

MAYA

The Voice For Environmental And Climate Justice



DEMANDING

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE JUSTICE IN OUR LIFETIME.

BULLETIN

3rd Issue

November 2021



Statement on The Climate Crisis Ahead of CoP26

5th October 2021

The climate crisis is one of the most critical challenges of our times, and one where we can literally see our world and livelihoods disappearing before our eyes. The greatest burden is undoubtedly borne by communities, households, the working class, young people and women in the Global South.

We are aware and greatly concerned that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) continues to produce scientific evidence and reports on the dire state of the ongoing climate emergency, but many countries in the Global North continue to ignore such reports at worst or just give tokenistic acknowledgment at best, without any commitment to real action.

As the entire African continent, we contribute only 4% of global CO₂ emissions but suffer some of the worst consequences of climate change. In Zimbabwe our people continue to experience the most adverse impacts of the breakdown of our planet including rising food insecurity, declining water resources, rise of diseases, flooding, cyclones, tropical storms, heatwaves and droughts. The majority of our people live in rural areas and in communities where the infrastructure does not ensure adequate adaptation to the impacts of the climate crisis.

As the state parties, observers, and members of the media meet in November 2021 in Glasgow for the UN Climate Change Conference (CoP26) we make the following demands:

- Rich countries must make a serious commitment and take action to achieve net zero emissions by 2030.
- Governments and businesses must be held accountable and made to accelerate the phase-out of coal and other carbon forms of energy.
- Deforestation must be contained and confronted.
- Rich countries must own up to the commitment made under the Paris Agreements and provide funds for loss and damage and for assisting poor countries to adapt to the impacts of the climate crisis.
- There must be support for investment in renewable energy and a green, community-centric economy.
- Our biodiversity, species, and ecosystems must be restored and protected.
- There must be capacity building and technology transfer to enable civil protection units and vulnerable communities to have early climate disaster warning systems and resilient infrastructure.

- Women and youths must be fully involved in decision-making processes related to climate adaptation, mitigation, and a just, green transition.

We have no time to waste, We have no Planet B. We need action now!

Issued By:

Climate Alliance ZW

Climate Alliance ZW is a coalition of progressive organisations in Zimbabwe fighting for climate justice and social justice. The coalition comprises Magamba Network, GreenGovZW, Advocates4Earth, Manica Youth Assembly, African Youth Initiative on Climate Change and MyTrees





On the City of Mutare Budget Committee

Statement by MAYA
First Published 18th October 2021



“WE DEMAND AN INCLUSIVE BUDGET”

Now the City of Mutare has come up and constituted what they term “a Budget Committee” made up of men and women of substance from around the city that will spearhead the 2022 Budget consultations and formulation process. The Budget Committee was tucked away in Nyanga where according to the Council, they were being capacitated and immersed in the onerous task of reviewing the current 2021 Budget. MAYA notes that the Committee of thirteen only has a single woman and no representative for young people which makes it exclusive rather than inclusive. The deed has been done. However, this under-representation of women and youths must not be taken lightly and this has to be corrected during the next budget cycle.

MAYA hopes and prays that the Budget Committee’s sojourn in Nyanga where they breath fresh unpolluted air, away from the hustle and bustle of the City will bring about the expected results. It is our wish that from reviewing the 2021 Budget and its performance, they also learned the lesson of what ought to be done and what should not be done. The most important element in humans is the ability to learn, relearn and unlearn certain things and certainly, we appreciate that the 2021 Budget presented a worthy learning opportunity that will benefit the residents of Mutare. We also expect that council managed to unlearn the bad habit of not consulting residents on time and in good faith.

As MAYA, our expectations from the Budget Committee is a people-centred, gender and youth-friendly budget informed by the needs and priorities of the people. The work of the Budget Committee has been cut out for them. The Budget comes at a time the nation is reeling from COVID-19 which has left residents poorer and more vulnerable than previous years as exemplified by urban families receiving livelihood support from World Food Programme and partners. Residents are stressed and stretched, a situation which tends to relegate women and young people to the bottom of the food chain. The Budget must at least consider these very important elements so that citizens will appreciate the new approach adopted by the Council of constituting the Budget Committee.

We recognise the tough choices that the Budget Committee will have to make because of the tough economic times that we are living in especially the fiscal and monetary regime marked by inflation and lack of confidence in the local currency. Some wards have no representation after their elected councillors were purged. While MAYA supports the concept of the Budget Committee, it is our fervent hope that this Committee becomes relevant. The committee must be able to work without interference from other offices and should be able to make decisions so that at the end of the day, the Committee as a whole will be accountable to the residents for the Budget.

Now the Budget Committee must hit the ground running. Residents are waiting.

