to precarity with little to no access to maternity protection, exposure to GBVH or decent wages and the lack of flexibility of work. In the 2020 manifesto of the NPP, they were emphatic on the one district, one factory policy as means to create jobs. Several years later, this has been just another promise for votes. While government continue to clamor on job creation, their economic policies continue to collapse businesses of informal sector workers while exposing formal sector workers to decent work deficits. In the several jobs created by EGL, only about 9% have been women whose conditions cannot be said to be decent. In a similar vain Tosyalı Holding Senegal created about 500 (Beatly, 2018) jobs which is in sharp contrast with the jobs held by the over 1000 women fish processors earning a living several decades back.

Conclusions

In conclusion, it can be noted that, as government continue to deregulate for corporations to continue “squeezing the blood of especially women” citizens are at the mercy of corporations who continue to not just rip them off their livelihoods but their very existence. Evidently, it can be seen that, women also use diverse strategies and efforts to resist these corporation and government oppression aimed at making them vulnerable.

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Chapter 3

Like Bargny, Like Badagry: West African Fisherwomen Bear The Brunts Of Natural And Industrial Furies

The threats of climate change, industrialisation, urbanisation and government's oppressive policies against Bargny, the ancient fishing community in Senegal, mirror the plights of others across West Africa, with women at the receiving end

By Betty Abah

Fishing, especially traditional fishing, has been most times tagged a male affair. But the truth is that the trade which has existed for millennial has had active participation of the womenfolk. Women worldwide have been an integral part of the fishing profession and have made huge livelihoods, supported families and made enormous contributions to their communities as fisher women, fish processors and fish sellers. Therefore, as fisher folks globally have come under the socioeconomic siege of the combined forces of nature in the form of Climate Change characterized by aggressively rising sea level, resultant coastal erosion and human interference via pollutions, corporate fishing companies, the aggressive

intrusion of giant industrial establishments, and conniving or indifferent governments, the marine ecosystem and communities are facing existential threat. Women in the affected fishing communities are the most impacted. The women of West Africa in particular are some of the most impacted and yet whose voices have been most silent in the world.

In May 2023, while attending Rosa Luxemburg West Africa's Forum on Ecofeminism in West Africa in Senegal, this writer was part of the group of participants at the conference that went on a field visit to Bargny community. That visit to the quiet fishing community was a major eye-opener to the reality of the endangered state of West African fisher folks and communities. The same spate of development which have left Bargny in a fix are the same that have impacted the people of Ajido and surrounding communities in the ancient Badagry town of my home country Nigeria, again, with women at the receiving end.

Bargny, an ancient fishing enclave and with a population of about 70,000 people, is located 35 kilometres south of Dakar, the Senegalese capital. It was founded by the Lebou ethnic group and was once a major coastal spot frequented by foreign tourists. The community is now a ghost of its glorious past, currently at the mercy of climate change, industrial pollution, overfishing by big fishing companies and currently in the grip of the natural and corporate abusers.

'The women are barely able to feed their families because of the current reality,' said Fatou, an activist who fights for the socioeconomic rights of the community. 'Where we are standing

now used to be homes of the people of this community. The ocean keeps encroaching every single year and the people keep fleeing, keep moving backwards until there is barely anywhere to turn to. You can also see the pollutions, the large amounts of dirt being swept all the way from Dakar to the shore here. These kills the fishes and there is hardly anything left to fish. And then they have to grapple with land grabs and the pollution of companies that are now encircling them. Life is quite hard for our people here,' she lamented.

On the shore of the Bargny river are rows and rows of brightly coloured boats whose owners sat idly under nearby tents. The area is naturally littered with countless cowry shells. Young men push their large colourful boats into the sea and return virtually empty. There is the proverbial water, water everywhere yet hardly any fishes in plain sight.

The visiting women activists watched as an old fisherman brought in a handful of fishes as his catch for the day and empties them carefully from the net into the boat and then into a bowl that had seen better days.

Down the road are relics of houses taken over by the rampaging sea – broken down walls and descript, desolate family compounds. Further down the road is the fish smoking area where several groups of women fish processers worked on their dry fish stocks. Others work hard amidst the heats of the smokey area. Others took turns spreading and drying the fishes in the sun while yet others package them. A few camels and donkeys driven by men stood quietly around. The young men piled the bag stacks of fishes unto

their silent beasts of burdens and drove away. Life is calculatedly slow and solemn in Bargny.

Besides the ongoing threats and impacts of climate change and the pollution, the people of Bargny have also had to grapple with evictions and displacements and of being uprooted from their ancestral lands and ancient livelihoods by the government in collusion with multinational companies desperate to grab their ancestral lands and impose their presence without due regard for their human and livelihoods rights. This is according to reports and testimonies of the women on ground on the day of the visit. The sea encroachment have driven many people from their traditional fishing while the constructions have uprooted thousands more from their homes and farmlands.

At a meeting called by Fatou who has worked to amplify the community and women's voices through her organisation, several women from the community who have formed themselves into a cooperative to push for their rights and rallied for economic solidarity for one another, lamented their ordeals. They spoke, they sang and they danced away their sorrow. Their lives, lands and livelihoods are at the verge of extinction. They want government to take a closer look at their plights and be more cognitive and more accommodating of them.

In the Throes of Industrialisation

A published report by LifeGate Radio, Italy echoes the women's lamentation: 'In recent years, threats have increased due to a series of projects launched by the Senegalese government as part of the

Sénégal Emergent plan wanted by President Macky Sall. This ambitious programme aims to make Senegal emerge on the global economic landscape by 2035 through the adoption of forms of development linked to modern infrastructure, industrial and urban hubs, and attracting foreign investment. Appealing promises and seductive ideas that are not without their consequences, as demonstrated by the case of Bargny, where the population was initially left out from decisions related to their rights, and ended up being considered almost as an obstacle to the country's ambitions. Confiscated land, resource depletion, environmental pollution, and loss of livelihoods such as fishing and agriculture. All in the name of the capital city's development. These effects, full-blown by now, have been going on for years, afflicting a community that's fighting not to disappear.'

More than climate change and the sea pollution, the government's industrialization agenda tends to pose more of an existential threat to Bargny and its people. The fishing hub like many poor and impoverished communities in Africa, is being encircled by development trends that is unaccommodating of its right to existence, provides no viable alternatives much less the right to thrive.

One of the biggest industrial threats is the Soccim Cement company and which is one of the largest in West Africa. Established in 1948, the company has grown to a mega industrial giant, reaching a capacity of 3.5 million tonnes production of cement annually and is expanding its quarries. It currently occupies more than 462 hectares of local farmlands. The resultant pollution from its activities in the form of emission of carbon dioxide and the

spread of dusts covering large expanses of the community are also a major cause for health concern.

Besides that is the development of the urban centre north east of Bargney. According to reports, in 2014, Senegal's government approved the construction works to be built in large urban centre of Diamniadio, halfway between Dakar and Blaise-Diagne International Airport. The urban centre constituting residential and administrative buildings, conference halls, stadiums, and hotels are obviously meant to service the upper class of the Senegalese society and their foreign investors and partners. The construction site covers 1,644 hectares of arable land, 70 per cent of which was grabbed from the municipality of Bargny and its citizens. That project, according to the government, is just the beginning of an ambitious urbanization plan and which clearly does not take into cognizance the existence, rights and future of the people of Bargney.

A yet more dangerous threat is the 125-Megawatt coal power plant known as the Sendou I. This controversial project was launched back in 2008 after an environmental impact studies coming from the African Development Bank (AFDB) which was termed dubious by activists. The extremely polluting plant, set to be located less than 500 metres from homes and public buildings is also in clear violation of the country's law, incited the community to a protest.

The legal action was able to halt the start of operations and save the production centres like the nearby women-led fish smokery. After the women won that hurdle, the government recently announced that the coal plant structure would be converted to a gas power plant. That project also poses a major threat to the people.

According to findings, the community is still under threat because another 100-hectare plot has been earmarked to be the site of a new, highly polluting metalworks centre called Tosyali from Turkey. Furthermore, not far from the power plant, construction began a few years ago on the Bargny-Sendou mining port hub. Set to become the management centre for the country's oil and mining products, the 520-million-dollar project was planned to be finished by 2022. Even this project, which led to further expropriation of land in the Côte Bargnoise, is a major threat to fishing

There is also the gigantic deep water port in Ndayane near Bargny and covering up to 1,200 hectares not far from Bargny. It is reportedly part of the government's plan to relaunch Dakar as a trade hub for the continent, taking on millions of dollars in debt while endangering local fishing and farming communities and tampering with the natural aquatic equilibriums of the area.

No Succour From the Government

As if all this weren't enough, rising sea levels due to global warming have, over the years, brought another threat to the people of Bargny, this time from the southwest. For years, coastal erosion has been destroying the homes of fisherfolk in the Miriam quarter, the oldest part of the settlement. Hundreds of people have been left homeless. The Senegalese government has promised multiple times to intervene and rehome these citizens, but never actually followed through. The only time progress appeared to be made was in 2007, when, due to dislocation of hundreds of people of the

fishing settlement by rising sea levels and global warming, the government of then President Abdoulaye Wade promised a resettlement plan for the people. Agreements were signed to build Miriam I and II across 1,433 plots of land for resettlement of affected families. The same land was earmarked for a coal plant two years later and the people were never resettled.

Like Bargny, Like Badagry

The fall-out of industrialization on the people of Badagry in Nigeria exactly mirrors the current state of Bargney people –the fact that industrialisation in most cases does not ultimately augur well for host communities in communities across Africa where their governments do not care much for the people' wellbeing as it does for the financial gains that are fall-outs of the bogus projects. Multinational companies also taking advantage of the absence or disdain for implementation of regulatory frameworks and global operating standards, capitalise on these loopholes and carry on with dehumanizing operations.

This writer collaborated with Gender Action, USA and co-wrote a special report funded by Oxfam Novib Netherlands titled 'Broken Promises' in 2011. It was the result of a year-long research and mobilization of communities across Nigeria, Togo, Ghana and Cameroon impacted by the West African Gas Pipelines (WAGP) and the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipelines. Both projects, like the African Development Bank (ADB) funded project in Bargny, were funded majorly by the World Bank.

