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Dear readers,

We are approaching the end of 2023 – a year rich and full of lessons ! Lessons comprising painful moments in certain parts of the world (e.g. parts of Africa, the Middle East); lessons about moments when international solidarity and compassion between people were lacking. In our West African sub-region, the challenges remain constant (migration, climate change, coups d'état and conflicts, poverty, attacks on individual and collective freedoms.

Still and once again, RLS West Africa would like to thank you for your active collaboration in its mission and wishes you a very happy new year 2024!

RLS West Africa is pleased to send you the latest Newsletter for the year 2023. This issue presents a number of activities carried out in the sub-region, in collaboration with our various partners. Those comprise mainly the following :

- The activities of the union CGT-B (Confédération générale des travailleurs from Burkina-Faso) including the hosting of youth and women's forums;
- The so-called 'validation workshop' by TUC Ghana regarding their work with young unionists in Ghana;
- A report on a mission carried out by RLS West Africa as part of a workshop on alternatives for peace organized in Mali ;
- A report on a workshop organized in Senegal by women working in the processing industries in the context of climate change;
- An interview with Elimane Kane of LEGS Africa on the challenges of oil and gas exploitation;
- An article on the question of natural resources written by two colleagues from RLS West Africa and RLS South Africa;

Enjoy your reading!

Claus-Dieter Koenig
Director of RLS West Africa



NATIONAL FORUM OF YOUNG PEOPLE, WOMEN AND ACTORS IN THE INFORMAL ECONOMY (GENERAL REPORT)

On June 15 and 16, 2023, the Confédération Générale du Travail du Burkina (CGT-B) held its national forum for young people, women and informal economy players at the Bourse de Travail in Ouagadougou.

The first day

The first day was filled by the opening ceremony and two presentations. Following the welcome and installation of participants, the opening ceremony was held by the Comrade Nicolas OUEDRAOGO, Deputy Secretary General in charge of communication for the CGT-B. In his speech, he described the socio-political situation: Internationally, it is marked by the deepening of the capitalist crisis. At sub-regional level, the situation is characterized by the resurgence of coups d'état in Guinea, Mali and Burkina Faso, and at national level by the chaotic management of the MPP, which has led to the eruption on the political scene of MPSR I and II, whose governance focuses on the undermining of individual and collective freedom. Comrade SGA went on to say that the aim of the present forum was to raise the level of political awareness among militants. He also praised the excellent relationship between the headquarters and the ROSA Luxembourg foundation, financial partner of the present forum.

The first paper dealt with the following theme: "Reactionary civil war in Burkina Faso: What contribution can the trade union movement make to a victorious outcome in favor of the people? It was led by Comrade BADIEL Souleymane, Federal SG of the F-SYNTER. In his presentation, the comrade highlighted the nature of the war the country is experiencing, the players involved, its characteristics, causes and consequences, and the possible contributions of the trade union movement to a successful outcome for the people. This presentation, like the other three, was translated into the Moore national language, before opening the floor to discussion and clarification questions.

The input to the second topic "Violations of individual and collective freedoms under the MPSR" was held by the comrades Norbert OUANGRÉ and Zakaria NADIA. They were reanalyzing the context of the security crisis, including the violations of democratic and trade union freedom, with many examples of acts committed by armed terrorist groups - however, these violations of human rights are also the work of state forces. In terms of future prospects, the speaker emphasized the need to denounce any form of violations of democratic and trade union freedom, to raise awareness and mobilize in popular unity to counter all violations of our most basic rights - and to build a state that is more concerned with the protection and defense of human rights in general. After the discussion around this input, the first day was over.

The second day

The second day included a report of the first day and two presentations. The first presentation, by comrade Dominique YAMEOGO, former general secretary of the Union Régionale/CGT-B du center, was on the following theme: "The anti-imperialist struggle in Burkina Faso, current status and prospects". The talk was held around three main points: The definition of imperialism, the current state of the anti-imperialist struggle in Burkina Faso and prospects.

The second theme of the day, "Revolutionary trade unionism, class struggles and revolution", was presented by comrade Richard TIENDREBEOGO (SGA of the CGTB from 1994 to 2013). In his talk, Comrade TIENDREBEOGO first clarified the notion of class struggle and revolution by defining a few concepts, then showed what trade unionism is. These clarifications made it possible to give an overview of the situation of trade unionism in Burkina Faso, but also to communicate on the nature and role of trade unionism, and finally to identify the tasks of the revolutionary trade union. Day 2 and the forum ended at 3:05 pm with the SGA's closing remarks. He thanked all the participants and our partners, and declared the work of the National Forum of Young People, Women and Actors in the Informal Economy closed.