MAYA Press Release 9th September 2021

MAYA is deeply worried by the recent news that some unidentified people suspected to be fishmongers did the most unthinkable act of poisoning the Fern Valley Dam in a desperate bid to make a big catch. However, as expected, this despicable act did not end well as the poison decimated most, if not all the ecological system of the dam. The fishmongers were concerned only in harvesting the fish, but other flora and fauna species including frogs, fish eagles, animals that drink from that dam are at risk of dying as well. This is a very unsettling development that must be condemned by all responsible citizens and action taken to prevent such heinous acts from being perpetrated again.

As MAYA, we are further perturbed by the obvious public health risks attached to the poisoning act which exposes many people to food poisoning after consuming the fish. Hundreds if not thousands of unsuspecting people adults, children, pregnant women, lactating mothers, fathers, and elderly could be munching the fish now, happy that they have had a hearty meal with juicy fish after a long period of hard times, only to realize that it was a very fishy meal. The water and fish are now a poisoned chalice putting people and a whole range of biodiversity that rely on the Fern Valley dam water in great danger.

It must be noted that the water from the Fern Valley dam proceeds as the Dora River which joins Sakubva River 5km downstream, itself a tributary of the Odzi River. This illustrates how grave the situation is and what is at stake. In this respect that we urge the responsible authorities to urgently investigate the type of chemical/poison that was used to place the water and the possible effect it may have on humans and biodiversity in the immediate and intermediate future. This information is necessary for those who may have eaten the fish who may need immediate medical attention and the possible preventive measures that those people and animals living downstream in Dora may have to take to mitigate the effects of the poison.

MAYA salutes the quick action from Councillor Matsiya (ward 19) for alerting the public. This is leadership. As an elected official, he has done his part. **Section 73 (1) (Environmental Rights)** of the Constitution says that **“every person has the right to (a) An environment that is not harmful to their health and well-being and (1) prevent pollution and ecological degradation.”** This reminds us all as citizens that we have a duty and responsibility towards the environment, and this entails that citizens must at all times act responsibly. Lacing water with poison to catch a few fish is irresponsible and criminal. We regard it as culpable homicide if not a genocidal attempt. There is no justification for this callous act, it cannot be hunger nor poverty. It can only be terrorism.

MAYA urges law enforcement to upscale their investigation regarding this criminal action while the local Authority (City of Mutare) must be authorized to run and maintain the dam. We understand the ownership issues involved however we believe the local authority is better placed to protect and manage the dam. The Environmental Management Agency must also up their game and be more visible, lest very soon, there will be no environment for the Agency to manage. Further, since this is more of a public health matter, we await quick action by all concerned stakeholders especially EMA and the Ministry of Health. Citizens must act responsibly towards fellow beings and the environment and must support the local authority, EMA, and police as they in their various capacities To manage the environment for our benefit either by discouraging negative actions from fellow citizens where ever we encounter such or reporting such actions to the authorities. We are sure, someone somewhere saw this evil act happening and is quiet now, by choosing silence, you’re siding with evil.

Love your neighbour as you love yourself so as the environment. This is Ubuntu.

This is Ubuntu.

PLANT TREES, PLANT BAOBABS

by **Melissa Mhaka**

14th January 2021

Ignorance, the need for firewood and urban farming are factors, among others, which are causing a high level of deforestation in urban areas.

Not acting, not proffering solutions as residents whilst the environment is being destroyed will haunt us one day when we become victims to natural disasters. During this period when Zimbabwe is experiencing high rainfall countrywide, loose soil is eroded in to homesteads thus destroying crops, furniture and other things. Currently hundreds of families in Mutare are in poverty as their few items which were supposed to sustain them during this lockdown sank into mud. The devastating event was a wake-up call to every citizen.

There is paramount need for collaborative efforts in protecting the environment especially to stop deforestation and destructive farming methods on mountain-sides and along river banks.

The Manica Youth Assembly urges every citizen to take action and join the Re-Greening Mutare Project.

Today MAYA planted 50 baobab trees. A baobab tree is well known as the ‘Tree of Life’ with it’s numerous benefits as it provides shelter, clothing, food water for animals among others. Baobab roots prevent soil erosion and can reduce the mud and rock flows which we experience during heavy rains.

Let us save lives by planting a tree.



MARYMOUNT TREE NURSERY PROJECT

26th May 2021



Marymount Teachers' College, in liaison with the liaises with Manica Youth Assembly (MAYA), the Environmental Management Agency (EMA), the Forestry Commission and other stakeholders, has launched a Tree Nursery Project on its premises. In a statement, Marymount Teachers' College Principal, Mrs Petty Silitshena said:

“For the tree nursery project, we are planting exotic and indigenous trees. This is our first step to development as we are looking forward to revegetating and rejuvenating our environment.”