Like Bargny, the women of Badagry, the expansive coastal

community and well known as a former slave port and a tourist destination, the establishment of the gas facilities left the community high and dry and burnt on many fronts: the heat from underground pipelines killed most of the fishes, a major pollution left the rivers unusable for a long time while the most problematic was the gas flare facilities which caused major air pollutions in the community and left many people sick. Attempts by the community youths to protest the nuisance that the gas facilities had become led to heavy brutalizing of the youths, arrests and detention by the armed security personnel. The most affected were the fishermen and women of the community and the raffia palm weavers who make mats for sale. The pollution affected both water and plant and grossly impacted lives and livelihoods in communities across Badagry where the pipelines passed through.

The West African Gas Project and the Women of Badagry

Broken Promises, a special Report co-written by this author, explained the controversial project thus:

The West African Oil and Gas Pipeline (WAGP) is a 681 kilometer pipeline that transports natural gas from fields in the conflict-ridden Niger Delta region in Nigeria to Benin, Togo, and Ghana. The pipeline exists largely offshore in a seabed 15 to 20 kilometers from the coast of all four countries. For the first section of the gas transport, WAPCo used a 20+ year old Lagos-Escravos pipeline, which was built without an Environmental Impact Assessment. Offshore construction was completed in December 2006, but

instability in the Niger Delta region and pipeline leaks delayed its commission until March 2008.

A public-private partnership named the West Africa Pipeline Company (WAPCo), consisting of the four host governments and an oil consortium led by Chevron, Texaco and including Royal Dutch Shell, owns the pipeline. The World Bank and European Investment Bank (EIB) supported the project with loans and grants. Costing approximately \$590 million, the pipeline is expected to supply trillions of cubic feet of natural gas for industrial and commercial use. Proponents of the project said that it will attract \$1.8 billion in total capital investments to the region, including \$400 million to build the pipeline, \$600 million from power plants and \$800 million in secondary industries such as mineral processing.”

A major promise of the project was that it would ensure “clean fossil fuel” and “contribute to fostering regional economic and political integration that would support economic growth and in particular the development of the West African electricity market.” The President of Chevron Overseas Petroleum remarked at the signing ceremony in Cotonou, Benin, “One of the most exciting aspects of this project is that it ties together, people, economies and nations to benefit from the huge region of sub-Saharan Africa. It is our hope that the vision of unprecedented economic growth and enhanced stability resulting from the benefits created by this project can be realized. This regional energy infrastructure project was conceived over a decade ago within the West Africa Power Pool Initiative of ECOWAS, aiming to transport cheap natural gas from Nigeria's rich oil region to meet the energy demands of Benin,

Togo, and Ghana region with cheap gas. It was set to increase trade and energy between member states as well as encourage investment in the power sector.

The World Bank's Involvement

In 2004, the World Bank approved a loan of \$125 million in guarantees to support the WAGP project, which began disbursement in 2005. In addition, the International Development Association (IDA) financed a guarantee of \$50 million over 22 years, and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) provided political risk insurance for \$75 million over 20 years.

The pipelines have brought economic and social pressures to the communities. Community members convey a sense of loss and general negativity with regards to the pipeline. They were promised improved infrastructure and facilities, but these have not been forthcoming. The roads are in a worse state now. The one classroom that was built was shabbily executed, and the one clinic is no longer functional. In many cases, adequate compensation was not given to the owners whose lands were taken by WAPco for their pipelines' right of way, while others were short-changed and given miserly amounts as compensation.

Most of the jobs, both in construction and subsequently in operations, were given to non-indigenes of the community; locals received the most menial of jobs, and even those have ceased to exist. Well-paying jobs went to expatriate workers and those connected to senior WAGP executives; the discrepancy between expatriate workers and locals is stark. More alarming is the gender

discrimination in terms of employment and overall benefit. According to the community members, not a single woman was employed in all the communities covered, in both skilled and unskilled labour by WAPco.

Community Voices:

“Many of the women are selling fish. Since they started this pipeline, there are no more fishes. The heat from their facilities is too much for our children..”

■ Mrs. Felicia Adosu, businesswoman

“Women were not involved in the process: “A lot of our women have been pushed to one side. They are not involved in the process. There were no criteria for the compensation. When they were paying, some people received N3, 000 (about \$20), others received as little as N1, 500 (about \$10). When I even went to collect compensation for my land, they said it was not my name that is on the paper. I can say they didn't do anything for us.”

■ Chief Solomon Akapo, white-cap chief

“We have no choice than to drink the bad water: “This water here is so bad that it spoils even our plates. We know it is not good but we have no choice, than to use it for drinking and everything else because we don't have any other alternative.”

■ Mrs. Sauni Dauda, trader, age 51

“The water is not good for anything: “This borehole water is not good for anything. Also, I don't know of anyone from here who has

worked from the pipelines company. We need light, hospital and market stalls.

- Serifat Asani, trader, 64 years

"They promised in 2004 that they would provide about 16 community development projects that will cut across Lagos and Ogun States, but in the citing of the projects, there have been some shoddy business. For education, they cited six in Ogun and one in Lagos, which is not even in Ajido. They said they would give training to the youth which they did not do. Ajido does not have a single employee in that WAPCo. They built a health centre but did not equip it, there is nothing there. Ajido is short changed. There was a time we had a pollution which brought sludge on the fishing gears. I insisted that the fishing gears be replaced. After the gears were replaced, they instigated the people against me, and I was removed so that they will not have opposition again. Since then it has been divide-and-rule in Ajido and other communities that are hosting the pipelines."

- Mr. Alex Kunuji, former Community Liason Officer (CLO) with Wapco.

Conclusion

The impoverishment of communities such as Bargney in Senegal and Badagry in Nigeria and its ripple effects. This much was succinctly echoed by Claus-Dieter König, Rosa Luxemburg's Head of Regional Office for West Africa at the Ecofeminist

conference which held at Toubab Dialaw community from May 2 to 5, 2023 and brought together leading feminists and women's rights activists from all over West Africa including Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria, Niger, Benin Republic, Gambia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, Togo and others:

'Capitalism has escalated the exploitation of nature even though over, it is just a little over 500 years. Capitalism has taken over from slavery', he remarked.

Yet, as long as activist and courageous community champions continue to expose the oppressive and inhuman tendencies of big companies and colluding governments, there is hope.

There is yet hope for the women, men and children of Bargny, Badagry, Senegal, Nigeria, West Africa, Africa and the world.

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Chapter 4

Empowering Women in Sub-Saharan Africa: Reshaping Traditional Economic Roles in Agriculture and Fisheries Amidst Climate Change, Oil Spills and Land Pollution

Mercy Anino Atsekurubu, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Farming and fishing are essential sectors for food security, nutrition, income generation and environmental conservation in Africa. Women are key actors in these sectors, performing various tasks along the value chains of crops, livestock and fishing; from production to processing and marketing. African women have long played vital roles in their societies, particularly in agriculture and fisheries. These traditional economic activities have not only sustained their families but have also shaped their identities and roles within their communities. However, there are challenges limiting the potentials and hindering the empowerment opportunities available to women in this sector.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), women make up about 50% of the agricultural labour force in sub-Saharan Africa, and produce up to 80% of the food crops for household consumption and sale. They grow a variety of crops, such as cereals,

roots, tubers, fruits, vegetables and legumes, using mainly traditional methods and low-input technologies. They also have a good knowledge of crop varieties and cultivate over 120 crop species that are managed by men (FSPN Africa 2020).

However, the massive potential of these ventures has remained unharnessed due to multiple challenges, including climate change, oil pollution, and poor implementation of government interventions focusing on women empowerment. This article aims to explore the impact of these issues on women in Senegal and Nigeria, highlighting their resilience and efforts to overcome these obstacles and forge a path towards sustainable livelihoods.

1.1. Intersectionality of Capitalism, Environmental Degradation and Patriarchy

The intersectionality of capitalism, environmental degradation and patriarchy, is a critical lens to understanding the complex and interrelated causes and effects of the climate crisis. Patriarchy is a system of social organization that privileges men over women and other genders, and that often manifests in one form of gender-based oppression, violence, and discrimination. Capitalism is an economic system that prioritizes profit over people and planet, and that often exploits natural resources, labour, and markets for the benefit of a few. Environmental degradation is the deterioration of the natural environment due to human activities, such as deforestation, pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions.

These three systems are not separate or independent, but rather intersect and reinforce each other in various ways. For example, ecofeminism is a branch of feminism that explores the relationship

between women and nature, and argues that the degradation of the planet and the exploitation of women are both connected to the patriarchal system of the Africa settings and the devaluing of both. Similarly, socialist ecofeminism sees environmental problems as rooted in the rise of capitalist patriarchy and the ideology that the Earth and nature can be exploited for human progress through technology. According to Merchant (1980), the rise of capitalism and modern science in the 16th and 17th centuries was accompanied by a shift from an organic worldview that saw nature as a living and nurturing mother to a mechanistic worldview that saw nature as a dead and inert machine. This shift enabled the development of technology and industry that exploited nature for profit and progress, without regard for the ecological consequences or the rights of other living beings.

Moreover, intersectionality also recognizes that different groups of people experience the impacts of climate change differently depending on their race, class, sex, gender, religion, and other factors. For instance, women in the Global South are more likely to bear the burden of collecting fuelwood or water, which reduces their opportunities for education or income generation. Additionally, marginalized communities are more likely to face environmental racism, such as living near toxic waste sites or being displaced by natural disasters.

Therefore, an intersectional approach to climate action is essential to address the root causes of environmental injustice and to achieve more equitable outcomes for people and planet. For example, ecofeminism explains how patriarchy has contributed to the climate crisis by devaluing women and nature (Thomas 2022). It also shows how women are more affected by climate change due to their roles as

caregivers, subsistence farmers, water collectors, or disaster victims (Suresh 2021). Moreover, it reveals how women's empowerment and participation are key to finding solutions for climate change mitigation and adaptation (Agarwal 2017).

By examining the intersection of social and environmental injustices that target vulnerable communities and the planet, this approach reveals a more complex and individualized experience with climate impacts and helps to identify the most effective solutions for each context. An intersectional approach also challenges us to question our own assumptions and privileges, and to listen to and amplify the voices of those who are most affected by climate change.

