



EARTH RIGHTS INSTITUTE

www.earthrights.net

Earth Rights Institute is dedicated to securing a culture of peace and justice by establishing dynamic worldwide networks of persons of goodwill and special skill, promoting policies and programs which further democratic rights to common heritage resources, and building ecological communities.

EARTH RIGHTS REVIEW

SPRING 2006

NIGERIA'S FIRST ECOVILLAGE UNDER CONSTRUCTION



Gordon Abiama on site during construction (April 2006)

The Odi Ecovillage Living and Learning Center is now successfully in the second phase of development. The construction of the first green building is underway after two years bringing the vision and work plan into focus and raising funds. **Gordon Abiama**, the Program Coordinator, is working closely with the other Odi Ecovillage team members and local technicians. Located on a prime site of over a hectare of land in an area that was devastated by war, this combined administrative office and lecture hall building will be used for community meetings, seminars, workshops and other ecovillage activities. As additional funds are raised, the other proposed structures of two hostels, two chalets, and a restaurant will be built.

After searching for months for the right green designer consultant, Earth Rights Institute contracted with **Vanessa Black**, a member of [Sustainable Energy Africa](http://www.sustainable.org.za/) (www.sustainable.org.za/) and co-founder [GreenHouse People's Environmental Centre Project](http://www.greenhouse.org.za/) (www.greenhouse.org.za/) in Johannesburg. She traveled to Odi in December 2005 to work with Gordon and the others on developing a 'green design' for the structures and lay out of the entire ecovillage site. Vanessa was perfect for the job! Her capacity to understand the

challenges for the Niger Delta environment and her expert advice and counsel gave us confidence to proceed into the building construction phase. She explored and evaluated the site, gave workshops on sustainable building, developed a document to ensure a more environmentally friendly building process, produced a sketch design of the site and drew up a work plan. Upon her return to South Africa, she completed her consultation work with a detailed report of her visit and the final structural drawings which included instructive materials on building techniques and many other useful inputs. Everyone at Earth Rights Institute is so very pleased to have her on board our project launching the first ecovillage in Nigeria!



Preparing the site



Making the Earth Bricks



Laying the Foundation



Newly made roof tiles

The Odi Ecovillage team purchased two roof tile making machines and one compressed earth brick (CEB) machine. Six local youths were selected to help with the construction. Working with Paul Ebe, the Building Construction Manager, these young men were trained in the art of making CEBs and roof tiles. They in turn will train others and develop a local based industry from the skills they have learned while constructing the Odi ecovillage. Many locals have expressed an interest in such building services. This is a great example of how ecovillages furthers sustainable development while

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generating community based economic activities. The next phase for the Odi Living and Learning Center will be the aquaculture program of eight fish ponds expected to bring in a solid return on investment. Construction of the chalets and hostel will accommodate the increase of visitors to the area for the ecotourism program.

ERI Updates from Washington DC

ERI continues to develop strong ties within the nation's Capitol as **Alanna Hartzok**, Co-Director, spent a few days in Washington DC on a whirlwind of meetings as well as giving a presentation on 'Earth Rights Democracy' in co-sponsorship with **Steve Shafarman**, Director of **Citizen Policies** (www.citizenpolicies.org) at the new DC hotspot, Busboys and Poets . .

Earth Rights Democracy Building an Economics of Peace & Justice



Thursday, February 2
8:00 - 10:00 pm
Busboys & Poets Restaurant

2021 14th Street NW (near V St.)
Washington, DC
Metro Green Line U Street Exit

Powerpoint presentation and discussion topics include:

- The Worldwide Wealth Gap
- Military Expenditures and Human Needs
- Natural Resource Wars & US Foreign Policy
- Clarifying an Economics of Peace
- Taxation Policy to Build a World that Works for Everyone
- Citizen Dividends and Basic Income for All
- Earth Rights Democracy - Local to Global

Alanna Hartzok is Co-Director of Earth Rights Institute, a UN NGO representative and President of the Council of Geopolitical Organizations. Her 2001 E.P. Schumacher lecture was published as *Democracy, Earth Rights, and the New Economy*. A former Green Party candidate for Congress in Pennsylvania, her published articles can be found at www.earthrights.net.

Steven Shafarman is the Founder and President of the Citizen Policies Institute and a member of the Coordinating Committee of the U.S. Basic Income Cooperative Network. US BICG will be having its 9th annual conference in Philadelphia on February 24 - 26. More information at www.usbicg.net. Steve is the author of several books, including *The People - Healing Our Democracy and Saving Our World*.

"This is basic and important stuff - a revelation"
Jack and Kathie Hendricks, Democratic Party leaders, Pennsylvania
For further information contact: Diane Perlman, 305-360-2104
Steven Shafarman, 305-436-6556 or Alanna Hartzok, 717-254-0957

Her first meeting was with Ohio Congressman, **Dennis Kucinich** (<http://www.kucinich.us>) to discuss Land Value Taxation and later talked with **Elizabeth Kucinich** about ERI sustainable development programs as a good alternative model for developing countries. The conversation is continuing with the focus on Cleveland investigating LVT policy.