Of the 363 trees that were nursed, 81 are indigenous and 282 are exotic. Further, Silitshena said the tree nursing project has become an eye-opener for students and stakeholders because there is a clear relationship between people and the environment. People get oxygen from trees and trees get carbon dioxide from people which makes them grow.

EMA representative, Mr. Ernest Marange, said plastics can be used to nurse the trees under the theme of Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle.

In an interview, Acting Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Chairperson for Marymount Teacher's College, Mr. Sam Mutandwa said:

“Nursing tin's are from used plastic packs and plastic bottles. Let us reduce waste and reuse other materials to plant trees.”

Moreover, students were excited about the programme saying they are looking forward to planting more trees in the communities and teach people about the importance of trees. ESD Club representative, Everjoice Bonyongwe, said:

“Let us Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle so that we can plant trees for they help the people with oxygen.”

In conclusion, the Principal said:

“We are looking forward to working with MAYA, EMA, and other stakeholders to plant more trees for a better environment.”

At this juncture, MAYA urges people to plant trees to improve the environmental cycle which we get from trees. Manica Youth Assembly graced the occasion



5th June 2021

World Environment Day is celebrated annually on 5th June and is the United Nations' principal vehicle for encouraging awareness and action for the protection of the environment. First held in 1974, it has been a platform for raising awareness on environmental issue such as marine pollution, human over-population, global warming, sustainable consumption and wildlife crime. World Environment Day is a global platform for public outreach, with participation from over 143 countries annually. Each year, the program has provided a theme and forum for businesses, non-government organisations, communities, governments and celebrities to advocate environmental causes.

The Manica Youth Assembly celebrated World Environment Day with stakeholders from Marymount Teacher's College, ZimParks, and youths in marginalised communities under the theme:

“In memory of the youths who passed on due to COVID-19.”

In a statement, ZimParks representative, Mr Mashava, urged the youths to plant many trees as they can for environmental conservation.

Moreover, Dean of Students for Marymount Teacher's College, Mrs Matsongoni said::

“We urge people to plant trees as a way to mitigate climate change. We should develop a culture 'teach them young' thus encouraging children to be involved in tree planting activities.”

At this juncture, MAYA is thanking Dakini Rising for its undying and unconditional support. The partnership with Dakini Rising will go a long way in protecting and planting trees at Dangamvura Mountain in Mutare, Zimbabwe.



DAY OF THE AFRICAN CHILD

by Jussa Kubdherezera

16TH June 2021



SOWETO UPRISING 16th June 1976

It should not hurt to be an African Child.

The Manica Youth Assembly commemorates the Day of the African Child under the theme:

“30 years after the adoption of the Charter: accelerate the implementation of Agenda 2040 for an Africa fit for children.”

This day reminds people of the role an African child can play in changing society’s narratives. It also reminds every nation to renew its commitment to championing children’s rights against any form of discrimination and stigmatisation.

Since 1991, the day of the African Child has been celebrated every year to commemorate those killed during the Soweto Uprising on 16th June 1976. Hundreds were killed while marching as a way to demonstrate their disapproval of the Bantu Education Act, which segregated students based on their race.

Due to the unprecedented pandemic of COVID-19, millions of children have undergone sexual, emotional, and physical abuse in Sub-Saharan Africa. This has been caused by economic instabilities, retrenchments, and poverty. Hence, many parents feel they have little or no alternative but to force their children to marry or even operate on the streets.

Research shows that, of the 57 million primary school-age children currently out of school around the world, over half are from Sub-Saharan Africa.

Though the present socio-legal system boasts of several constitutional mandates, international laws, treaties, child protection laws are all in the best interest of serving children in its democracy and the world at large, it is without doubt that the mandates are being violated because the elites are taking advantage of the marginalised innocent souls.

Moreover, children are seen surviving through the cold winds of neglect, and all kinds of misfortune and vile treatment. Every day they are seen with broken smiles that endure the painful kicking of their malnourished bellies protruding with dreams that may never see the light of conception. To help children, there is a need for a little kind word, meaningful promises, hearts of compassion, and smiles of hope. The late anti-apartheid revolutionary and political leader, Nelson Mandela, once said:

“There can be no keener revelation of a society’s soul than the way it treats its children.”

Therefore, like the moon and the sun, children are worth more than gold, and like the stars in the sky, they are worth more than diamonds and silver. Our children are our wealth, ‘minerals’ that should be handled with care. The Day of the African Child is also an opportunity to raise awareness of the ongoing need to improve the education of children living across Africa.

