



EARTH RIGHTS INSTITUTE

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MISSION STATEMENT

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.

A Non-Profit 501 C3 Tax Deductible Organization since 2001

EARTH RIGHTS REVIEW

November 2005

Greetings Friends to our First Newsletter

NIGERIAN DONATION PROGRAM

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US Congressional Black Caucus Hearing

The US Congressional Black Caucus launched and discussed an important policy paper, "Breaking the Oil Syndrome: Responsible Hydrocarbon Development in West Africa," in Washington, D.C. on July 19, 2005. Alanna Hartzok, Co-Director/Founder of Earth Rights Institute was an invited panelist addressing the NGO perspective on Energy and West Africa. Francis Udisi, ERI Program Coordinator for Nigeria/USA, had arranged for Professor Joseph M. Ebiware, Vice President of the Ijaw National Alliance of the Americas to present a statement voicing the concerns of the Ijaw people of the Niger Delta. Alanna addressed the issues of distribution of (resource) rents and the importance of using such revenue for poverty reduction and infrastructure development. ERI views such policy approaches as an emerging new form of democracy, one that captures the value of land and natural resources for the benefit of the people as a whole while removing tax burden from the economically productive and beneficial activities. Alanna also spoke of the Niger Delta Fund Initiative, ERI's Odi Ecovillage project in Bayelsa State, Nigeria, the ecovillage development model in general, and ERI's work with US donor agencies as facilitated by ERI's Program Coordinators Francis Udisi and Gordon Abiama in association with ERI Co-Director/Founder Anne Geoke and the Bayelsa State government of Nigeria.



ERI SENDS 4 MILLION DOLLARS WORTH OF AID TO NIGERIA IN TEXTBOOKS, MEDICAL EQUIPMENT AND COMPUTERS.

For our on-going assistance of the people of the Bayelsa State, ERI has organized the shipment of numerous ocean containers of donations to Nigeria under the direction of Francis Udisi, ERI Program Coordinator Nigeria/USA. He initiated this very successful donation program and for the past few years has collaborated donations from organizations such as Project Hope and Books for Africa. Currently on route from Los Angeles is a humanitarian aid container of 200 wheelchairs and medical equipment donated by Wheels for Humanity; 2000 textbooks and other educational materials donated by CORE-CA, Drew University Library, and Ralph Nader; and student materials donated by Heartfelt Foundation. All are US based NGOs dedicated to uplifting the living standards of the under-represented, the poor and vulnerable. These donations will be used mainly for educational institutions such as the first public Niger Delta University and the newly opened 500 bed hospital in Yenagoa, Nigeria. Our work with US donor agencies is facilitated by ERI Program Coordinators Francis Udisi and Gordon Abiama in association with ERI Co-Directors Anne Geoke and Alanna Hartzok with the Bayelsa State government of Nigeria.

ERI USA DELEGATION TO VISIT NIGERIA 2006

WHO Annie Geoke and Alanna Hartzok (ERI Co-Directors), Francis Udisi (ERI Program Coordinator USA/Nigeria), Jeffrey Sklar (ERI General Council), Dave Martin, Mark Ravis and Adrian Dove of World-Wide Congress for Racial Equality who will initiate distance learning programs in law and medicine and a scholarship exchange with USA Universities; David Richard (Director) and Joseph Obogomon of Wheels for Humanity will personally fit donated wheelchairs while working with local healthcare givers concerning the physically disabled; and Patti Rayner (Director) from Heartfelt Foundation will be setting up a heart to heart service community program.

PURPOSE To assist in advancing the Niger Delta in educational, health care and sustainable development and help establish the Niger Delta University with accreditation of its academic programs.

OBJECTIVE To help support and develop institutions of higher learning that will inspire future generations of Nigerians in the development of an entrepreneurial spirit, promote individuals to acquire knowledge, to be employed, and to employ others.



Earth Rights Institute is a member of the International Union for Land Value Taxation and EcoEarth Alliance, both affiliated UN NGOs.