POLICY PAPER ON THE STAGE OF YOUNG WORKERS IN TRADE UNIONS IN GHANA



workshop report

The Trade Union Congress (Ghana) recognizes the significance of mobilizing the youth (defined to include persons in the 18-35 age cohort) and retraining them in the labour movement. This commitment has led to a number of progressive initiatives including the establishment of a youth desk, development of a youth policy, implementation of youth programmes and a review of the TUC Constitution to accommodate more young people at the General Council. These initiatives have brought some improvement in the participation of the youth in union activities.

In spite of the above, representation of the youth in trade unions is limited. Not all of the member unions of the TUC (Ghana) have functioning youth structures. Our youth structures in the regions and districts are not working as anticipated. There are also simmering intergenerational issues and contestations in our trade unions. These issues need to be address so that we can attract young workers and sustain their interests in unions.

It is therefore important to find new ways to improve participation of young workers in trade unions activities. It is also imperative that as the TUC prepares for its 12th Quadrennial Delegates' Congress in 2024, it assesses the state of young people within the trade union movement to properly plan for effective interventions in the years ahead. It is against this backdrop that the TUC in collaboration of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation initiated the process of developing a policy paper on the state of the young workers in the labour movement in Ghana.

The development of the policy paper commenced with a preparatory workshop in March this year which brought together selected young workers of the TUC, researchers, and leadership. It served as a good platform to discuss the building blocks of the policy paper. This was followed with the writing of the draft report and a validation workshop.

This activity report presents proceedings during the validation workshop which took place on October 17, 2023, at Erata Hotel, Accra.

Objectives

The overall objective of the workshop was to provide a platform to validate the draft policy, gather diverse perspectives towards the finalization of the policy paper.

Specifically, the workshop objectives were as follows:

- To present and disseminate the draft policy paper to young workers within the trade union movement.
- To gather feedback, comments, and suggestions from participants to enhance the draft policy paper.

Expected outputs.

The following shall be expected to be achieve by the end of the workshop.

- Enhanced participants understanding of the draft policy paper.
- Increased trade union support, ownership, and acceptance of the policy paper.
- Updated Draft Policy Paper based on the feedback received.
- Actionable Recommendations that can be implemented to improve the draft policy.

Participants

The workshop brought together twenty-nine (29) made up of youth Desk Officers from the affiliates National Union of TUC, researchers, heads of departments and leadership. Out of the 29 participants, sixteen (16) were females and Thirteen (13) were males.

Workshop Approach

The workshop utilized a participatory approach to encourage active engagement, foster inclusive dialogue, and promote an open exchange of ideas. The facilitation process involved a combination of presentations and interactive activities to ensure all participants have the opportunity to contribute.

General proceedings

Opening Remarks by Deputy Secretary General of TUC

Bro. Joshua Ansah, the Deputy Secretary General (DSG) of the TUC expressed his happiness to be part of the validation workshop that look at the state of young workers in trade unions in Ghana. DSG noted that the TUC strongly believes young workers are the future of the workforce and the survival of the trade union movement. Bro. Joshua however acknowledged that youg people face many daily challenges from high rate of unemployment, social exclusion as well as issues around self-determination among others. In addition, Bro. Joshua indicated that the situation was not different in the trade union movement as there is relatively low involvement and low participation of young workers in union activities.

He expressed TUC commitment in championing the course of young workers and also encouraging their participation and representation within the union.

He concluded that it was important for TUC to assess the state of the young people within the trade union movement to guide in planning for effective interventions for the youth in the years ahead especially as this moment the TUC was preparing for its 12 Quadrennial Delegates Conference. DSG, on behalf of the executive committee of TUC, thanked Rosa Luxemburg for supporting the development of a policy paper on the state of young workers in trade unions in Ghana.

Presentation: Policy Paper on the State of Young Workers in Trade Unions

Brother Prince Asafo-Adjei (PhD), Deputy Head of Labour Research and Policy Institute of the TUC presented the Policy Paper on the State of Young Workers in Trade Unions in Ghana.

According to the Dr. Prince, the structure of the Youth in TUC constitution and in practice are Youth Desk officer, National Youth Council (NYC), Regional and District Youth council. In addition, he said that the constitution and internal regulations of the TUC require that not less than 20% of delegates of member unions to Delegates Congress of TUC (Ghana) should be youth.

Dr. Prince presentation touched on how the TUC were sustaining the interest of the youth in the TUC affiliates and also ways to being used mobilize or recruit new young workers or youths into the unions in Ghana. In addition, he also shared international best practice of other labour organisations strategies they used in sustaining and attracting young workers to trade unions.