There is a saying, “investing in a child’s education is investing in a nation,” but the right to education of our children has been marginalised as inequalities in learning widen.

With the introduction of online learning, children from poor families have been disadvantaged because their parents cannot afford computers and smart-phones. This era of the digital divide has drawn lines between the poor and the elite. Therefore, within the Zimbabwean situation and the new curriculum of education for sustainable development, the real problems of the majority of children must be considered.

For the betterment of our children, let us abide by the sustainable development goals that were put forward by the United Nations: these include no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, clean water and sanitation, gender equality, reduced inequalities, and peace and justice.

At this juncture, MAYA affirms that inside our children are embedded so many gifts and possibilities which the community needs to encourage.

The Day of the African Child, therefore, gives children the opportunity to hold their community and their leaders to account.





INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE

21ST September 2021

The International Day of Peace, also officially known as World Peace Day, is a United Nations-sanctioned holiday observed annually on 21 September. It is dedicated to world peace, and specifically the absence of war and violence, such as might be occasioned by a temporary ceasefire in a combat zone for humanitarian aid access. The day was first celebrated in 1981 and is kept by many nations, political groups, military groups, and people. This year's theme was:

"Recovering better for an equitable and sustainable world."

The Manica Youth Assembly last week joined the rest of the world in celebrating the International Day of Peace by giving back to the community. MAYA donated a total of 100 library books to two local schools. 50 went to Chisamba Primary School with the other 50 going to Dangare Primary school in Mutare.

Mrs Munyaradzi, the Senior Teacher at Chisamba Primary School thanked MAYA for the kind book donation and hoping MAYA will do more for her learning institution.

"The donation will go a long way in uplifting the children's lives. I wish to thank the youth organisation for being kind hearted at a time when life is really tough out there," said Mr Chikavhanga, Dangare Primary School Senior Teacher.

"It our culture as an organisation to give back to the community especially communities that raised us, those that support us, and those that are underprivileged in terms of resources," says Tinashe Muzama, MAYA Programmes Officer.



CHISAMBA PRIMARY SCHOOL



DANGARE PRIMARY SCHOOL

CO-OPERATION BETWEEN MAYA AND TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL ZIMBABWE

by **Melissa Mhaka**

30th September 2021

MAYA has been holding community meetings in collaboration with Transparency International Zimbabwe. The aim is to build constructive relationship between communities and Civil Society Organisations in order to empower communities to organise around their various issues.

By doing so we can assist communities to make decisions and to interact with local government in ways which will improve their lives.



CLEAN UP !

7th October 2021

Let's keep our environment clean by picking up litter.

Zero tolerance to litter and everyday responsibility is the new slogan.



THE CASE OF MEMORY MACHAYA

by Jussa Kudherezera

18th August 2021



Zimbabwe has come a long way in the fight for a socially just society based on respect for human life and dignity for its citizens. It is not therefore surprising that 2021 marks thirteen years after Zimbabwe became a state party to the landmark Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (African Women's Protocol). The Protocol was adopted on 11th July 2003 in Maputo. Zimbabwe ratified the Protocol on 15th April 2008 and thus committed itself to be bound by its provisions.

The Protocol was adopted for a good cause which is to build a society that respects and promotes the full protection of its women and children from religious and harmful and practices. Harmful religious and traditional practices are forms of violence that are remitted primarily against women and girls in certain communities and societies for so long that they are considered, or presented by perpetrators, as part of accepted cultural or religious practice. The most common are forced or early marriages for girls.

It is under this context that Manica Youth Assembly (MAYA) sadly notes with serious concern recent developments where a young girl aged just fourteen (14), Memory Machaya is reported to have lost her life during childbirth at a Johannes Marange Apostolic sect shrine in Bocha/Marange recently.

We acknowledge that this is only a tip of a very huge iceberg which society is fully aware of and witnesses daily. It should not be a surprise at all as this unfortunate death is just a microcosm of the bigger disaster that has been unfolding yet society feigns blindness or ignorance and does nothing, leaving violators to feast on young girls under the guise of religion.

Now, a young life has been lost, she should be in school, not in a grave. We note that the alleged husband, one Evans Momberume shares the same name with that of the Church leader, which brings the question: "Are they related"

She died because the good people kept quiet allowing evil to prevail.

Where are the adults, relatives, neighbours, friends, and stakeholders when Memory was traded?

This must be a hard lesson and a call to action for all concerned to put our energies towards ending these harmful practices. The Marange Apostolic sect leadership must be held accountable. However, as MAYA we maintain that there are many other harmful practices that society must deal with to end this scourge because there are many more Memory Machayas out there suffering out there and these are young people who must be protected.