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ODI ECOVILLAGE LIVING AND LEARNING CENTER UPDATE



Following the December 10, 2004 launching of ERI Odi Ecovillage Living and Learning Center as the first Ecovillage in Nigeria, ERI has raised \$30,000 to begin construction on the Community Center/Office. The Living and Learning Center will promote and assist holistic sustainable community development programs while serving as a point of attraction for the wider society. The building itself will be constructed using local natural materials and will be designed using integrated living systems. Projected date for opening of Ecovillage to visitors will be the end of 2006. This project is being overseen by the dedicated work of ERI Program Coordinator Gordon Abiama.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO ECOVILLAGE UPDATE

Headed by our Program Coordinator, Fr. Jean Claude Atusameso, we have completed the first phase of developing the Jatukik Providence Ecovillage Living and Learning Center in Kibeti, Democratic Republic of Congo.

This was made possible by the generous grant of \$7500 given by the **Tet Ansanm Fund** of the Tides Foundation. Under this grant we were able to fund Fr. Jean Claude's attendance at the Sustainable Resources 2004 Conference enabling him to learn and make connections to important persons of skills and knowledge in the sustainable development area as well as promote our initiative with organizations that later can collaborate in helping support this program.



Afterwards, Fr. Jean Claude and Anne Goeke (Co-Director ERI), organized two local Congolese members of the Jatukik Providence Foundation from Bundundu Province, Jean-Paul Atusameso and Raymond Kumbelu Nzuetu, to attend a 20 day long training program at the Living and Learning Center for Eco Yoff/CRESP on the outskirts of Dakar, in Senegal. Together, with 23 other students from around the world, they covered 4 areas in the Ecovillage, training program under the direction of founder and Director for CRESP, Ms. Marian Zeitlan. Returning back to the Congo, they were ready to initiate the work plan for the Ecovillage. So far they have built one building for the center. Fr. Jean Claude has organized a donation container from the USA that includes a truck for the Ecovillage. Earth Rights Institute with Jatukik Providence Foundation are now working on developing the next proposal for the second phase of the program.

WISE WORDS from GORDON ABIAMA Discussing the issue of resource claims in Nigeria

The Ijaws, in Nigeria, are calling for an increase in revenue from Abuja based on the principle of derivation is not to be applied to oil in the Niger Delta alone but to all resources in every state across Nigeria. This sounds fair, doesn't it? So it is not a case of Niger Delta ethnic societies alone to enjoy increased revenue from resources around them. The fact is that Nigeria as a whole is so blessed with abundant natural resources but all attention is being focused on oil, leaving the rest untapped. Such a revenue derivation formula will no doubt spur authorities in these other states into looking inwards as to exploit their resources for the benefit of their people. In the sixties in Nigeria, the revenue sharing formula was 50% of the wealth going to the regions/states from where the wealth was gotten, while the remaining 50% went to the Federal purse.

The North had tin, bauxite and famous groundnut pyramids (real money spinner then), the West had cocoa and the East had coal. Now that the South-South discovered oil in commercial quantities, the rules are changed. It now belongs exclusively to the Federal Government to disburse to the whole states of the Federation not minding the fact that the Niger Delta is a very difficult terrain for development and therefore needed more funds for it as well as to cushion the effects of oil pollution and devastation. Statistics show that it costs as much as twenty times the amount needed to build the same length of road in other parts of Nigeria in Niger Delta region. I think it is only fair to compensate those who are denied access to resources found around them by corporate monopolists. As it is, states are not allowed to drill oil (except marginal fields) and drilling licenses are selectively granted to moneybags from other regions of the country who, like the multinational, do not have any interest in helping to uplift the living conditions of their host communities who have been denied access to such resources through legislation and the massive concentration of wealth needed to exploit same. What about the 13% additional funds given to the states? Even this amount after careful calculations arrives at just 7%. Whether these funds have been judiciously utilized for development purposes is another kettle of fish entirely. We do not think they have been well utilized and which is why we are advocating the establishment of an institutional mechanism whereby such oil royalties would be equitable and transparently distributed to benefit all in the region. Mind you, like I have stated, the agitation for an increase to 25% of such funds is not limited to oil and the Niger Delta alone. If other state like Ekiti which has gold deposits can have such a resource exploited, it would apply to hem as well. This is fair, would you agree? So you see it is not a matter of Ijaws agitating for exclusive rights but to a fair share.

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