Closing remark

The Deputy Secretary General (DSG) of TUC expressed his appreciation to all the participants for their active participation and he mentioned that he has taken note of their suggestions and concerns DSG noted that TUC is prepared to do anything to sustained the interest youth and also attract the young workers to the unions.

He noted that his office is open for further deliberation towards the cause of young workers.

PEACE ALTERNATIVES IN MALI

VALIDATION WORKSHOP

By Marie N'guettia (RLS Program manager)



From September 25 to 30, 2023, a team consisting of the Foundation's Director (Mr. Claus-Dieter König) and two Program Managers (Mr. Ibrahima Thiam and Ms. Marie N'guettia) made a field visit to Bamako, Mali, to take part in a so-called 'validation workshop' organized by RLS in collaboration with the Association CARED, as part of their study on "Peace alternatives in Mali". Following that, they further met with partners and other local organizations working on issues of peace and security, reconciliation, climate change, feminism, migration etc.

The workshop was held on Thursday September 28 at the Hôtel Millenium in Bamako, in the presence of local authorities. The workshop was officially opened by the Mayor of Bamako's Commune 4 at 10am. Its main aim was to enable participants to gain a better understanding on the issue of prevailing conflicts in Mali and alternatives for peace.

- Three reports were produced, and each author gave a presentation at the workshop. Each presentation was then opened to comments, questions and contributions. In addition, three focus groups were set up, enabling direct exchanges with the researchers, with the aim of gaining a better understanding of the various reports. The general validation workshop was held without major difficulties, and the approach adopted to enable participants to contribute appropriately to the debates was beneficial. The quality of the participants and the framework for exchange, through contributions, proposals and recommendations, were well chosen for the main aim of the ongoing study - which is nothing less than the search for lasting peace in Mali. The three reports made during the workshop will thereby be a significant contribution to the research conducted by the RLS and their partners for long lasting solutions for peace in Mali.
- Visits to organizations also went very well, starting with the CARED Association, with whom the Foundation organized the prior workshop. The delegation then met with the NGO Femme et Développement, the Musow Lafia Association, TEMELT, and Radio Kayira, one first partners of the RLS in Mali. The main aim was to discuss the activities of these organizations, the socio-political situation and further partnership opportunities. Particularly noteworthy was the visit of the Musow Lafia Association, which has a specific, salutary and innovative objective: The association supports women who have lost a husband, son or parent through illegal immigration, via training in the transformation of local products, enabling them to take charge of their own lives and look after their families. It trains them to be self-sufficient in an income-generating activity. According to the President of the association, demand is high, but Musow Lafia (women's empowerment) does not have sufficient means to welcome all the women in need. The small delegation from the RLS still was able to visit their center and see some of the products produced by the women with support of the Musow Lafia.

Finally, it became clear during our discussions that those who choose to migrate illegally still have within their reach alternatives for a healthy life far from violence, even if it requires a great deal of commitment, determination and, above all, an what we call entrepreneurial spirit.

Mali remains a strategic country for the Foundation in the sub-region. The RLS will continue to work alongside its partners to provide a joint response to certain political, social, security and economic situations, according to its priorities in the region.



COORDINATION WORKSHOP FOR A PROGRAM ON WOMEN'S RESILIENCE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Ndéye Fadiaw Diagne & Ann-Katrin Hähnle (RLS interns)

Synthesis

From the 13 to 15 October 2023 the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation (RLF) organized a so-called 'coordination workshop' at Lac Rose (Dakar) for a women's resilience program facing impacts of climate change. This workshop, which brought together 9 women working in the processing industries, had the general objectives of discussing the possibilities of setting up a program of women's resilience against climate change, and of exchanging views in a general way on the issue of climate change at the present time. For all these women, climate change is a reality that already weighs heavily on their daily lives and routines.

During the discussions and presentations at the workshop, the following demands, needs and difficulties were highlighted:

- Growing scarcity of raw materials such as fish and other fish products
- Destruction of habitats in certain fishing areas as a result of rising sea levels due to global warming;
- Salinization of land;
- Climate change causing a drop in agricultural productivity (a disadvantage for women processing agro-forestry products);
- Destruction of mangroves as a result of climate change;
- Sinking of dugout canoes, resulting in the death of many women (e.g. the Bettenty tragedy);
- Increase in the number of climate refugees;
- Children unable to go to school;
- Difficulty for women to provide for their families (food, education, health);
- Illegal competition between foreign boats and local fishermen, resulting in a huge disadvantage for women processors;
- Needed support from state authorities to improve working conditions for fishermen and women in the processing industries.
- Applying biological rest, which is a management measure involving the closure of fishing with the aim of either protecting spawners, protecting juveniles and young individuals not yet recruited to the fisheries, or reducing fishing pressure on all or part of a given resource;
- Professionalize networks of women in the processing industries (e.g. issue business cards to professional women for better recognition and identification of another);
- Need to promote the processing of fish products and to set up circular economy programs;
- Financial adaptation (with fitting credits, solidarity gourds, diversified sources of income, etc.).