MAYA condemns this religious and cultural narcissism and demands that this must end now. We demand justice for Memory. One life is one too many. We urge the government and all stakeholders to take a stance now and proactively work together to end this genocide. We call for proactive but drastic action to stop this vandalism by at source. Zimbabwe already has enough laws and policies to deal with this challenge.

Why should some religious zealots be allowed to breach our constitutional order by being allowed to con, abuse, and murder our girls and women?

The Apostolic sect must be put on notice together with other religious cults that promote such harmful activities. All religious and cultural activities must comply with the laws and Constitution of the land and those in contravention must reform or face the consequences.

Therefore, we recommend that Government must ban all harmful religious and cultural practices and make them criminal. The leaders (religious or traditional/cultural) must be held liable. Sexual and reproductive health education and facilities are accessible to all women and youths. Youths are activated to report suspected child marriages in their communities. It is time that the Zimbabwe government fully implements the existing laws and protocols for the benefit of the vulnerable. Civil society must upscale interventions in co-operation with the government.

Human rights standards and norms require that the rights of particularly vulnerable groups be respected, protected, and fulfilled. The state must undertakings a duty by protecting its girls to allow them to live a full productive life. It is a fact that child marriage limits girls' rights to health and education. Denial of education and health leads to denial of other rights such as the right to work and the right to life.

Below: A report from the Guardian newspaper, London 8th August 2021



THE UNITED NATIONS AND CHILD MARRIAGE

The United Nations has condemned the practice of child marriage in [Zimbabwe](#) following the death of a 14-year-old girl after she gave birth at a church shrine, an incident that caused outrage among citizens and rights activists. The case has brought to the fore the practice of child marriage within Zimbabwe's apostolic churches, which also allow polygamy.

The government has traditionally turned a blind eye to [child-marriage](#). Zimbabwe has two sets of marriage laws, the Marriage Act and Customary Marriages Act. Neither law gives a minimum age for marriage consent, while the customary law allows polygamy. A new bill being debated by parliament seeks to synchronise the laws, ban marriage of anyone below 18 years and prosecute anyone involved in the marriage of a minor.

The UN in Zimbabwe said in a statement it **“notes with deep concern and condemns strongly”** the circumstances leading to the death of Memory Machaya, the 14-year-old girl from the rural area of Marange in the east of the country. **“Sadly, disturbing reports of the sexual violation of underage girls, including forced child marriages, continue to surface and indeed this is another sad case,”** the UN said. One in three girls in Zimbabwe are likely to be married before turning 18, said the UN, whose office in Zimbabwe groups all 25 of its agencies operating in the country.

Police and Zimbabwe's gender commission said they were investigating the circumstances that led to the girl's death and burial. Local media reported the girl died last month but the case came to light only last week after angry relatives, who were barred by the church's security from attending her burial, told their story to the state-owned press.

THE STORY OF TENDAI LORRAINE MWARAMBA

in her own words



I, Tendai Lorraine Mwaramba, am 29 years old with a learning disability. I am based in Mutare. I stay in Hobhouse suburb. I am a single lady and stay with my parents.

Academically I attended my ordinary level in Mutare at Sakubva 2 high School where I obtained a one ordinary level pass. This was due to my inability to cope up with the pace of learning that was being done by other learners. Failure to obtain 5 'O' levels denied me to further my studies as I had been anticipating. All I could be doing was being at home and doing whatever work assigned by parents.

With progress of time, with the initial capital injection from my parents I was now doing buying and selling of second-hand clothes. It is during this time that I came across Mr Dzveta of the Tariro Foundation of Zimbabwe who interviewed me on my background and aspirations.

Mr Dzveta introduced me to programmes that are business related and are being done in partnership

with government departments and other development partners. The Tariro Foundation team instilled confidence in me and gave me hope to become an achiever despite my personal and community perception towards my disability. I attended programmes on Entrepreneurship, Starting and Financing SMEs and then Co-operatives. The trainings were done by the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender Development and Small & Medium Enterprises, Tariro Foundation of Zimbabwe, Women & Law in Southern Africa (WILSA), Junior Achievement Zimbabwe and the International Co-operative Alliance – Africa.

Mr Dzveta in August 2019 helped me to apply for a programme for training on co-operatives which was being funded by International Co-operative Alliance – Africa. The application was a success and this was a further inspiration to myself as it gave me an opportunity to fly (board an aero-plane) and attend a training outside the country touring other cooperatives in Uganda and take a leaf from them then implement such co-operatives in our home countries as well. The stages of co-operative formation and sustaining it were some of the key lessons learnt. So after the November training in Uganda, I came and mobilized my group of 10 youths it was an inclusive group comprised of youths with disabilities and those who are able-bodied.