2.1 The Traditional Economic Roles of African Women

African women have long played critical roles in the traditional economic activities of agriculture and fisheries, which are deeply rooted in their cultural heritage and societal norms. In many African countries, women are responsible for cultivating crops, tending to livestock, and engaging in small-scale farming activities (Djurfeldt, 2004). Their involvement in agriculture is vital for food production, household sustenance, and income generation (Doss, 2011). Additionally, women have been actively involved in fishing, both in coastal communities and inland water bodies, contributing to the livelihoods of their families and communities (Béné et al., 2016).

The gendered division of labour within African societies has allocated specific roles and responsibilities to women in agriculture and fisheries. Women often perform tasks such as planting, weeding, harvesting, and processing agricultural products (FAO, 2011). In fishing communities, women are typically engaged in post-harvest

activities such as processing, marketing, and trading of fish (Béné et al., 2016). These roles have shaped the identities of African women, providing them with a sense of purpose and recognition within their communities.

The socioeconomic significance of women's engagement in agriculture and fisheries cannot be overstated. In rural areas, where the majority of the population depends on agriculture for their livelihoods, women are the backbone of food production (Djurfeldt, 2004). Their contribution to household food security and income generation is crucial for poverty reduction and overall community development (Doss, 2011). Furthermore, the involvement of women in fisheries plays a significant role in meeting the nutritional needs of communities, as fish is a valuable source of protein and essential nutrients (Béné et al., 2016).

2.2 Importance of Agriculture and Fisheries

Agriculture and fisheries play a pivotal role in the economic and social fabric of African societies, with women making significant contributions in these sectors. Agriculture is the backbone of many African economies, providing employment and income for a substantial portion of the population (FAO, 2019). Women actively participate in farming activities, cultivating crops such as maize, millet, cassava, and vegetables, which serve as essential food sources for their families and communities (Doss, 2019). Additionally, women engage in livestock rearing, poultry farming, and agroforestry, contributing to overall food security and nutritional well-being (Quisumbing et al., 2014).

Fishing and aquaculture are vital sources of livelihood and nutrition,

especially in coastal communities. Women in fishing communities are often involved in small-scale fishing activities, either as fishers themselves or as processors and traders of fish and seafood products (Allison et al., 2009). They play a crucial role in ensuring food security and providing income for their households by selling fish in local markets (The World Bank, 2012). Moreover, fisheries contribute significantly to national economies through exports, tourism, and employment opportunities, where women's involvement is essential for sustaining these sectors (WorldFish, 2016).

The importance of agriculture and fisheries extends beyond economic considerations. These sectors serve as avenues for women to assert their agency and contribute to community development. By actively engaging in agricultural practices, women gain a sense of autonomy, empowerment, and identity within their societies (Njenga et al., 2019). Moreover, their role in agricultural production and processing contributes to community cohesion and interdependence (Mandelbaum et al., 2016). Similarly, women in fishing communities contribute to the preservation of cultural practices, knowledge transmission, and the maintenance of social networks (Sanyang, 2017). Thus, agriculture and fisheries not only provide sustenance but also shape women's roles and identities within their communities.

2.3 Socioeconomic Significance

The socioeconomic significance of women's traditional economic roles in agriculture and fisheries in Africa cannot be overstated. Women's involvement in these sectors contributes to food security, poverty reduction, and economic development in their communities and beyond. In many African societies, women are responsible for cultivating crops, tending to livestock, and processing agricultural products, ensuring a stable food supply for their families and local

markets. In Addition, women's participation in fisheries activities, such as fish processing and marketing, not only generates income but also contributes to the nutritional needs of their communities. Women's empowerment and equitable access to resources in agriculture and fisheries have been linked to increased household incomes, improved nutrition, and enhanced education and health outcomes for their families (FAO, 2011). Therefore, recognizing and supporting women's roles in these sectors is crucial for sustainable development and the overall well-being of African societies.

3. Climate Change and its Impacts on Women Farmers and Fishers

Climate change poses significant challenges to women engaged in farming and fishing activities, particularly in African countries. Alterations in rainfall patterns, increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, and rising temperatures have profound implications for agricultural productivity and the availability of marine resources. Women farmers are disproportionately affected as changing rainfall patterns can lead to crop failures, food insecurity, and loss of income. Additionally, rising sea levels and coastal erosion threaten the livelihoods of women fishers, who heavily rely on healthy marine ecosystems for sustenance and income. These climate-related impacts exacerbate existing gender inequalities and put women at a higher risk of poverty and vulnerability. To ensure the resilience and empowerment of women in the face of climate change, it is crucial to implement gender-responsive policies and strategies that support sustainable agriculture and fisheries, provide access to climate-smart technologies and resources, and promote women's active participation in decision-making processes (UN Women, 2019).

3.1 Changing Rainfall Patterns and Crop Failure

Changing rainfall patterns have emerged as a significant challenge for African women engaged in agriculture. Erratic and unpredictable rainfall disrupts traditional farming practices and leads to crop failure, affecting food security and livelihoods. The irregular distribution of rainfall, characterized by prolonged droughts or intense rainfall events, impacts the timing of planting, crop growth, and overall agricultural productivity. Women farmers, who predominantly rely on rain-fed agriculture, face increased vulnerability to climate change-induced crop failures. For instance, studies have shown that in regions such as sub-Saharan Africa, changing rainfall patterns have led to decreased agricultural yields and reduced incomes for women farmers (Mugabe, 2019).

3.2 Rising Sea Levels and Coastal Erosion

Rising sea levels and coastal erosion pose significant threats to African women engaged in farming and fishing activities. As a result of climate change, increased sea levels contribute to the gradual inundation and erosion of coastal areas, impacting agricultural lands and fishery habitats. Women who rely on these resources for their livelihoods face the loss of productive farmland and fishing grounds, leading to decreased agricultural yields and declining fish stocks. The detrimental effects of rising sea levels and coastal erosion on African women's economic roles highlight the urgent need for adaptive strategies and sustainable coastal management practices (Smith, J., & Johnson, A., 2019).

3.3 Economic Impacts on Fishing Communities

Fishing communities heavily rely on healthy marine ecosystems for

their livelihoods, but they face significant economic challenges due to various factors such as climate change, overfishing, and illegal fishing practices. These impacts have far-reaching consequences for the socio-economic fabric of these communities. The depletion of fish stocks and reduced catch sizes directly affect the income and food security of fishing households. Additionally, fluctuations in fish prices, market access barriers, and increased competition further exacerbate economic pressures on fishing communities (Cinner et al., 2018). As a result, the economic well-being of individuals and the overall resilience of fishing communities are significantly compromised.

Moreover, the economic impacts extend beyond individual fishing households to encompass the broader local economies. Fishing communities often serve as important economic hubs, with various ancillary sectors relying on the fishing industry for employment and trade. Reduced fishing activity leads to a decline in income and job opportunities not only for fishers but also for fish processors, traders, boat builders, and other supporting industries (Bennett et al., 2019). This domino effect can contribute to a decline in local economic growth, increased poverty rates, and reduced opportunities for economic diversification in fishing-dependent communities.

3.4 Illegal Fishing/Overfishing: Exploitation and Depletion of Resources:

Illegal fishing poses a significant threat to marine ecosystems and the livelihoods of communities dependent on fisheries. It involves activities such as unregulated fishing, poaching, and using banned fishing methods. The consequences of illegal fishing are far-reaching, leading to the exploitation and depletion of valuable fish stocks. This

not only disrupts the delicate balance of marine ecosystems but also jeopardizes the sustainability of fisheries and the food security of communities.

Illegal fishing has profound gendered impacts on coastal communities and fishing households, affecting women in unique ways. Research has shown that illegal fishing activities contribute to the depletion of fish stocks, leading to reduced catches and income for fishing communities (Williams et al., 2018). As a result, women who are actively involved in fishing or engaged in fish trading and processing face significant economic challenges, as their livelihoods are directly dependent on the availability of fish resources. Moreover, the increased risks associated with illegal fishing, such as conflicts at sea and encounters with authorities, disproportionately affect women who engage in these activities, often leading to their vulnerability and marginalization within the fishing industry (Bennett, 2016). Understanding and addressing the gendered impacts of illegal fishing is crucial for developing effective strategies to promote gender equality, protect women's rights, and ensure sustainable fisheries management.

Overfishing and depleted fish stocks pose significant challenges to sustainable fisheries management. Over the past decades, increased fishing pressure, driven by growing demand for seafood, has led to the depletion of fish populations in many regions worldwide. Overfishing occurs when the rate of fishing exceeds the natural replenishment rate of fish stocks, leading to a decline in their abundance and reproductive capacity. This phenomenon has profound ecological, economic, and social consequences, particularly for coastal communities heavily reliant on fisheries for food security and livelihoods. Effective management measures, such as implementing fishing quotas,

establishing marine protected areas, and promoting sustainable fishing practices, are crucial to mitigate the negative impacts of overfishing and restoring depleted fish stocks (Jackson et al., 2001).

4. Ecological Challenges and Women:

Oil Pollution: A Threat to Livelihoods and Health

Oil pollution poses a significant threat to the livelihoods and health of women engaged in farming and fishing activities in African communities. Environmental degradation resulting from oil spills and related activities negatively impacts agricultural productivity and fishing resources, leading to economic losses and food insecurity. The contamination of land and water by oil pollutants disrupts the delicate balance of ecosystems, affecting crop yields and aquatic biodiversity. Women farmers experience reduced agricultural productivity as their lands become contaminated, resulting in crop failure and financial instability. Similarly, women involved in fishing face diminishing fish stocks and reduced catch sizes, leading to decreased incomes and compromised food security. Moreover, the health consequences of oil pollution are severe, with exposure to toxic substances from oil spills leading to respiratory problems, skin diseases, and long-term health complications for women and their communities (UNEP, 2018).

5. Feminist Responses and Resistance: Case Study of Community Women in Senegal and Nigeria:

5.1 *Senegal: Women's Collective Action in Fishing*

Senegal is a West African country with a long coastline and a rich fishing tradition. Fishing is one of the main sources of income and

food security for many Senegalese people, especially in rural and coastal areas (Petesch et al 2021). In Senegal, women have been at the forefront of collective action and community-based initiatives to address the challenges faced in the fishing sector. With their deep knowledge of coastal ecosystems and their role as processors and marketers of fish, these women have organized themselves into associations and cooperatives to assert their rights and improve their livelihoods. Through these collective efforts, they have been able to enhance their bargaining power, access resources, and promote sustainable fishing practices (Westermann-Behaylo, 2017).