Conclusion

The workshop for setting up a program of women's resilience to climate change was rich in experience and new collective knowledge both organizational and scientific. The exchange with the women transformers was fruitful and enriching, as they shared their knowledge, their experiences in the field of transformation and exposed the real problems they are often facing due to impacts of climate change. Further the collection of concrete local and regional needs linked to the areas where each of the women were based and active makes up an enormous resource for future work.

- With regard to resilience strategies to be developed, most of the women have already implemented a number of alternative for dealing with impacts of climate change, although the battle is far from won. The women were unanimous about the option of changing to related occupations such as processing forest products, local cereals, fruits and vegetables with the aim of broadening the scope of the processing business without limiting it to the processing of fish products.
- For further occupation with the topic and its application, a comprehensive summary about the concrete difficulties, needs and solutions collected during this workshop is going to be published by the RLF on its website.
- However, on further outcome was the overall negative perception of the forthcoming exploitation of oil and gas in Senegal shared among the women. This is linked to one of the major issues currently being debated is whether oil and gas development will benefit Senegal. Differently asked: Will oil and gas development benefit the fishing industry or will it stifle it?

Document de synthèse



Fama Sarr (Saint-Louis) and Fatou Samba (Bargny) who moderated the workshop.

A portrait of Elimane Kane, a man with short grey hair and a beard, smiling slightly. He is wearing a white shirt. The background is blurred.

INTERVIEW WITH ELIMANE KANE

President LEGS-Africa:
Leadership, Ethic, Governance,
Strategies for Africa

By Ibrahima Thiam

1. Senegal stands at the brink of a new era of offshore oil and gas extraction along its coastline. Do you believe this represents a genuine economic opportunity?

In 2014, it was announced that significant oil and gas deposits may exist off the coast of Senegal. After this was confirmed in 2016 and 2017, the Senegalese government signed off on two definitive investment projects: the Sangomar Project for the production of oil, and the production of gas as part of the Greater Tortue Ahmeyim (GTA) Project. A third project, the Yaakar-Teranga Project, is still awaiting approval for investment.

Although the projected quantities of oil and gas do not compare to those of other African oil- and gas-producing countries such as Nigeria, Angola, and Equatorial Guinea, they are certainly significant for a country with a middle-income economy such as Senegal, which has previously been heavily dependent on imported hydrocarbons to meet its energy needs. The oil and gas production projects could indeed represent an economic opportunity for Senegal — but they could also prove to be disastrous. It all depends on how the hydrocarbon sector is governed, as well as the Senegalese state's ability to ensure that the partners contracted to manage both projects — BP and Woodside — adhere to their contractual obligations.

2. The first platform off the coast of Saint-Louis in northern Senegal began production in January. What environmental risks and impacts are connected to the extraction of oil and gas, and how can they be kept to a minimum?

- When analysing the environmental and social impact assessments for the GTA project, we identified three types of risk. The first has to do with potential negative effects on the environment and biodiversity, including a reduction in air quality during both the construction and operation of the platforms, as well as the fact that birds and endangered Mediterranean monk seals and sea turtles in the region would be exposed to high levels of hydrocarbons.
- The second risk is socio-economic in nature and concerns local communities and their activities. This primarily relates to the temporary ban on small-scale fishing operations in the area surrounding the oil and gas production facilities, resulting in reduced incomes for up to 80,000 fishermen and a further 700,000 people working in the fishing industry. A reduction in fishing volumes must therefore also be factored into calculations concerning the economic benefits of oil and gas exploitation. Fishing is of great importance to the national economy and a core component of daily life for many households, both in a socio-cultural sense and as a food source.
- The third risk pertains to the economic consequences of an oil spill, as well as the safety of fishermen at sea due to the presence of project-related vessels during the construction and operation of the platforms. Potential further issues include conflicts between fishermen and public security forces that may occur if their boats have to be escorted out of the exclusion zones, as well as armed attacks on the gas production facilities, which could increase the general risk of terrorism across the country during both the operation and phasing out of the gas project.

The environmental impact assessment for the GTA project provides an acceptable monitoring plan that primarily focuses on mitigation and control measures during operation, relevant legal requirements, and the vulnerabilities of the surrounding biological and social environments, as well as the possible impacts each project phase might have. However, monitoring the project's operational design, as well as the mitigation of its effects, remains an enormous challenge — especially with respect to the offshore discharge of wastewater. In terms of the project's potential social impact, economic and social aspects have been taken into consideration, and the specific needs of the local region have been taken into account.