The time to co-ordinate our formation of a co-operative was hit by challenges of time to train the would-be cooperative members as each was engaged elsewhere so the team wasn't available as easy as we anticipated despite the commitment they showed. This challenge took us until the time of COVID-19 lockdown and everyone was home. We then thought of engaging through the online platform using WhatsApp. We received guidance from our mentor, Mr Derera of Junior Achievement Zimbabwe. The cooperative members who were committed became 5 and we agreed to start with rabbit production and spread to the production of products for home use such as Cobra, drinks, multi-purpose cleaner and detergents.

To date we have managed to have the infrastructure and started with 2 rabbits. At the moment the rabbits are now 16 from the time we commenced the project in May. We are working as a group and the guidance we are getting from our Mentor, Mr Derera and Mr Dzveta is motivating us to scale up our work and increase our income as youths with disabilities.

From this background and commitment, I as a young woman with a disability I need to inspire families and communities that they need to focus on our abilities so that we also contribute meaningfully to our families, communities and nation at large.

Our co-operative group is now on the verge of registering with the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises. The co-operative has built confidence to many in our community hence it has raised the hope to families and the community with regards to the abilities of those with disabilities especially young women. Am now further intrinsically motivated by the trainings I got and the visit I had to co-operatives in Uganda hence implementing it for the benefit of my other youths. Tariro Hobhouse Co-operative group will be more visible in the coming year as it has set to do more home projects to ensure productivity while at home for those with disabilities who usually are not accorded employment opportunities by the employers who lack confidence in us.

Currently I am complementing my income with the selling of perfumes in Hobhouse near Hobhouse Police Station or by Harlem Community Centre. I am now able to add up to our household income through these income generating projects which I want to inspire other people with disabilities to consider doing rather than begging. Self-reliance also instills confidence on the ability for people with disabilities in fending for themselves and their families if given the opportunity.



THE DESTRUCTION OF AFRICA'S ENVIRONMENT

by Ian Beddowes 11th October 2011



The African continent produces only about 3% of the world's greenhouse gasses but is arguably the most vulnerable to climate change. The Sahara is the world's largest desert — and is expanding southwards, taking over the Sahel region of marginal savannah grasslands. Rising sea levels threaten at least one third of low-lying Mozambique, including the capital, Maputo and the adjoining South African coast including the major port city of Durban

My country, Zimbabwe, has, since Independence in 1980, received on average less rainfall than in the earlier period yet the population has grown. In 1980 the population was 7.3 million, it is now 15.1 million. The land area could potentially sustain a much bigger population, but the biggest problem is the dwindling water supply. Water management has long been a problem, and the capital, Harare and its major satellite, Chitungwiza, have not had clean water for some years. But even with the best possible water management system in place, global warming and population increase would still make life very difficult. Currently, the fertility rate, that is the number of children per woman, is 3.6. To the south, in South Africa, it is 2.4. To the north, in Zambia, it is 5. The top 22 countries in terms of fertility are in Africa, the fast-growing population and consequent environmental degradation and inadequate or shrinking food resources point to the strong likelihood of large-scale famine in years to come.

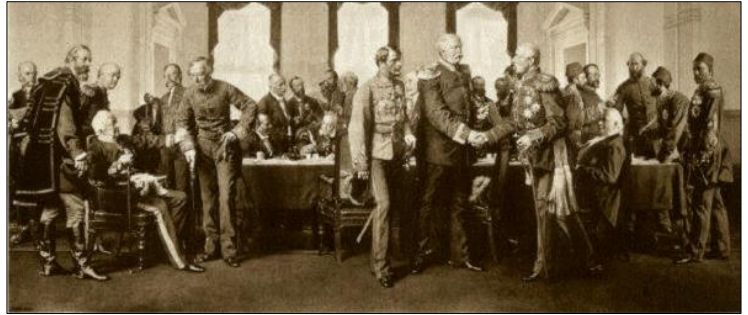
Africa has an international reputation for bad governance, a rapidly growing population and poverty. Having said that, we must also record the persistent policy of the imperialist powers to remove any progressive leader from power and to leave in place their nominees. This has been catastrophic in terms of both development and proper conservation of natural resources. In sub-Saharan Africa, Kwame Nkrumah, Prime Minister and then President of Ghana from 1946 to 1966 was removed from power in 1966 because he sought to build an independent aluminium industry based on Ghana's bauxite. Ghana's main income was from cocoa. And the Ghanaian government led by Nkrumah used the cocoa revenue to fund the aluminium project.