In Joal Fadiouth, home to one of the largest artisanal fishing ports in Senegal, women have played a vital role in contributing to the local economy through fishery activities where according to executive data, about 30,000 tons of dried fish and other fish products are processed annually in the city for an estimated value of US\$52.7 million (Food Business Africa, 2023). For generations, they have been actively involved in fishing, processing, and selling fish and seafood products. Their contributions are not limited to the fishing sector alone; they also engage in value-added activities such as fish drying, smoking, and transforming fish into various products like fish paste and fish powder. The economic significance of their work cannot be overstated, as it not only sustains their households but also provides a substantial source of income for the entire community. However, these hardworking women face several challenges. Limited access to financial resources, modern fishing technologies, and proper market linkages hamper their productivity and profitability. Additionally, the impact of climate change and overfishing in the region poses threats to their livelihoods and the sustainability of the fishery sector. Despite these challenges, the

resilience and determination of women in Joal Fadiouth remain an essential driving force in supporting the local economy and preserving their cultural heritage tied to the fishing way of life. Addressing these challenges and empowering women in fishery-related activities can further enhance their contributions to the economy and foster sustainable development in the region.

The Women's Platform for Sustainable Fishing in Joal Fadiouth is an example of how women's collective action can empower them to overcome the challenges they face in the fishing sector. It also shows how women can contribute to the sustainable development of their communities and their country by using fishery resources wisely and responsibly.

Despite their significant contribution to the fishing sector, women face many constraints and inequalities that limit their opportunities and benefits. Some of these challenges include:

- Ø Lack of access to productive resources, such as land, credit, equipment, and technology.
- Ø Lack of recognition and representation in decision-making processes and institutions related to fisheries management and development.
- Ø Lack of adequate infrastructure and facilities for processing and preserving fish products.
- Ø Lack of training and information on quality standards, market opportunities, and value addition.
- Ø Exposure to health and safety risks, such as smoke inhalation, burns, cuts, and infections.

5.2 Nigeria: Women Farmers Adapting to Changing Conditions as a Result of Gas Flaring (Kpokpo Garri Processing in Ughelli, Delta State)

Gas flaring, a common practice in the Nigerian oil industry, has detrimental effects on the environment and local communities. This practice releases greenhouse gases and toxic pollutants into the air, leading to air pollution, acid rain, and land degradation. Among those affected by gas flaring are women farmers, who rely on agriculture for their livelihoods and play a crucial role in food production. Despite the challenges posed by gas flaring, Nigerian women farmers have shown remarkable resilience and adaptability in response to the changing conditions.

Gas flaring contributes to the alteration of weather patterns, such as irregular rainfall and prolonged droughts, which affect crop growth and productivity. In the face of these challenges, women farmers in Ughelli, Delta have been employing various strategies to adapt and mitigate the impacts of gas flaring. To make it worse, the plants are situated very close to community settlements and the heat from the gas has been a source of discomfort to the locals.

The heat from the gas flare has had a long-term effect on the crops cultivated in the area as the otherwise green leaves would turn yellow and thereby resulting in shrivelled and crinkled cassava yields. A source from the community claims that productivity has shrunk by over 70 percent in the last decade. By diversifying their agricultural activities and cultivating climate-resistant crops, such as drought-tolerant varieties, women farmers are reducing their vulnerability to the changing conditions caused by gas flaring (Ogbonna, 2018).

Women process cassava into a local food value known as tapioca or “kpokpogarri” in the local parlance, a food variant of the local garri, often dried under the hot sun to give it a crispy feel and tangy taste and usually served with peanuts. This production is then sold to other markets in Warri and even neighbouring states like Edo, Bayelsa and River State. Because of the changing weather patterns and the fluctuations and volume of rainfall in the region, these women have resorted to drying the product from the heat of the gas being flared. This action constitutes potential health risks to the women, their children (who are often part of the business) and the consumers of the product that are closely exposed to hydrocarbons. In response to questions about why they chose this method of drying their tapioca (kpokpogarri) despite the physical and potential health risks, the women claimed that they had to use what they had been suffering from for years to their advantage because their crops no longer yielded much. They claimed that they couldn't farm cassava and had to buy it from other villages where the heat had less of an impact, and then process it in the community using heat from the gas flaring facility.

6. Strategies for Women's Empowerment:

6.1 Enhancing Climate Resilience in Agriculture and Fisheries

Enhancing climate resilience in agriculture and fisheries is crucial for ensuring the sustainable livelihoods of African women engaged in these sectors. To address the impacts of climate change, interventions such as the promotion of climate-smart agricultural practices, diversification of crops and fishing techniques, and the adoption of climate-resilient infrastructure are essential. Additionally, empowering women with knowledge and skills

related to climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies can significantly enhance their capacity to cope with changing environmental conditions. By integrating climate resilience into agricultural and fisheries policies and providing support through training programs, financial resources, and technological advancements, women can be better equipped to navigate the challenges posed by climate change. Through these efforts, African women can continue to play a pivotal role in ensuring food security and economic stability in their communities (IPCC, 2019).

6.2 Advocacy and Policy Support

Advocacy and Policy Support play a crucial role in empowering African women engaged in farming and fishing and addressing the challenges they face. Effective advocacy efforts aim to raise awareness about the specific needs and rights of women in agriculture and fisheries, while also promoting gender equality and sustainable development. By highlighting the contributions and struggles of women in these sectors, advocacy initiatives can bring attention to the importance of addressing climate change, oil pollution, and illegal fishing. Moreover, policy support is essential for creating an enabling environment that recognizes and supports the rights and needs of women, ensuring equitable access to resources, decision-making, and economic opportunities. Through the development and implementation of gender-responsive policies and regulations, policymakers can foster the empowerment and inclusion of women in agriculture and fisheries, leading to improved livelihoods, resilience, and sustainable development (Author, Year).

7. Conclusion:

7.1 Recognizing Women's Agency and Contributions

Recognizing women's agency and contributions is essential for achieving gender equality and fostering inclusive societies. Women have long been active participants and contributors in various domains, including education, healthcare, business, politics, and community development. Their agency refers to their ability to make independent choices, exercise autonomy, and actively shape their lives and communities. It is crucial to acknowledge and value the diverse roles women play, as well as the knowledge, skills, and perspectives they bring to the table. By recognizing and celebrating women's agency and contributions, we can empower them to reach their full potential, promote their rights, and create a more equitable and just world for all.

7.2 Collaborative Efforts for a Sustainable Future

Collaborative efforts are paramount for achieving a sustainable future. Addressing complex and interconnected challenges such as climate change, environmental degradation, and social inequities requires the active participation and cooperation of diverse stakeholders. Governments, civil society organizations, academia, businesses, and local communities must come together to exchange knowledge, share resources, and develop innovative solutions. By fostering collaboration, we can pool expertise, leverage collective strengths, and generate collective impact. Through partnerships that prioritize inclusivity, dialogue, and shared responsibility, we can create a more sustainable future that respects ecological limits, promotes social justice, and ensures the well-being of present and future generations.

7.3 *Intersectionality and Inclusive Movements*

The intersectionality of patriarchy, capitalism, and environmental degradation demands an inclusive and holistic approach to addressing the interconnected challenges. This approach recognizes that the struggles for gender equality, economic justice, and environmental sustainability are intertwined. It requires transformative change that challenges patriarchal norms, disrupts capitalist exploitation, and promotes environmentally sustainable practices (Alston, 2013; Shiva, 2016). By addressing the root causes and power imbalances embedded in these systems, intersectional approaches can pave the way for a more just and sustainable future for both women and the environment

Acknowledgments:

I would like to express my gratitude to the women in Senegal and Nigeria who generously shared their stories and experiences for this article. A special appreciation to Rosa Luxemburg Foundation for the opportunity to share with the experiences of women in Africa achieving great feats in small ways and for Social Action for the platform.

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Chapter 5

The Economic Effects Of The Farmers-Herders Conflict On Women And Girls In North Central Nigeria

Angela Odah, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

This article discusses the economic effects of the farmers- herders conflict in North Central Nigeria. Despite the structures of discrimination embedded in the Nigerian society through patriarchy that denied women equal access politically, socially and economically, women were active participants in the agricultural sector and trade.

The first part of this article highlights the status of women in communities across North Central Nigeria before the escalation of the herders- famers conflict which further dispossessed women as millions of them across the region have become residents of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps, with no homes, no land, no farms and no capital for trade.

The second part of this article reviews the economic effects of the conflict on women and girls and the views shared by the key informant interviews.

Status of Women and Girls in Communities within North Central Nigeria before the Herders- Farmers Conflicts

Communities in North Central Nigeria like other parts of Nigeria were patriarchal societies with structures across political, economic, social and cultural spheres of the society that granted rights, privileges and positions to men and boys to the detriment of women and girls. Despite the provisions of the Nigerian 1999 Constitution that discourages discrimination on the basis of gender, patriarchy maintained the structures that held women in “chains”.

Women participated in the economy under agricultural production and non-agricultural production. Women's access to the factors of production such as land was regulated due to the patriarchal nature of the society. For instance, the structure of Idoma ethnic group of Benue state will be used to illustrate the traditional structure of rural community in the North Central region of Nigeria.

In Idoma land, the central component of social, economic and political organization was the family unit “odu'udole” headed by the eldest male member of the compound (Ochefu 2002,p.49). The family head “okpani or adole” managed allocation to the land. They allocated farm land to other male adults within the family, who in turn gave plots of land to their wives to cultivate (2002, p.49). Although women do not have control of land, they were responsible for doing most of the farm work and largely responsible for feeding themselves and their children and wards from the produce of their farming activities. Consequently, women's access to land was indirect and thus grossly insecure. Women owned no independent rights to land, their access is administered through men, either their fathers, brothers, husbands or adult sons (2002, p.49).

These restrictions to women's access to land made women's participation in food production and animal husbandry extremely challenging. Women prepared land for cultivation and participated in planting, weeding, harvesting, processing, transportation and sale of the farm produce and processed goods on the market days (2002, p.49).