3. How have the fishermen in Saint-Louis responded to the project?

In Saint-Louis, the communities involved in bass fishing and fish processing have shared their concerns with the authorities about the GTA project, identified local priorities, and developed a localized plan for monitoring the project's ecological and social impact with the assistance of LEGS-Africa, a pan-African initiative dedicated to scientific, political, economic, and social issues. In order to reduce the project's identified potential impacts, it is crucial that both the Senegalese state and the private operators involved in the projects pursue a policy of dialogue with local communities in order to adopt appropriate measures that are aligned with the interests of all parties involved.

Fishing forms a key part of the Senegalese economy. Does the offshore extraction of hydrocarbons not present a threat to this sector? What alternatives exist for fishing communities? Will these projects create a crisis for the fishing sector?

Fishing is of great importance to the national economy and a core component of daily life for many households, both in a socio-cultural sense and as a food source. Because it significantly contributes to food security, generates income and jobs, and strengthens economic competitiveness, fishing plays a very important role in the Senegalese economy.

Between 2018 and 2019, the commercial value of small-scale fishing activities increased by 12.9 percent to a total value of 182.3 billion CFA francs. In contrast, industrial fishing only comprised 19 percent of the overall fishing catch in Senegal — in 2019, this amounted to 106,118 tons, with a total commercial value of 74.5 billion CFA francs.

Fishermen are currently already lamenting a depletion in fish stocks. This can be attributed to a number of factors, in particular climate change, the techniques utilized in small-scale fishing, and malpractice on the part of the industrial fishing industry. The restriction of the areas in which they can fish as a result of oil and gas operations has only heightened their concerns. Taken as a whole, all of these factors do point towards a serious oncoming crisis.

4. Senegal is endeavouring to reduce its dependence on environmentally damaging fossil fuels through the development and installation of new wind and solar power stations. Will the production of oil and gas endanger this energy transition?

Despite the fact that Senegal has made progress in implementing its mixed energy strategy, which aims for more than 20 percent of energy to be derived from renewable sources, it is also intending to go ahead with its gas-to-power strategy. This involves using gas, including that derived from the Yaakar project, to generate electricity — a course of action that is certainly at odds with the plan for an energy transition, even if Senegal views gas as a clean energy source and pushes ahead with the continuation of gas production.

This option, which goes against the idea of energy sovereignty, will definitely hinder the country's ability to achieve the goal of using 100 percent renewable energy for many years to come.

5. Can the so-called “resource curse” be avoided in Senegal?

Only if the Senegalese state pursues a transparent and responsible policy with respect to hydrocarbon extraction. This requires a democratic approach that includes all economic and social stakeholders while also ensuring the effective controlling and monitoring of external partners' contractual obligations during offshore operations.

None of this will happen of its own accord. Currently, Senegal seems inadequately equipped with the necessary technology and personnel required to respond appropriately to future eventualities and malfunctions. Such outcomes could well compromise the ecosystem and have negative external effects on other, more sustainable economic sectors.

By
Roland Ngam
(Program manager RLS
Johannesburg)
&
Ibrahima Thiam
(Program manager RLS Dakar)

WHO IS REAPING OUR RESOURCES?



Does resource extraction really lead to development? After over half a century of exploiting its mineral resources, is Africa reaping the full benefits of its underground resources? Also, are the short, medium and long-term benefits worth the destruction that we inflict on the environment year after year? These are the questions that Senegal is grappling with right now.

In a country where the per capita income does not exceed 1640 dollars, where the poverty rate, despite all the economic efforts made since independence (1960), cannot adequately meet social demand, where young people, who account for more than 60% of the population, venture into illegal immigration seeking greener pastures by crossing the Mediterranean into Europe and the Atlantic to the Americas; where agriculture, which employs 70% of the population, is unable to guarantee food self-sufficiency; where the unemployment rate has reached 21% ; and where economic policy is subject to the austerity policies imposed by international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), would calling for a halt to exploiting our resources be tantamount to suicide?

Africa is a resource rich continent. However, there is no country that we can honestly point to and say that they have used their resources to develop in a sustainable and proper manner. Let us be clear, we are not among those who think Africa's natural resources are a curse. On the contrary, they are a potential that our States can harness to drive economic growth, provided they are well managed.

However, we must ask: would the oldest continent not rather focus on unlocking its renewable energy potential now while preserving its resources until they are ready for proper management? Instead of remaining in the unprocessed export paradigm forever, would it not be more appropriate to increase beneficiation before export or preferably beneficiation for local use? Finally, should Africa not refrain from exploiting its resources until they are ready?