Next day, Alanna met **Liane Schalatek**, Associate Director, **Heinrich Boell Foundation** (www.boell.de) where there is an interest in ERI 'green tax' and sustainable programs . ERI hopes to start up a dialog with

the German Greens about integrating resource rent components into their existing 'green' taxation policy. Other meetings were with **Evangelos Vallianatos** - author of *'This Land is Their Land'*; **Kevin Zeese** (www.kevinzeese.com), coordinator of Nader's **Democracy Rising** and running for US Senate in MD; **Dr Kenya Covington**, Associate Director of Research at the **Congressional Black Caucus Foundation** (www.cbcbfinc.org) who has interest in exploring LVT in how it impacts on the need for affordable housing; **Steve Riskin**, **Carola Weil**, **Christie Hoffman** from the Program Development and Grant Department, **United States Institute for Peace** (www.usip.org), to discuss grant possibilities. Ending the trip, Alanna attended the book signing event at the Brookings Institution of **Chris Patten** launching his new book *'Cousins and Strangers: America, Britain, and Europe in a New Century'*. Appreciation goes to Diane Perlman for all of her help and support to make this trip a success.

ERI DONATION & ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



Bayelsa State Library stocked with ERI book donations

Our six containers of humanitarian aid to Nigeria arrived safely and have been distributed to their designated locations. More information about these donations - Winter 2005 issue www.earthrights.net/newsletters/2005-11.pdf

The Bayelsa State Library is now well-stocked with our donated textbooks and other educational materials. Our medical supplies and wheelchairs are being stored until the completion of the construction of the Yenagoa public hospital and medical center. Under the direction of **Annie Goeke**, Co-Director, and **Francis Udisi**, Program Coordinator, ERI is currently exploring additional donation possibilities for the Niger Delta Region and hopes to further expand collaborations in the area with the Niger Delta Development Commission on their peace keeping efforts and master plan for sustainable development.

ERI submitted to the **US Institute of Peace** a grant proposal for \$35,000 to organize a Peace Fair and Conference in the Niger Delta region to be held in

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February 2007. This event will include a 2 day peace conference at the Odi Ecovillage Living and Learning Center and a one day Peace Fair in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. The goal is to sow the seeds for peace and to help the region conceptualize and support a Niger Delta master plan initiative for socio-economic development.

Annie Goeke will be presenting at the upcoming 'Boro Day' (Ijaw) conference in Newark, N.J. on May 20th about the [NGO Perspective for the Niger Delta region](#) and attending with **Francis Udisi** and **Jeffrey Sklar**. ERI hopes to meet the new Governor of Bayelsa State, **Dr. Goodluck**, to discuss about our Nigerian partnership at this event.



Photos from Fr. Jean Claude's visit to our ecovillage in the Democratic Republic of Congo



Our Program Coordinator for Democratic Republic of the Congo, **Fr. Jean Claude Atusameso**, has worked hard on building support for the [Jatukik Providence Ecovillage Living and Learning Center](#) in Kibeti, DRC. With a recent visit back home, he gave out donated items he had shipped from the US of educational materials for local schools, a truck for the ecovillage and other necessary aid for the local people in the region. Upon his return, ERI facilitated the donation of 88 desktop computers with

monitors, kindly donated by A&E Television Network. Plans for the second phase of development for the ecovillage should be completed soon. ERI is working towards a collaborative proposal with the Bonobo Conservation Initiative (www.bonobo.org) to promote other peace building initiatives and health programs for the Congo Basin. It is the hope of the ERI Congo team that sufficient funding will be available soon as the needs of the people in the DRC are extreme and the work we have done so far has brought a glimmer of hope.

WISE WORDS FROM FRANCIS UDISI

Special Appeal to Intervene on the Crisis and Kidnappings in the Niger Delta: US must step in to resolve underlying issues.

Written by Francis Udisi on March 23 2006

I am writing to express my grave and troubling concerns about the sad events currently taking place in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria. We, the Ijaw, want the urgent and direct intervention by the United States to resolve the current crisis between the Ijaws and the Nigerian federal government. Their intervention is the only available option and credibility now left for the resolution of this crisis.

In the past few months, four Americans, among other foreign nationals, have been kidnapped in two separate incidents, by Ijaw militants in the Niger delta region of Nigeria. The United States government has called for the immediate, unconditional and safe release of the hostages and declared that it is working closely with the Nigerian government to achieve that result. This reaction is understandable and expected from a country that pursues the protection of its citizens abroad as a major foreign policy objective.