Women cultivated specific crops. For female farmers in Benue corn, cassava, beans, soya beans, yam, potatoes, rice, and vegetables were staples cultivated for subsistence and sale on market days (Key Informant interview with Ruth Ngwandu, Daudu IDP Camp, 23/8/2022, Benue State; KII with Mama Theresa Obaugwu, Otukpo, 13/8/2022). For women in Plateau state, corn, vegetables, tomatoes and potatoes are staples cultivated for subsistence and sale on market days (KII with Kachollom Pam, displaced person, Jos, Plateau state 15/8/2022; KII with Simji Goshwe, Founder Simji Orphanage, Jos Plateau state, 15/8/2022).

Women processed farm produce and traded in a variety of commodities such as food seasonings like locust beans, smoking of fish, oils (palm oil, groundnut oil, palm kernel oil, shea butter) grains, yam flour, cassava flakes called “garri” and traditional cosmetics and weaving of cloth. Women also engaged in pottery for domestic and ritual matters (Key Informant interview with Ruth Ngwandu, Daudu IDP Camp, 23/8/2022, Benue state; KII with Mama Theresa Obaugwu, Otukpo, 13/8/2022; KII with Kachollom Pam, displaced person, Jos, Plateau state 15/8/2022; KII with Simji Goshwe, Founder Simji Orphanage, Jos Plateau state, 15/8/2022).

Weaving of clothes was also another lucrative activity women engaged in the North Central zone. Women gathered roots and fruits of economic trees like locust beans, “ogbono”, berries,

mushrooms and herbs for traditional medicine, firewood and charcoal. They also had monopoly of the textile and brewing industries. The brewing of alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks was a profitable endeavor for women across the North Central zone (Key Informant interview with Ruth Ngwandu, Daudu IDP Camp, 23/8/2022, Benue state; KII with Mama Theresa Obaugwu, Otukpo, 13/8/2022).

Women actively engaged in trade within their communities, the North Central region and across the country in distribution of agricultural produce (such as vegetables and potatoes from Plateau state and yams, cassava, cassava flakes (garri), fruits, rice, other farm produce from Benue state) and an array of commercial activities. (KII with Kachollom Pam, displaced person, Jos, Plateau state 15/8/2022; KII with Simji Goshwe, Founder Simji Orphanage, Jos Plateau state, 15/8/2022; KII with Annap Musa, Jos, Plateau state 15/8/2022; KII with Madam Ihotu Odeh, Otukpo, Benue state 23 / 8/2022).

Economic Effects of the Herders-Farmers Crisis in North Central Nigeria from the lens of Key Informant Interviews and Reported Interviews

The Institute of Economics and Peace, affirmed that the conflict between herders and farmers ranks number four in the list of the deadliest terror groups. The Islamic State and Syria, Al Shabaab and Boko Haram, take the first, second and third positions. Nigeria in 2016 is reported to have lost over 14 billion USD to the conflict between farmers and herders (Lenshie et al., 2020, p.2).

Thematic Report 2017, asserted that Benue state and Kaduna state lost about 2.3 billion USD of their Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) to the farmer and herder conflict in 2015, which was about 50% of their internally generated revenue. The environment of uncertainty the conflict created made it difficult for farmers both male and female to go to their farms for fear of being attacked, raped, injured or killed (CDD, 2021, P.12). Nigeria is estimated to have lost 13.7 billion USD yearly to the farmer and herder conflict according to a Mercy Corps 2015 report (p.13).

Women across the North Central Zone of Nigeria are known to be farmers. The North Central zone is acclaimed as the food belt of Nigeria. Plateau state and Benue state produce a variety of crops, fruits and vegetables. Benue state in particular is known as the “food basket of the Nation”. Women engage in agriculture and trade. Each community in the North Central zone have market days which women participate in weekly as buyers and sellers of food and non-food items. Women farmers participate in every process of farming, from the planting, to the weeding and harvesting. They also engage in small and medium scale production and processing farm produce, herb processing and packaging, drying and roasting of fish and bush meat and other meats, and the sale of the produce and processed food items on market days and exporting to other markets across Nigeria.

BENUE STATE	PLATEAU STATE
Dry season farming (pepper, tomatoes, vegetables)	Dry season farming (carrots, onions pepper, cabbage, green beans and other vegetables)
Rainy farming (yam, sweet potatoes, cassava, groundnuts, soya beans, maize, guinea corn, and rice)	Raining season farming (acha, millet, yam, sorghum, Irish potatoes and sweet potatoes, cowpea maize and sugarcane)
Rearing of Domestic Animals (chickens, ducks, goats, sheep, pigs; fishing activities)	Rearing of domestic animals (chickens' goats, sheep, pigs, hens and cattle)
Pottery (clay pots and trays)	Mining activities
Sale of farm produce on the market days	Selling of dairy products (especially for women the herder community) Trade: on market days and transportation to other parts of Nigeria, sale of vegetables and potatoes across the country
Processing of fish and other farm produce and brewing of local drinks and beers	Processing of fish, and other farm produce and brewing of local drinks and beers

Source: Atim and Gbamwuan, 2022, p.99)

Disintegration of Economic Ventures of Women

The advent of the herder farmer crisis negatively impacted on the economic enterprises of women in North Central Nigeria (Search for Common Ground, 2018, p.16).

For women farmers who are largely subsistence farmers who cultivate crops for food for their families and the surplus processed for sale on market days, the key economic consequence of the attacks and their displacement from their homes was the loss of their farmland, their means of livelihood. The assailants destroyed their farmlands, burnt their harvests and fed their crops to their cattle. The cloud of uncertainty due to the insecurity that surrounded such attacks made it impossible for female farmers who fled to Internally Displaced Persons Camps (IDPs) and other farmers in communities which had not yet been attacked to go to their farms to harvest whatever was left on the farm. Thus, sometimes their crops were destroyed because it could not be harvested as at when due. As women farmers in Barkin Ladi Local Government Area of Plateau state took up shelter in the IDP Camps, their livelihood as farmers was lost as they had no access to land in IDP camps (p.16). With the decline in farming activities, food prices increase and farmers become poorer as they have no earnings. Thus, the food security of the North Central region and Nigeria in general is threatened (p.16).

Women also engaged in subsistence animal husbandry such as poultry, goat rearing, fish ponds and small-scale rearing of cows. With their displacement these economic activities were also lost as they had no space or resources to run these business ventures in

IDP camps. These ventures helped them to meet the protein needs of their families and provided additional income for their families. For women in the herder group, they participated in the cattle rearing, goat rearing and poultry, as well as sale of cow milk with ground millet meal and lard. The loss of cattle during cattle rustling also meant loss of income for them and their households (p.17). Thus, women in both herder and farmer communities lost their means of livelihood as a result of the crisis between farmers and herders (CDD, 2021, P. 12).

The unfavorable environment of insecurity made participation in economic ventures risky and income and turnover low due to lower purchasing power. Women farmers could not go to their farms to plant, weed or harvest the crops for fear of being raped or kidnapped. In periods of crisis the weekly local markets are closed and women who are active participants in buying and selling food and non food items lose income, as buying and selling becomes impossible (p.17).

For women in the IDP camps, living in hunger and joblessness becomes their new normal. And even in these difficult circumstances, women had to step up to become the sole breadwinner and caregiver of their children, wounded and elderly relations. With irregular aid coming from religious groups, philanthropic organizations, non- governmental organizations and international non-governmental organizations, women in displacement had to think of other alternatives to make a living. Some women acquired skills for making crafts like weaving baskets, soap making, air freshners, liquid soap, pastries and other small business ideas. Some NGOs on the Plateau such as Simji Girl

Child Initiative organized skills acquisition trainings for displaced women in communities such as Riyom, Barkin Ladi in Plateau state and Zunkwa and Kachia in Kaduna state to offer an alternative to women who have lost everything. Acquiring skill builds hope and confidence in displaced women. Since the weekly market days in their communities no longer exist, women resort to hawking on the highways and basically live from hand to mouth and are unable to save (since their capital is small) or prepare a plan for the growth of their business venture. (Key Informant Interview, Simji Goshwe, Simji Orphanage, Jos, Plateau state, 15/8/2022).

Women in displaced communities on the plateau are always on the move, not having a home to retire to at the end of the day. This uncertainty due to insecurity even in the IDP camps, makes women and their children very vulnerable. With the closure of IDPs on the Plateau, we have a generation of very poor women with literally nowhere to go to. Some displaced women from Riyom basically live by hawking potatoes and vegetables on the highway during the day, and sometimes sleep on top of trees or at the foot of hills with their children to hide themselves from invaders. They try to hide where they can see from a distance any attacker on the prawl (KII, Simji Goshwe, Jos, Plateau state, 15/8/2022).

For female farmer displaced in June 2022, from the attack by Fulani herders on Igama village in Edumoga district of Okpokwu Local Government Area in Benue state, displacement has meant loss of her farm and other economic activities she engaged in such as processing of garri which helped to pay her children and grand children's school fees. After the attack a relative relocated her family to an uncompleted building in the Wurukum area of

Makurdi, the Benue state capital. Her husband is old and frail, thus the feeding of the family falls on her. She currently feeds her family through the production of locust beans seasoning which she sells to soup ingredient sellers in the market. She also works as a cook for caterers when they get contracts to cater for weddings, funerals and other occasions. However, the pay is low, between four thousand and five thousand naira per day, but at least she is able to take home some of the left-over food to her family after a hard day's work; these jobs don't come frequently either (KII Interview with Mama Theresa Obaugwu, Makurdi, Benue state 13.8/2022). She specializes in making local soups such as 'Egusi', 'Ogbono' and 'Okoho' soups as well as making of food items like semolina and eba (KII, Mama Theresa Obaugwu, Makurdi, 13.8/2022).

For Mrs. Nyamve, her husband's village of Chembe (a village sharing border with Nassarawa and Taraba states) was attacked in January 2015 and over 17 people were killed including her husband. She was left to fend for her seven children all by herself. Now she has resettled among her people in Logo where she has a farm of 80 rolls of 65 heaps each of yams. She hopes that the harvest is huge as the proceeds will help her pay her children's school fees and meet other needs of her household (<http://premiumtimesng.com> 4/10/2020).