A rich continent whose riches are enjoyed elsewhere

The African continent has some of the world's largest deposits of mineral resource (30% of global reserves in oil, gas and transition minerals). Nearly three-quarters of Africa's oil reserves are in the Gulf of Guinea (Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria, Congo, Cameroon and Gabon). This is why that real estate has a high concentration of Western oil companies such as Exxon Mobil, Shell, BP, Elf as well as local ones such as Nigeria's NNPC. The Continent holds 54% of the world's platinum reserves, 78% of its diamond reserves, 40% of its chromium reserves and 28% of its manganese reserves.

Countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Zambia, Niger and South Africa are teeming with strategic raw materials such as copper, coltan (used in manufacturing mobile phones), uranium, diamond and gold. Africa is also home to some of the world's largest fresh water deposits (the 6,895 km long Nile, the 230 million hectares-wide Congo Basin) as well as vast stretches of arable land, 90% of which is still undeveloped.

Africa began exploiting hydrocarbons in the 1950s with Algeria, Gabon and Congo, followed by Angola, Nigeria and Libya in the 1960s. The leading oil producer in Africa, Nigeria, generated 1.861 million barrels per day, followed by Gabon, the sub-region's second largest producer (212,000 barrels per day). Although the exploitation of Africa's resources had raised many hopes of better living standards for all from the sixties, most countries have never reaped any significant positive developmental rewards. Instead, exploitation of the natural resources has become synonymous with pollution, lack of transparency, violence, corruption and so on. Apart from Botswana, it will be hard to find countries that have been any exception to this rule. The continent is littered with broken promises and arrested development.

WHO IS REAPING OUR RESOURCES?

Chinese companies in South Kivu in the Democratic Republic of the Congo prey on the local authorities' corrupt ways and local militias' support to access mines. Gold mining is exempt from taxation. Congolese militias use mineral wealth to obtain cash, weapons and food rations. According to Mr Ibrahima Thiaw, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), this situation is fuelling internal conflicts, the continuation of which benefits both traffickers and miners.

He contends that 90% of the major armed conflicts between 1950 and 2000 occurred in countries with rich biodiversity and mineral deposits. A 2003 World Bank report revealed that over the past 40 years, developing countries with no natural resources had developed two or three times faster than resource-rich countries. The documentary Arlit further illustrates this messy legacy in another country, Niger, where at the opening of a uranium mine, the President vowed that this precious resource would turn Arlit into a city like Paris.

Today, Arlit has become a hellhole with tall mine dumps killing the local population slowly. The environment and groundwater have been contaminated. Whereas 80% of France's energy needs depend on uranium, some of which comes from Niger, that country ranks among the five poorest countries in the world.

Nigeria is another case in point. Fifty years of oil production have made the country one of Africa's giants...on paper. The country is an oligarchy, ruled by a small group of connected politicians and dollar multimillionaires who either made their money through oil or government tenders. The rest of the country lives in abject poverty. Nigeria's oil and gas legacy includes the pollution of the Niger Delta, the destruction of fishing and agriculture (between 2011 and 2017, almost 18 million litres of crude oil contaminated the soil and water of Africa's largest mangrove swamp), insecurity and militarization, corruption and so on. The country is a hotbed of religious, ethnic and environmental conflicts and crises. A total of 112 million Nigerians live on less than \$1.90 a day; 10 million do not attend school, 130 million are without sanitation facilities, and 57 million have no access to drinking water.

The third scramble for Africa

Yet, Africa seems to be the new destination for Western leaders looking to expand the frontier of capital accumulation. Natural resources are the primary incentive driving this new interest in Africa. The statistics bear this out. According to The Economist, 320 foreign embassies opened in Africa between 2010 and 2016. China, for example, increased its investment by 226%, India by 292% and Europe by 41%. In addition to mining contracts, military agreements are also being signed every day. Russia's Wagner Group is the poster child of this new privatisation of security on the continent. The discovery of gas and oil, especially against the backdrop of the European energy crisis due to the war in Ukraine, has made Senegal a highly sought-after country.

The long-awaited take-off of oil and gas production in Senegal is viewed by most Senegalese as a turning point in a new economic era for the country. Off the coast of Saint-Louis, along the Senegalese-Mauritanian border, BP has built gas extraction facilities with the aim of liquefying the gas in a terminal and selling it as liquefied natural gas (LNG). Production is due to start in 2023, with an initial capacity of around 2.5 million tonnes per year. This figure is set to rise to 10 million tonnes a year in the long term.