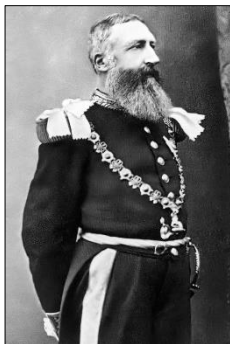
KWAME NKUMAH

We now have indisputable evidence that the British and French governments colluded to bring down the cocoa price (neighbouring French-controlled Côte d'Ivoire is the other major cocoa producer in the world). Nkrumah was ousted by a coup in 1966 after which Ghanaian assets were privatised with wealth going to foreign, mainly British monopoly capitalist interests.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), formerly the Belgian Congo, has absolutely the worst history of any country in Africa. It was colonised by Belgium following the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 which divided Africa among the imperialist powers. This happened at a period when rubber began to be used in large quantities for the tyres on motor vehicles and bicycles.



THE BERLIN CONFERENCE DIVIDED AFRICA IN 1885



LEOPOLD II

Under Leopold II, King of the Belgians, the so-called Congo Free State became his personal property. Forced labour on a massive scale was used to collect wild rubber from at least three separate plant species found in the rain forest — rubber plantations had not yet appeared.

The cruelties involved, including the cutting off of hands for those who did not fulfil their quotas led not only to direct killings, but also to the disintegration of Congo society and the death of around 20% of the population in the period from 1886 to 1908.



CONGO: CUTTING OF HANDS

The Congo River Basin is second only to the Amazon in size and is the second biggest area of rainforest 60% is in the DRC. Other countries which are largely covered by rainforest are: Republic of Congo (former French colony — capital Brazzaville), Central African Republic, Rwanda and Gabon and the rainforest stretches into other surrounding countries. But like in Brazil, uncontrolled logging as well as clearing for agriculture and uncontrolled mining are quickly destroying the forest and threatening world efforts to combat climate change.

The mineral riches of Congo have been the source not of enrichment, but of impoverishment of both the Congolese people and the environment in which they live. Long before colonisation, Congo was a major source of copper and it is still the world's biggest producer.

The uranium which was used to manufacture the atomic bombs which hit Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 came from Congo — and spurred the US interest in gaining control of the minerals of Congo and the rest of Africa. US influence was to grow immensely in the years following the Second World War. Today most of the world's coltan, used in the manufacture of cellphones comes from the DRC. The DRC is also the world's number one producer of cobalt and of molybdenum; gold and diamonds are also plentiful. Political interference based on the exploitation of minerals by big mining companies has left the people of this resource-rich country in poverty and degradation.

In June 1960, Patrice Lumumba became the Prime Minister of what was to be called the Republic of Congo as it became independent from Belgium. He was elected with a huge majority according to the norms of bourgeois democracy. Within weeks he faced a police mutiny and the copper-rich Katanga Province declared Independence through the intervention of the giant Union Minière mining company which nominated its puppet Moïse Tshombe as President.



PATRICE LUMUMBA, ARRESTED UNDER FULL VIEW OF UN TROOPS

President of Congo, which he renamed Zaire, from 1965 to 1997. Very strong circumstantial evidence points to the Rhodesians bringing down Hammarskjöld's plane in a period of inter-imperialist rivalry over the mineral resources of Congo.

In 1997, Kabila took power initially with the assistance of the USA through the armies of Uganda and Rwanda. They needed a new and compliant strong man to replace Mobutu. But then Kabila shocked the Western world. He renegotiated all mining contracts insisting that they must put money back into Congo. Belgian Communist, Ludo Martens became his main adviser. That was enough. President Bill Clinton visited Uganda and established military support for the invasion of Congo by Uganda and Rwanda. Towards the end of 1998, the biggest war in Africa's history began. According to United Nations figures, the Congo War 1998-2003 was responsible for the deaths of 5.4 million people either directly through war or by famine and other indirect causes. Zimbabwe and Angola came to the rescue of Congo, leading to the beginning of sanctions against Zimbabwe in 1999 when the World Bank and IMF withdrew funding from Zimbabwe while at the same time funding the aggressors, Uganda and Rwanda.

Although the invasion was defeated, the assassination of Laurent Kabila in 2001 was the end of economic reforms in the interests of the DRC and its people. His son, Joseph Kabila, who became President after the death of his father, relapsed into the old ways of corruption.

Today, mining companies do what they please in DRC and logging companies clear the rain forest.

We have spent a lot of space highlighting the problems in one country, but that country has the most extensive natural resources in Africa and is geographically in the centre of the continent. Consistent destabilisation and outright plunder have not only reduced the people of the Democratic Republic of Congo to poverty and backwardness, it has disturbed the development of the whole region. The destruction of the rain-forest is a threat to the future of mankind and other life-forms on Earth.