For Nguveren Terseer, a 27-year-old widowed mother of two, who was displaced in January 2018 from Logo village, life has been hard in displacement. She used to be a farmer and joined her husband to grow yams, cassava, and rice. From the harvests, she sold garri which she processed and yams and rice which was sold in the market and used to supplement their income. All these changed

with the killing of her husband during the attack on her community. Now she makes a living, from the sale of gin and cigarettes at a small shop in the Wurukum area of Makurdi (<http://premiumtimesng.com> 4/10/2020).

For 25-year-old Veronica Namsoor, a mother of four, living with her family at the Tse Yandev camp, life is really hard in displacement. She and her children suffer from malnutrition. Before displacement she stated that food was not a problem for them as her husband was a hardworking farmer and together, they were able to feed their family. Now with no farmland, her husband works as a laborer at the grinding mill and is able to get a kilogram of corn flour at the end of a day's job. She goes to the rice mill to work as a laborer too and get some broken grains of rice to boil for her children. They rely on the palliatives shared by government and other philanthropic groups too but this doesn't come in regularly (<https://humananglemedia.com>, 22/12/2021).

Others resort to hawking corn, groundnuts and cooked food. Some women became nannies and domestic workers in homes. Children are also made to hawk food items such as groundnuts, corn and bananas; others become domestic workers, beggars on street corners of the state capitals of Jos and Makurdi and other suburbs in both states as well as other odd jobs (manual labours on construction sites and farms) in the host communities (p.17). These exposure and vulnerability of women saddled with providing for their families even when they have lost everything make them open to abuse. Children also are exposed to physical and sexual abuse when they beg or hawk food items (p.17). Children sent out to work as domestic helps also are reported to suffer from physical and

sexual abuse perpetuated by the madam, they work for and other male members of the household they work for. There have also been reports of trafficking of displaced children for sexual exploitation and drug trafficking; exposing them to sexually transmitted diseases, teenage pregnancies, abortions and other negative vices (p.17; Omokugbo, 2022, p.122).

The demolition of farmland and crops planted by farmers by herdsmen fosters crisis between the two groups. A 2022 study on internal displacement of farmers and food losses in Benue state reveal that cassava and yam are the major food crops cultivated as well as rice, cowpea, groundnuts and oranges. The findings of the research reveal that in 2016, 108 (30%) of the participants of the study, lost 6001-8,000kg (6-8tons) of cassava; while 147 (41%) of the IDPs lost approximately 2,001-6,000kg.⁸⁹ (25% of the IDPs lost bigger quantities which were estimated to 8,001kg and above. In 2019, 188 (52%) lost between 100kg of cassava to 4,000kg. While 172 (43%) lost from 4,001 to 8,000kg. The outcome reveals that the farmers could not cultivate more due to the uncertain security situation in the rural areas.

The findings from the decline in yam cultivation reveal that in 2016,147 (41%) of the participants lost between 100-4,000kg (1-4tons) of yam, while about 202 (56%) of the IDPs lost approximately 4,001-10,000kg (4-10tons). However, 11 (3%) of the IDPs lost more quantities which is 1001kg and above. In 2017, 132 (37%) lost about 100-4,000kg of yam in the farm; 141 (39%) lost 4,000-8,000kg of yam while about 87 (24%) lost 10,000kg and above. In 2018, 73 (20%) lost from 8,000 and above; 70 (19%) lost approximately 8,000kg in 2019, while 63 (18%) lost about 8,000kg

in 2020 (Uza et al., 2022, p.57). Thus, diminished food production result in rising costs of food items and difficulty for citizens to purchase food items. The above lead to hunger and food insecurity becoming the new normal (Omokugbo, 2022, p.122).

Conclusion

The North Central zone of Nigeria is regarded as the food belt of the nation. Women were active participants in the agricultural production and trade within the zone and across Nigeria. The displacement of communities across the zone, with the raids and killings by armed herds men who destroyed the farms and homes of rural communities within the region, meant that women were stripped of everything.

Women grew a variety of crops for subsistence and sale of the surplus in the weekly market days in the rural areas, statewide and across the nation. They participated actively in trade at the community level and nationwide. Women farmers in Plateau state were known to be active participants in farming and sale of vegetables and potatoes. These food items were distributed across the country and women were active participants in this enterprise. For women in Benue, garri (made from cassava), rice and yam and oranges were cultivated and distributed across Nigeria.

Displacement into IDP camps stripped women of everything, their farms, trade and homes. For some they lost their husbands and relatives, they were injured or their loved ones injured and disabled. They became the sole breadwinners and care givers to their children and or dependents, the sick or injured, with no means of livelihood.

These stresses require courage and resilience on the part of women to look for alternative economic ventures to support their children and dependents. We have in this research provided an analysis of the status of women economically before herder farmer crisis. The literature on the economic effects of the conflict is also reviewed as well as key informant interviews on the effects of the crisis on women and highlighted the experiences of women living in displacement.

Issues Arising and Recommendations

Women and girls bear the brunt of violence between farmers and herders. IDPs interviewed across Benue and Plateau states all want to go back home, if their security can be guaranteed by the Federal government. The girls interviewed for this study all want to return back to their villages and their schools and other means of livelihood.

Women and girls endured extreme hardship and exploitation in Benue and Plateau states, as a result of the farmers-herder's crisis in North Central Nigeria. They lost their loved ones, homes, farms, schools and means of livelihood, when they were forced to flee their homes as a result of the violent attacks of herders on their villages. Women and girls endured sexual and physical abuse in the hands of their attackers, male members of their displaced communities and security personnel. Stripped of everything they owned, women became bread winners and care givers, to their children, wounded, old and disabled members of their families.

Like before their displacement, the contributions of women, their concerns, views and perspectives are not heard, or mainstreamed

into the peace building processes to discuss the causes of the conflict, experiences in displacement and resettlement and re integration of IDPs into society.

The Nigerian government is signatory to the 1998 United Nations (UN) Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the 2009 Kampala Convention on Internally Displaced Persons but has failed to protect its most vulnerable citizens in rural areas across the North Central zone (the focus of this study) and Nigeria in general. The millions of farmers, men and women living in displaced camps in Benue and Plateau states are the farmers that contribute to feeding the nation. Stripped of their farms and cramped up in displaced camps, they have become destitutes in their homeland, depending on the goodwill of faith based groups and donors, while the food security of the nation is threatened with food prices at an all time high and increase in the hunger and poverty levels of citizens across the country.

Section 1, Principle 1, of the UN Guiding Principles on Internal displacement, stipulates that IDPs should be treated equally as all citizens and their fundamental human rights and civil liberties under transnational and nation laws must be upheld and protected.

Section 1, Principle 3, highlights the duty of government to protect and provide humanitarian support to IDPs in their territory.

Section 1, Principle 4, affirms that these principles should not discriminate against IDPs on the basis of age, gender, race, color, ethnicity, language, nationality or social status. The Federal Government Nigeria (FGN) is mandated by the Nigerian Constitution to provide security to the citizens, but has failed to

substantially protect the rural communities of Benue and Plateau states from the attacks of Fulani headers who are said to be immigrants from neighbouring West African countries. This is a violation of the rights of IDPs in these states. The Nigerian government also falls short of the principles stated in section 2 of the UN Guidelines on internal displacement which covers protection from displacement. The failure of the FGN to provide effective protection to rural communities across the North Central zone, made them vulnerable preys in the hands of criminal herder gangs who ambush rural communities to displace them, and then settle in those communities without being apprehended by security agencies.

The FGN also falls short of the provisions of Section 3 of the UN Guidelines on internal displacement, which highlights protection of IDPs while living in displacement. Women and girls have been raped, physically battered and emotionally abused by men in their displaced communities, herders and even security personnel mandated to protect them.

The FGN has also fallen short of the provisions of section 5 of the Guiding Principles which covers the resettlement and reintegration of IDPs back into their rural homelands. IDPs who were supported by government or independently tried to return back home in both Benue and Plateau states were attacked shortly after their return, some were killed, while others, had no choice but to return back to the IDP camps as they were not safe in their homelands.

This study also confirmed that IDP camps in Plateau state were closed by the state government and the IDPs prematurely driven out into the streets without being resettled into their home lands or alternative settlements provided. Thus, there are thousands of

homeless persons, especially women and girls on the Plateau who are destitutes and vulnerable to violence on a daily basis.

Recommendations

1. Psychosocial support to IDPs especially women and girls. A lot of women and girls in Benue and Plateau states have watched their loved ones killed by their attackers. Many have been abused sexually and physically and thus suffer from mental health challenges in varying degrees. Government at all levels should make provision for regular psycho social support for women living in IDP camps and host communities.
2. Initiatives to monitor and protect women and girls from abuse in IDP camps are imperative because of the experiences shared by women and girls in the camps. This would strengthen accountability and make the camps safer for women and girls. A register of sexual offenders could also be developed to name and shame predators and pedophiles.
3. IDP educational support Programme for children and youths. Displacement has led to thousands of out of school children at both the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Initiatives to provide transfer of children in displaced communities to schools closer to the IDP camps and support to get them to the school on a daily basis are important. Some university students have also had their educational pursuit stop because of loss of funds due to their parents loss of their homes and livelihoods after attacks on their villages.
4. Resettlement support and reintegration scheme. From the

experiences of IDPs who tried to go back home but were attacked again and displaced, it is evident that strengthening of the security architecture in the rural areas across the North Central zone is imperative. Enhanced efforts at community policing will also empower rural dwellers to protect their communities from criminal herder gangs.

5. Establishment of ranches and establishment of farms to grow grass for cattle ranches is evidently the sustainable alternative to the present roving method of cattle rearing that has created a vicious cycle of conflict between herders and farmers in the North Central zone of Nigeria and across the country. The current method of open grazing of cattle is not profitable for the sustainable growth of Nigeria.
6. Provision of land by host communities for women farming cooperatives. This cooperative farming would help women IDPs to feed their children since most of them are the sole breadwinners after the killing of their spouses and other loved ones. Upon resettlement, Nigeria will need to review its land tenure system to integrate women who are presently excluded but exploited by the current discriminatory practices.
7. The need to revisit state police to strengthen protection of communities in the rural areas where there has been a huge absence of law enforcement agencies, thus making rural communities, soft targets for criminal herder gangs.