Over the past 20 years, US companies led by ChevronTexaco, ExxonMobil, Halliburton, Kellogg, etc. have aggressively penetrated the oil and gas industry in Nigeria and made huge financial investments. In 2004, ExxonMobil announced that it was investing \$10 billion in Nigeria's petroleum sector over the next five years, to raise its crude oil production to 1.0 million barrels per day. Between 2005 and 2010, ChevronTexaco is expected to invest over \$4 billion and more than double its daily production output of Nigerian oil and gas.

Nigeria currently supplies about 5 per cent of US domestic consumption and this amount is projected to increase to as much as 20 per cent by 2015. Additionally, it has been demonstrated that supply interruptions in Nigeria have a direct and immediate impact on global oil price that invariably hits US consumers in the pockets. So far, the US policy thrust towards the security crisis in the Niger delta is to aid the Nigerian government to bolster security in the region. Over the years, it has signed several security agreements with the Nigerian government including the

so-called "energy security partnership". It has trained the Nigerian military, supplied arms, communication equipment, attack helicopters and gunboats. It has an aircraft carrier stationed permanently in the Gulf of Guinea and there have been talks of stationing US marines on the ground to protect oil facilities in the region.

Whilst this policy may appear to serve US national interest by keeping the oil flowing in the short term, it is nevertheless a simplistic and **wrong** approach to the problem and will seriously harm its interests in the longer term. It portrays a lack of understanding or appreciation of the fundamental issues involved and/or a disregard for historical outcomes in similar circumstances around the world. The US currently aids the Nigerian government's policy of pacifying the Niger delta militants by applying an overwhelmingly superior force. But this policy is bound to fail. The facts on the ground strongly suggest that it can only lead to an escalation of violence, total disruption of oil and gas activities for extended periods of time and alienation of Americans from the local populace.

The Niger delta, home to a significant minority of Nigeria's population, produces almost entirely all of Nigeria's oil and gas. For fifty years, transnational oil conglomerates based in Europe and the United States, led by Royal Dutch Shell, ChevronTexaco, ExxonMobil, British Petroleum, Elf, and Agip have exploited the marshlands of the delta with reckless abandon reducing the ecologically diverse and delicate terrain, much like the Mississippi delta, to one of the most polluted strip of land on the planet. The amount of oil spilled in the Niger delta is estimated to be several hundred times more than the eleven million gallons that were spilled on the Alaskan coastline by the Exxon Valdez in 1989. Yet absolutely no effort has been made to clean up and remediate the land. The Niger delta is on a fast track to becoming a barren land as the mangrove forests, fishes and other wildlife die off from this massive pollution. The same fate awaits the people themselves if they insist on staying put on their ancestral land.

At the same time, the people of the region have not benefited from the economic activities of oil exploitation as the proceeds are carted away to develop other parts of Nigeria or embezzled by politicians, soldiers and government officials to buy choice properties in the capitals of Europe and America. They have been abandoned, deprived and oppressed for too long and live in abject poverty and squalor. There is a very deep and widespread feeling that they must fight for their own survival or perish. Although the Ijaws may be leading the current struggle in view of their numerical strength, all of the many other ethnic groups in the Niger delta feel the same way.

The United States must not allow itself to be goaded into labeling the Ijaw militants as terrorists. It must not repeat the mistakes of failed policies in apartheid South Africa, Angola, Lebanon, Somalia and Palestine. The Niger delta situation is similar to the Sudanese conflict where the US played a constructive and leading role in bringing some measure of equity and justice to the indigenous peoples of the southern region of that country. The US must reverse course and assume the same leadership role in the Niger delta conflict. It needs to engage the local people in dialogue in order to understand the depth of feeling of hopelessness and by so doing, put itself in a position to proffer appropriate policy response much like it did during the pro-democracy years and after the murder of Ken Saro-Wiwa when its ambassador, Walter Carrington, was actively engaged in negotiations with the aggrieved parties and was even arrested by the Nigerian government of the time.

The protection of minority rights is at the core of any rule by the majority in democratic governance. What we have seen of Nigerian democracy is the government of the majority by the majority for the oppression of the minority. The present Obasanjo government is on record as committing the worst human rights violations in Nigeria's short history. Never in peace time has the military been so recklessly used to repress, oppress, kill and maim Nigerians of minority extractions. Odi, Zaki Biam, Umuchem, Odiama are all vivid examples. Currently, the Niger delta area is currently heavily militarized to the extent that citizen's rights are grossly abused and as such they are afraid to go about their normal lives. This is a major source of the present conflict.

However, the main sour point of the conflict is the gross infrastructural underdevelopment of Ijaw land from which about 90 % of the commonwealth of Nigeria federal republic is generated for the past 40 to 50 years. Yet, there is no clean potable drinking water, no dependable electricity supply, no adequate urban housing, no motor able road to link towns and villages, and the few schools that even exists are poorly funded and maintained, among others.

The US must be guided by its own experiences and legacy of slavery and racism in dealing with the conflict in the Niger delta and must not lower its standards in judging democracy in Nigeria. The US government can achieve this very goal through active participation to champion a global initiative to draw and establish a road map for permanent peace in the region.

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