Senegal expects revenues from gas extraction to reach CFA F 888 billion (around €1.4 billion) between 2023 and 2025. Cayar, a fishing village situated more than 65 kilometres from Dakar, is where Senegal's first offshore oil field, Teranga, is planned to be located within the Cayar Offshore Profond block. It is almost 100 km south of Guembeul-1 in the St Louis Offshore Profond block. The Cayar gas reserves are estimated at 1,400 billion cubic metres.

The Sangomar field, which contains both oil and gas, is 100 km from Dakar. It covers an area of 400 km², with water depths ranging from 700 to 1400 m, and has a production capacity of 230 million barrels of crude oil. However, the oilfields are situated opposite the Saloum delta, home to around twenty islands whose main economic activities are fishing, oyster harvesting and processing by women (4,800 women). The Saloum delta is a UNESCO World Heritage site with marine protected areas, parks, and pristine water sources.

Fishing activities hang in the balance

In Saint-Louis, Cayar and the Saloum delta, public discussion is no longer about the effects of climate change destroying their homes and biodiversity but about the consequences of future oil and gas extraction by Senegal. Undoubtedly, these fishing areas will suffer the effects of exploitation, as they are located in fish-rich areas. The mood in Saint-Louis is not so much one of euphoria as a concern - the worries of a fishing community that has been fishing in the region for a thousand years. For these people, fishing is not just an economic activity but also part of their culture, with its attendant ritual, recreational and social dimensions.

Fishing is closely linked to the prevailing forms of community life. Fishermen share particular types of solidarity - for example, they always provide fish for retired fishermen who can no longer work. A fisherman's whole life revolves around catching fish. Religious ceremonies, meetings and baptisms all follow the fishing calendar. When an old fisherman dies, it is not uncommon for part of his canoe or fishing boat to be taken out and used to mark his grave. Over 20,000 canoes fish along Senegal's 700 kilometres of coastline, where they compete with around 160 industrial fishing boats. It is the same story in other fishing areas. Cayar has a natural trench measuring over 1,235 metres deep and 3,000 metres wide. It is a fish breeding ground that has become a marine protected area stretching over 171 km²

Senegal's fisheries sector generates more than 600,000 jobs and is worth around CFAF 200 billion[ii]. Despite the challenges posed by the presence of foreign boats and climate change, small-scale fishing accounted for 525,108 tonnes of fish[iii] in 2021, equivalent to 15% of the total working population. Can such a sector compete with oil and gas production in Senegal? If the Senegalese government decided to forgo oil and gas production for fishing, it would be for ecological rather than economic reasons. As was pointed out at the start of our work, could a country like Senegal afford to do this to protect the climate and help save the planet? Such an outcome is highly unlikely given the commitments already undertaken by the State of Senegal in the areas of research, platform installation and exploitation.

However, because of the energy crisis in Europe, Germany is very interested in Senegalese gas. Developing infrastructure projects to produce liquefied natural gas (LNG) in Africa is closely intertwined with European countries' dependence on fossil fuels. Not only does this not help our countries to get out of debt, it also delays their transition to renewable energies. This is not merely a climate issue, but we have to assess the results of more than 60 years of hydrocarbon exploitation to be sure that history is not repeating itself yet again.

As part of its policy to promote renewable energies, the State of Senegal made a commitment alongside Germany. Promises were made to connect 168 MW of solar PV, 51 MW of wind power and 75 MW of hydroelectricity to the grid by the end of 2019, accounting for 22% of the country's total electricity production. Senegal's rural electrification rate is close to 42%. 13,000 of the country's[i] 21,000 villages have not yet been electrified although the country has abundant renewable energy resources, mainly solar and wind power. With technical assistance from Germany, Senegal could now hope to meet 100% of its energy needs from renewable sources. This would pave the way for the rest of Africa to move towards clean energy.

What alternatives for Africa?

Despite its proven potential, Europe is not showing a strong interest in investing in renewable energies in Africa. Global investment in renewable energy soared by 9% year-on-year to reach an all-time high last year. However, it plummeted by 35% in Africa, which accounts for just 0.6% of the 434 billion dollars invested in renewable energy worldwide. According to a report issued on Wednesday, 9 November, by the energy consultancy BloombergNEF (BNEF), the level of investment in renewable energy in Africa is "alarmingly low" despite the continent's immense potential. This report, published at the UN Climate Change Conference in Sharm El-Sheikh (COP27) and championed as an "African COP" by the Egyptian presidency, states that "only \$2.6 billion in capital was committed to wind, solar, geothermal and other renewable energy projects in 2021, the lowest level in eleven years"

BNEF further pointed out that the continent, which is still heavily reliant on polluting and costly fossil fuels for electricity generation, has fallen behind "despite Africa's exceptional natural resources, rapidly growing demand for electricity and an improving policy framework". Although Africa has demonstrable solar energy potential, it accounts for only 1.3% of the world's installed solar energy capacity. The report also highlights the significant concentration of investment in just a few countries: South Africa, Egypt, Kenya and Morocco, which have accounted for almost three-quarters of overall investment since 2010.