Chapter 6

Lessons Learnt from Participation in Eco Feminism Forum in Dakar

Angela Coutinho, Cape Verde

Our group has taken the view that in our countries, women are much more involved than men in housework, family and the children's education, following a social order that is shaped by society and culture, and which is reinforced by religion, which teaches us (women) to be submissive.

We have also noted that gender parity is progressing little by little in our countries, nevertheless, in semi-urban and rural areas there is more subordination and even situations of women's exclusion. We have seen that there is now a phenomenon of resignation of men, who no longer assume responsibilities at all with regard to the family, and women are now the ones who take care of the various aspects, including the financial ones.

Another perverse aspect linked to the advance of parity in our countries is the increase in femicide cases, men sometimes feeling threatened by advances in autonomy and equal status of women in society. This growing gender parity therefore creates new problems for families in our countries.

More in-depth studies in Cape Verde, for example, show that the country is very close to parity in public administration, however, there are many more men in directorship positions, and their female colleagues work more hours.

To conclude, we have seen that, in general, it is mainly men who take political decisions and it is also men who hold most of the economic and financial resources in our countries

Regarding the relationship with Nature, the main current challenges and how they are being met, we have seen that in Niger, for example, where rainfall is gradually decreasing, it is mainly men who have access to the most irrigated land.

On the other hand, the management of illegal fishing has been disastrous, which is why there are far fewer fish nowadays, and fish farming is developing in the country. The search for solutions to these environmental and economic problems is mainly the responsibility of women and often comes from civil society, even though the government launched a few years ago a program "Nigeriens feed Nigeriens", which provides for the planting of trees and the cultivation of more land with the drip system.

In Senegal, it is also women and civil society organizations that are more sensitive to environmental preservation issues, even if it has been considered that they can have a greater capacity to intervene, with stronger and more sustained actions.

The problems of lack of fish in the sea are common to our countries that have a sea coast, due to lack of control of illegalities practiced by foreigners from other continents – European and Chinese – with whom our states have signed fisheries agreements.

It was said that it would be necessary to use traditions to remedy the damage caused by the use of sand from beaches in Senegal, for example, instead of adopting new strategies that are not effective, such as the use of stones.

In Nigeria, the example of pollution caused by oil exploitation is very telling, as it leads to the destruction of fish and land, and causes deadly diseases. It has also been found that it is men who are directly involved in the competition for natural resources in this country that can give them access to power.

On the other hand, when there are natural disasters that reach communities, as is the case with floods, women and men fight together to survive, but it is women's associations that help women in these communities to overcome the damage caused by the destruction of Nature and of their provisions.

This reality contrasts with that of Cape Verde, a country devoid of natural resources. Awareness of environmental problems is slow, but with more or less equal participation of women and men activists.

Even in Nigeria, there is now a situation of organized terror in the northern region of the country, which is the most productive in terms of agriculture, being also close to important mineral resources. This terrorism is financed by foreigners interested in mining, and young nationals are recruited as well as of neighbouring countries from communities severely affected by climate change, along with professional mercenaries. This same situation is experienced in Niger, because of the uranium exploitation.

With regard to women's economic activity, we have seen that, in general, access to bank credit is difficult or impossible for women, because of the demand for guarantees and exorbitant interest rates, even if there are already government projects to try to remedy this, in Senegal, for example.

In relation to the concrete actions that are carried out, there are several examples of actions that work, as is the case for advocacy, education and reforestation campaigns, or others less known as is the case of the transformation of glass into sand.

We have concluded that all these positive actions are, however, largely insufficient.

There are also projects promoted by the governments that work, as is the case of the "Nigeriens who feed Nigeriens" or the investments made in Senegal for the energy transition.

Bad examples have also been presented, such as the use of stones to prevent the disappearance of sea sand in Senegal, or the use of electric cars in Cape Verde, when we have to import both cars and energy

The members of the group concluded that at this stage, we must decide whether we want to have a sustainable continent for Africans.

Chapter 7

Reflection on the Forum on Ecofeminism: A Means of Women's Protest Against the Capitalist Economic System and Ecological Challenges

Hamdiya Katchirika, Togo

Between 3–5 May 2023, I was invited to Dakar to participate in the third edition of the conference on feminism in West Africa. This year's theme was "Ecofeminism: A Tool for Women's Protest Against the Capitalist Economic System and Ecological Challenges". Before we get to the heart of the matter, let me define eco feminism.

Ecofeminism is a movement that connects the struggle for women's rights and environmental protection. It is based on the idea that oppressive systems that exploit and degrade nature are also responsible for the oppression of women and other marginalized groups. It has been demonstrated in our society how patriarchal domination is reflected in our relationship with nature, where women and marginalized communities are often the most affected by environmental disasters. This leads Ecofeminists to believe that the valorization of the market economy and economic growth at all costs are at the root of the current environmental crisis and social

inequalities. Thus, ecofeminism calls for a radical transformation of our social and economic relations, where cooperation and solidarity replace competition and domination. It advocates a holistic approach that considers the environment and human beings as interconnected and interdependent and encourages the active participation of women in environmental decision-making. Ecofeminism aims to end the oppression of women and the destruction of nature, promoting values such as sustainability, social justice and gender equality, women's equitable access to land and recognition of women's work in this sector. With the definition out of the way, I'm going to tell you what happened during the 3 days of the forum.

Why a theme on ecofeminism this year?

To accentuate the struggle. The Rosa Luxembourg Foundation brought together activists and experts in the field at Toubab Dialaw in May 2023. For 3 days, women from the agricultural sector, processors, feminist activists, environmental activists met to think about solutions that can promote the recognition of their work. This meeting was filled with group work and excursions. The research work during the group work made it possible to detect the realities of women in their respective communities and in their respective countries. These challenges include:

- The reduction of women to the responsibility of household managers.
- The limitation of a woman's abilities to a person to whom work cannot be entrusted.

- The pursuit of profit, including the capitalist economic system, has trampled on and minimized women's ability and power to contribute, like men, to the development of their community.

Aware of their potential, women have struggled to claim their rights and assert their capacities. This has led to a slight improvement in women's conditions, but much work remains to be done.

The 3 days of work with feminist experts and activists allowed us to discover the real issue of women's liberation from the socio-cultural yoke, both through examples of daily experiences and through strategies of involvement of all.

What the field visits revealed

After the two days of group work, the third day was marked by excursions. The group I was part of visited the women fish processors in Bargny.

Bargny is a fishing village located on the edge of the ocean where the future is uncertain when you observe how the sea ravages the houses, and the rubbish on the banks of the sea. In addition to this, there is the pollution caused by the coal-fired power plant. In this village, women face all kinds of ills, including illiteracy, unsanitary conditions, etc. In Bargny, the men live mainly from fishing, and the women from fish processing. This visit was an opportunity not only to discover the realities of these women entrepreneurs, but also to see the damage that climate change is

causing to the respective activities of these women.

It allowed us to learn more about the process of processing fish by her women. We observed how the drying is done, the smoking with the peanut shells and the sifting.

It also allowed for the sharing of experience with other participants in terms of good control strategies to adopt in order to postpone or otherwise stop the advance of the coal-fired power plant.

Personally, I really appreciated the resilience of the women of Bargny, especially their fight to postpone the construction of the coal-fired power plant.

Comparison between Bargny (Senegal) and Katanga (Togo)

Bargny reminds me of Katanga in Togo. Katanga is a fishing village located by the ocean, a few kilometres from the fishing port of Lomé.

In this slum, the inhabitants suffer from all kinds of ills, juvenile delinquency, illiteracy, insalubrity, poor housing. The main activity of the women of Katanga is the processing of fish, it is impossible to meet a native of this village who does not know how to handle and smoke fish. There, the men are involved in fishing and the women are in charge of all the processing and marketing. Unlike Bargny in Katanga, the women are not essentially Togolese, there are some who come from Ghana, Benin and all of them are specialized in salting, drying and smoking fish. The similarity between the women of Katanga and Bargny is that the work is

arduous in both countries but its women manage to impact their communities with their income.

Despite the difficulties and precariousness, its women do the work to provide for their families, to pay for their children's education with the money they earn from processing and selling fish.

The point of divergence is at the level of processing methods. In Togo, more precisely in Katanga, women use traditional ovens or coconut peels to smoke fish, while in Bargny women use peanut shells.

The importance of fishery products in the diet of the population no longer needs to be demonstrated. As the main source of protein, the fish resources made available to consumers are mainly smoked. There are two reasons for this, namely the inadequacy of conservation structures in the landing areas and the strong taste of consumers for smoked fish. However, the processing of fish products, which is generally carried out by women in the two villages (Katanga in Togo and Bargny in Senegal), is taking place under difficult conditions. Far from being the most modern, the methods and tools used by these women to process fish are archaic. This makes the work hard, arduous and risky. The activity is carried out in an artisanal way, in conditions that do not respect any safety at work and pose enormous environmental and health problems for both its women and consumers.

Conclusion

It is essential to recognise that these women fish processors deserve

to be supported. They contribute to household incomes, impact their communities, fight unemployment, contribute to the country's economy, provide significant locally consumed fish and contribute to ensuring national and international food security since they import their fish and sell them in the West African sub-region. In short, they fight against poverty and for sustainable development. Their living and working conditions deserve to be improved.

Chapter 8

A Comparative Article on the Lessons Learnt from the Ecofeminism Forum and Excursion, and the Reality in any Nigerian Community

Doofan Anakaa, Nigeria

The Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung organization hosted an Ecofeminism Forum held at Taubab Dialaw, Senegal. The program spanned three days, from 3rd May to 5th May, 2023. The forum focussed on capitalism, the environment in relation to the woman and her livelihood in a male dominated society such as Africa.

Discussions, presentations and group works at the Ecofeminism Forum show that the issues of environmental degradation, and capitalism affect African women the same way in all African countries. Some of these issues are solidified and authenticated by tradition. Especially the issues of land use and land ownership.

The forum agreed that the environment and the woman can be described as twin siblings of different origins. Just like the woman, the environment is a vital part of existence and continuance of all humans - both woman and the environment produce to keep life from going extinct; nature sustains life with the aid of air, water, and the sun just like the woman sustains human life through nurturing and taking care. Unfortunately, in spite of their immense contribution to the livelihood and welfare of mankind, both are seen as entities to be subdued, possessed, used and manipulated to suit the purposes, and whims of the man who is projected as a superior being in Africa.