Real attempts have been made to improve the effects of global warming and desertification in Africa. Perhaps the greatest attempt was by Libya which attempted to green the desert and become self-sufficient in food with the Great Man-Made River Project. This increasingly successful venture was bombed to destruction by NATO under the leadership of the USA's first 'African-American' President, Barack Obama who responded to the fears of President Sarkozy of France that Muammar Gaddafi's proposal of the Gold Dinar as an all-African currency would undermine France's control of its *de facto* colonies belonging to the French Community.

Britain, already reduced to the *de facto* position of having become a US semi-colony joined in. Britain, it should be noted was then under the leadership of David Cameron, a man whose family, historically, had become exceedingly wealthy due to slavery in the sugar plantations of the West Indies.

Lumumba asked for assistance from the United Nations, which indeed sent forces to Congo. However, UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld and his team conspired with the USA and Belgium to remove Lumumba from power leading to his murder and the dissolving of his body in acid in January 1961. Hammarskjöld himself was to be killed in September 1961 in a plane crash in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia). The Rhodesians supported the Belgians, the Katanga break-away and Tshombe, whereas the USA supported a united Congo under the leadership of their

man, Mobutu Sese Seko. Mobutu became



NATO BOMBS LIBYA IN THE NAME OF 'HUMAN RIGHTS' 2011

Saudi Arabia, a country led by Wahabi Sunni Islamic extremists also joined in. It should be noted that upsurge of Islamic fundamentalism is almost entirely due to the links between Saudi Arabia and the United States forged when oil was discovered there around 1930. Saudi oil revenue has been used to destroy progressive Arab nationalism throughout the Middle East and North Africa.

Sweden, the professional neutrals of northern Europe was also involved in the attack (remember that Sweden had also supplied Dag Hammarskjöld to the UN and to Africa.

14 countries participated in the bombing and destruction of Libya in the name of the restoration of 'Human Rights'. The high point of the exercise was genocide against black Libyans by the al-Qaeda allies of NATO including the destruction of the mainly black coastal town of Tawergha. In the name of the restoration of Human Rights, we now have the restoration of the slave trade in Libya.



LIBYAN SLAVE MARKET

There is indeed bad governance throughout most of Africa, but it is to a great degree due to the removal of some of our best leaders by the imperialists. We have here highlighted just some of the worst cases. The invisible hand of the international banking system has also been at work. Bullying, bribing and creating conditions for African countries which will maintain the African continent as nothing more than a source of cheap raw materials.

In terms of the fight against climate change, there is some glimmer of hope. In an attempt to drive back desertification in the Sahel region. First proposed as far back as the 1950s by British environmentalist Richard St. Barbe Baker, the proposal is to plant a cordon of trees 50km wide right across the southern edge of the Sahara. This project, agreed to by UN agencies and the African Union began in 2007 and was scheduled to end in 2030. The success of the Great Green Wall in northern China which has successfully pushed back the Gobi Desert has been an inspiration. But a report in 2020 claims that up till now, only 4% of the projected area has been planted.

The African country which has successfully reforested a very large area and is continuing to do so, is Ethiopia which has planted 5.5 billion trees. Smaller successes have been recorded in Burkina Faso, Senegal and Nigeria.

In Zimbabwe, Allan Savory has initiated a unique way of restoring savannah and increasing livestock production. Imitating the movement of herds in the Serengeti of Tanzania, Savory recognised that removing livestock entirely actually increases desertification. This is because dead grass rots and prevents new growth. On the other hand, the results of uncontrolled grazing are well known. Savory's method, now being replicated as far away as the USA and Australia is to paddock large herds in one place until the area is cleared of grass and then to move the herd to the next paddock. The faeces and the urine then encourage the growth of seeds in the ground and promotes grass cover which also prevents evaporation and run-off, raising the water table.

Also in Zimbabwe, the Manica Youth Assembly established in Zimbabwe's eastern province of Manicaland is involved in environmental awareness, conservation and tree planting. Though still working on a small scale, it shows that there is hope and that it is possible to create awareness in communities.

The efforts of environmentalists in Africa are hampered by the corporate greed of foreign monopoly capital coupled with the rule of the local parasitic bourgeoisie which is in control of most African governments. With global warming and a rapidly increasing population, the internal class struggle and the struggle against imperialism and monopoly capital in Africa are inextricably linked to the struggle for survival.



TREE PLANTING ETHIOPIA



THE MAYA TEAM



Jussa Kudherezera
Founder, Co-ordinator



Melissa Mhaka
Gender and Environment



Tinashe Muzama
Programme Officer



Chiedza Manyuma



Tatenda Dutiro



Nicolette Nyikadzino



Pacific Ocean: cleaning plastic waste