Michael Bloomberg, UN Special Envoy for Climate Action has lamented that Investment in clean energy in Africa is at an alarmingly low level. He adds that "changing this will require new levels of collaboration to identify viable clean energy projects and provide them with more private financing and public support in order to turn Africa's potential as a world leader in clean energy into reality". Some experts from the Global North believe that there are a number of barriers restricting the roll-out of renewable energies in Africa, including poor understanding by national investors of the opportunities in the sector and a lack of planning to promote the expansion of electricity grids. They recommend drawing inspiration from countries that have successfully cleared these hurdles, highlighting, for example, success stories of tenders in Brazil and the support provided by Mexico's national development bank.

The Africa Climate Summit made a lot of advocacy around unlocking carbon markets and green and blue bonds for Africa. Kenya's President William Ruto implored Western leaders at the event: "we can help others achieve their net zero objectives". The world has adopted ambitious cuts to CO2 emissions in order to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees relative to preindustrial levels. That requires bold Nationally Determined Contributions from all countries. It is in this regard that the cry of "keep it in the ground" has grown louder everywhere.

However, a number of things must be said. Firstly, African countries must decarbonise because they believe that it is the right and most efficient thing to do and not because they are being forced to do so. Decarbonisation in Africa cannot just be because other countries are struggling with their political constituencies and so Africa is needed to step in once again to do the heavy lifting. Doing others a favour does not in any way help the planet to cut down on emissions.

In the same way African leaders ask for accountability from foreign nations, they too much uphold the highest standards of accountability within their own borders. Too often, the right to say no is trampled upon. Most African countries have adopted legislation showing that a country's underground resources belong to the central government. Some recognise the leasehold owner's rights over the land. This typically does not translate to a community having the ability to say that natural resources found in their area belongs to them and they will figure out what is good for them before they decide what to do with it, as the Xolobeni example in South Africa shows.

Also, Africa cannot decarbonise without the necessary support from the countries that are responsible for the biggest levels of pollution since the start of the modern economic era. The countries that are guilty of unprecedented levels of pollution, toxic dumps on farmlands and in river sources, CO2 dumps in the atmosphere and the worse kinds of brutality against Global South countries must work harder to help these countries achieve their net zero objectives. Western countries must quickly open up their countries to provide African towns and villages with the credit that they need to build resilient communities and infrastructure. If this support is not forthcoming, can anyone blame African countries for turning to coal and gas?

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With '**Parlons Climat**' ('Let's talk about climate'), we invite you join us going to places and communities in West Africa where the consequences of climate change are already part of the reality. We'll meet women, young people and others who will share with us their perspective and analysis of the current situation :What is the problem, how climate change understood, what solutions and alternatives are out there? We – and hopefully you as well – want to learn from first hand, embodied and lived knowledge instead of top-up solutions and analysis.

Let's Talk Climate is an initiative of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, which seeks to give communities impacted by climate change the opportunity to speak for themselves – with us sharing and amplifying this voice.

Over the coming weeks, we'll be regularly showing videos and excerpts in which we #parlonsclimat



COP 28: We go!!

From 30.11 – 12.12 2023 the 28th UN Climate Conference will take place at the end of a blistering year of record-breaking temperatures and climate-induced extreme weather at the expo city, Dubai. Real happening nothing new for a huge part of the population in Senegal. Currently, the causes and consequences of climate change have never been clearer – and the solutions never more in reach. Fossil fuels are killing us, but renewable energy promises a better future for all. Yet rising emissions and planned expansion of fossil fuel production are wildly out of sync with the direction of progress needed while financial support to reduce emissions and to address escalating climate impacts remains completely inadequate. For the Senegal case new gas deals are made, side by side with the induction of the JETP, a fossil fuel based development path chosen, when other options seem far away. COP28, marking a key stress test for the Paris Agreement, will be about facing the facts, correcting course and giving solutions a real chance to deliver. It will be about the global energy infrastructure and it will be about financing – who is financing the future and who is paying for the past? Although critical voices demanding climate finance solutions as a unconcessional loans, consequent debt relief and reparation payment, it will be hard to hear their voices in the mass of neoliberal elitist meeting taking place there with the head of states, transnational corporation and think thanks.