The forum emphasized the concept of ecofeminism which draws parallels between the relationship between humans and the environment, and the relationship between man and woman, pointing out that manhandling the environment is akin to manhandling the woman and vice versa.

Even though man and woman make use of the environment, most times, each does so with a different purpose – where the woman nurtures gardens and grow produce that end up on the dining tables for nourishment, the man lumbers log after cutting down trees that are meant to protect the environment, an act which with time, causes desert encroachment and erosion. Again, while the woman rears domestic animals for meat and eggs, the man hunts indiscriminately, sometimes for animal tusk and hide to sell and enrich themselves.

The list is endless. The dependence of the woman on the environment is phenomenal. She has close links with the environment, and many similarities with nature. It is pertinent to note that each role played by both man and woman that defines the relationship between each with the environment is determined by the society which is controlled by patriarchy.

This shows a clear similarity between man and capitalism which has a primary goal of profit making, and little care about environmental protection and sustenance. Therefore, whatever harm done to the environment is a direct assault on the woman because of the woman's immense dependence on the environment.

In seeking to create wealth, human being, most often than not, cause a lot of damage to the environment. Capitalism with its sole concern of profit making has no consideration for the damage it causes to the environment. The environment is continuously desecrated when trees are cut down and used in industries for profit without regard to the negative effect of its actions; when manufacturers do not care about

producing materials that are harmful to the society, using manufacturing processes that are harmful to the environment. Capitalism encourages the destruction of animal habitats, sending them into extinction thereby distorting nature. And since anything that tempers with nature affects the woman, capitalism can be said to contribute substantially to things that harm the wellbeing of the woman.

A case in question is the use of chemicals such as cyanide by fishermen to make a big catch on River Benue. Of course, this eases the fishing process and gives them a huge harvest. But the result is that the women who sell fish get blamed for selling bad fish when the consumers get poisoned as a result of the chemicals that the fish ingested. She then loses patronage, her source of income and her dependents suffer.

On the other hand, the chemicals also cause environmental hazards. Other creatures other than fish are killed and left to float. If eventually they get eaten by other fish or water creatures, even days later, such animals also die. This results to a colossal damage to the ecosystem.

On the excursion to Madam Mariama Deme Batouley's place, the group was made aware of her projects. It was amazing to see one humanitarian project giving birth to another laudable project. Having worked as the unit head, handling cases of victims of domestic violence in a Non-Governmental Organization, Madam Batouley decided to start up her own organization to care for victims of domestic violence when the Domestic Violence Unit in the organization where she worked was shut down.

She explained that in order to save the victims, she provides shelter, food, medical care, and legal aid where necessary. She also shared her experience and the observations that she has made over the years. As the number of victims in her care increased, so did the need for financial aid. But since she received hardly any support from any quarters, she turned to nature and began to make products from fruits

and vegetables which she sells and channels the proceeds to meeting the needs of the victims of domestic violence. Her products range from drinks, jam, coconut chips, and powdered cocktails. This is a typical example of the dependence of woman on nature.

The largest percentage of the victims that have come to her, or have been brought to her are women. These women fall into three categories – those who have no means of making money; those who are low-income earners; and the third category is made of few of those who work and earn considerably well. This shows that domestic violence is not restricted to a certain group of women. No matter a woman's standing in the African society, she is not immune to domestic violence.

The society has constantly and persistently emphasized that a woman is not complete without a man; that a woman without a man deserves no respect; that a divorced woman is irresponsible and wayward; that a woman must be yoked with a man to have an identity; that a woman without a man is so because she has no value; that a woman who leaves her husband even on reasons of battery brings shame to her family. These are drummed into the girl child as she grows and by the time she gets to puberty, her mind is completely infused with the fallacy that she will one day be owned by the man who marries her. And that she must leave for him or be punished by her husband. So for her, domestic violence is a culture that should be lived by.

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It is therefore, not surprising that some badly battered victims who survive the injuries inflicted on them by their spouses by a hair's breadth, flee their abusers only to return as soon as they receive a little healing. But the abuse never stops. Some victims return to their abusers because they are completely financially dependent on their abusers, so they believe that they can not survive outside that environment, toxic as it might be. To make matters worse, when such a woman is told by her parents and family that she has no place in her father's house, she is left with no other choice but to stay.

Domestic violence has become a rampant occurrence everywhere. Back home in Nigeria, the story is not different. It comes in the form of acid baths, beating, slashing with sharp objects, stabbing and every nasty treatment possible.

Sometime in 2022, Ladi Ishaku in Adamawa State was permanently disfigured by her fiancé who poured acid on her. Another victim is Chika Egbo who suffered acid bath at the hands of her husband in Lagos in 2017. She never survived it. Also in the same year, in Akwa Ibom State, Iniubong Ime was disfigured after an acid bath that his ex-girlfriend gave him.

In Benue State, domestic violence comes mostly in the form of wife battery. Some women receive series of beatings on a regular basis from their husbands; sometimes even to stupor but they remain. Most often than not, they are told by family members that their husbands will change as they grow older. Religious leaders (especially Christians) would tell them that they cannot put asunder, what God has joined together. They tell them that the abusive husband is a cross they must carry. They then tell them to pray for their husbands for that is what a good wife does. And then the people around tells them to endure, for every woman endures to keep her home. And that it is the duty of the woman to keep her home no matter what.

Another case, also in Benue State is that of a young woman who cried out on social media after being mercilessly battered by her husband who is a church deacon. This, she said, was his stock-in-trade. It seemed like the marriage was coming to an end with consequences directed on her husband that was not to be. A powerful contingent of peace makers in the hem of affairs in the Benue State Government persuaded her to drop the case and reconcile with her husband. She issued a public statement stating her decision to forgive her husband and forget the incident, and that was the last heard about that.

So often times, women in African stay in abusive marriages because society has validated their husbands' abusive behavior. They stay because they are told that the respect they are given by society is because of their husbands, and that they will lose every iota of respect the moment they leave the marriage. The case of a University lecturer in Benue State University who recently cried out after suffering over 35 years of battery in the hands of her husband is baffling. This woman is a doctor of letters, a mother of adult children, and has attained a height in the society. No one knows why she stayed and allowed herself to be battered for so many years. Could it be the fear of stigmatization that hovers over divorced women in our society? Could it be out of fear of unwarranted shame that the society would unleash on her? It could be one or a combination of a few of these reasons.

The general notion embedded in African culture and lifestyle is that woman is a second-class member of the society unlike man who is believed to be at the top rung of the society. This notion determines, to a large extent, the rights and privileges that are accorded, and denied the woman. This is the reason for the limitations that the woman is subjected to. Ironically, just like the environment, much is expected of her, and a lot is taken from her, yet little value is accorded her.

Chapter 9

Ecofeminism Connecting the Dots Between Women and Nature

Hawa D Varney, Liberia

“We are either going to have a future where women lead the way to make peace with the Earth or we are not going to have a human future at all” Vandana Shiva.

Not much attention is being given to the analysis of how closely “mother Earth” and Women are connected. Historically women have been overlooked same as our own Plant. Everyday we hear news of devastating disasters closely linked to cruel treatment of Mother Earth by humans leading to destruction of thousand of lives and properties.

Early this year, between May 3rd to 5th, 2023, Rosa Luxemburg Foundation organized an Ecofeminism Forum for 50 women in West Africa. The conference took place at the Iris Hotel, Toubab, Dia Law, Dakar, Senegal. The conference was held under a cultivating Theme:” Ecofeminism: A mean of Protest of Women Against the Capitalist Economic System and Ecological Challenges”.

Women feel the burnt whenever there is catastrophe, yet their voices are never taken seriously in these matters of concern. Their participations are limited due to centuries of systemic barriers such as culture, religion, patriarchy and many more.

The Rosa Luxemburg Foundation supported Forum, brought together from West African countries 50 women farmers, environmentalist, climate change activists, Civil Society organizations and policy makers. The forum created a space for women to discuss issues surrounding their wellbeing especially as it relates to climate change and the constant suffering women are enduring due to negligence from their leaders. The lips service being paid by policy makers towards nature and women issues is a disturbing act that needs to end. At the event, women discussed strategies to positively engage their leaders. Plans were developed and shared.

As a means to support cross-country learning among participants an excursion was organized as part of the forum for participants to visit women cooperatives in Senegal to see, learn and share with each other. I was fortunate to have visited Batouly! This was one of my highlights at the forum. Batouly is a women's cooperative organized by Madam Mariama Deme to help provide support to survivors of gender-based violence. Batouly, leverages on value added agriculture products to raise funds. It was amazing to see how they were able to produce so many yummy products such as coconut flakes, boaboa cocktail, natural fruit juices, peanuts etc. Equally impressive is the level they are with their production and also how funds from their cooperative is being used to support survivors of gender-based violence, and helping women find their voices.

Like Batouly, value addition to agriculture produce is an emerging area that many women in Liberia are venturing into. However, they are still far from reaching the level at which Batouly is currently. In Liberia, women play crucial role in agriculture and provide over 60 percent of agricultural labor. They contribute 76 percent of labor to cash crop production, 93 percent to food crop production and 85 percent of all labor for marketing and trading. They also play a key role in linking rural and urban markets through informal networks, thereby enhancing crop production for income generation. However, with all the major contributions, women farmers continue to face several barriers that limit their access to land, information, finance, infrastructure, technologies, and markets.¹

The Women in Agriculture for Sustainable Development (WASUDEV) has been working with women farmers in Liberia to advocate in ensure that their voices are included in agriculture issues through capacity building trainings, provision of agriculture tools among others. Also, similar to Batouly, WASUDEV leverages on Agriculture as an empowerment tool for women and girls. Working with Gender Based Violence survivors and supporting them to be independent thus reducing the continuation of violence against them.

Through exchange learnings and excursions like the one supported by Rosa Luxemburg, knowledge can be shared for better progress of others countries including Liberia.

1. 2018 National Gender Profile of Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods

Finally, I would like to stress the need for more attention towards women and nature. The negligence of the two has caused us so much harm than good. If proper care is given to Mother Earth and Women, we will see a significant improvement in our personal lives and that of our planet.

This Research and Publication
was supported by:



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