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In Africa, as in the rest of the world, the ASM sector is a complex reality of positives and negatives. In recent times, the emergence of categories like 'conflict minerals' and 'blood diamonds' strongly associated with Africa and backed by international action to stop trade in these minerals have focused attention on the negative aspects of the ASM sector on the continent. Even before these developments most African governments were struggling to find a proper balance between how they respond to the problems associated with the sector such as unregulated environmental damage, child labour, the health and safety risks faced by ASM producers and the insufficient contribution to taxes.

Though they may not pay enough attention, African governments know millions of persons are directly employed in ASM and that the sector supports an addi-
tional tens of millions of citizens thereby making vital contributions to national economies, export earnings and employment and poverty reduction. Despite these positives, public policy and practice is heavily focused on the promotion of and support for large scale (mainly foreign owned) mines, including the state driving ASM producers out of areas where they are operating when large scale firms show interest.

ASM is reflexively treated as a problem rather than a complex phenomenon the negatives of which can be considerably reduced through concerted support and attention and the well-known positive contributions increased. Ironically, this is happening even as the African Mining Vision (AMV), the ECOWAS Minerals Development Policy and the ECOWAS Directive on Harmonisation of Mining Principles all call for a comprehensive policy and implementation framework that promotes the ASM sector on the continent given its immense contribution to the economy.

Recent events in Ghana have forcefully brought to the fore, albeit, in different ways the vulnerability of local artisanal and small scale miners at the hands of government and foreign companies. In the first instance, communities around the Keta lagoon in South East Ghana are up in arms as a lagoon from which they fish and mine salt since time immemorial has been handed over to an Indian salt mining company, Seven Seas Ltd.

Government’s disregard for the artisanal salt mining sector comes as a surprise to many even as they produce the greater portion of the currently estimated 250,000 metric tonnes annually which according to some has the potential to be increased to between 2-3 million metric tonnes.

Ghana again is currently at war against illegal artisanal and small scale miners (galamsey) through a sustained media campaign that has propelled the government to issue an initial 6-month ban on all ASM operations legal or illegal due to destruction of farmlands and pollution of water bodies by the activities of ASM operators. (See Ill effects of Illegal gold mining triggers ASM hysteria, page 7)

The ASM sector in Tanzania, has also been at the receiving end of government policies that have tended to favour large scale multinational mining companies. Over the years, thousands of small scale miners as well as whole villages have been relocated to pave way for multinational mining companies. (see Digging out of poverty, page 12)

Meanwhile, Africa does not have to look far for solutions to the ASM sector’s challenges. Ethiopia’s example of how to harness the ASM sector stands out. (see The Ethiopian ASM model, page14) Can the rest of Africa pick a leaf from Ethiopia’s organised small scale mining book? Ethiopia has not only recognised the sector but has made the operators form cooperatives, which makes monitoring of their activities easy and mandates them to sell their minerals to the state. This has helped somewhat in regulating the sector and increasing production of gold by the ASM operators at the same time ensuring that the environment was not unduly destroyed by their activities.

The AMV’s call for recognition of ASM by African governments as an important job creation and poverty alleviation sector and hence the need for proactive measures in the country mining visions to harness it for sustainable development seems to have been lost on some countries. True there have been environmental damages, pollution of water bodies, deforestation and other ills associated with unregulated ASM but this is specifically because governments have been negligent of the sector. As the Ethiopian example shows a responsible and proactive government can help the sector to be not only economically much more viable but also ensure that the operations are environmentally friendly and sustainable.”
There is currently a campaign spearheaded by the media against the activities of illegal gold mining in Ghana. This campaign has not only called for all unsanctioned and unregulated small-scale gold mining activities to be brought to a halt, but has also led to calls for the operations of legalized small-scale gold miners to be stopped as well. Ghana’s policy makers have taken up the cause and have taken a series of actions aimed in the short term, at addressing the challenges posed by illegal small-scale gold mining, ‘galamsey’.

Yet the public outcry which typifies the hostility to all ASM gold mining - legal and illegal leaves little room for a discussion of a holistic approach to tackling the complexity of the creature that is artisanal and small-scale mining. A complexity which policy makers have spoken of, but which seems to be getting very little by way of concrete action. It can be argued that alongside addressing the problems brought about by illegal gold mining, it is important that Ghana explores how to better organize and regulate artisanal and small-scale mining such that it can contribute to job creation, improved livelihoods for small scale miners, economic diversification and even more importantly, can support inclusive development.

The campaign against illegal gold mining is taking place alongside a long running conflict between ASM salt mining and Seven Seas Industries being waged in the Keta Lagoon in South East Ghana. Seven Seas, a foreign owned company has been given a concession to mine salt in and around the Keta Lagoon, a concession which has had the effect of cutting out the ASM salt miners in the locality. Unlike gold however, there has been little attention paid to the issues confronting the communities impacted by Seven Sea’s activities. Even after confrontations which have resulted in
injuries and death to community members. Gold is one of the country’s three main commodity exports and accounts for over 95 percent of total mineral revenues. In 2012, gold exports from Ghana were reportedly worth US$5.64 billion. Yet despite the importance of gold to the economy, links between the gold sector and the rest of Ghana’s economy remains relatively weak. It is a sector largely dominated by large scale foreign mining companies who account for approximately 65 percent of gold production and provide employment for approximately 16,000 people. Large scale mining also indirectly supports over 60,000 jobs. Artisanal and small-scale mining on the other hand has a far deeper reach into communities and on livelihoods.

According to Ghana’s Minerals Commission, small scale gold mining has increasingly been contributing to gold production. In 2016, it contributed 31 percent of total gold production and according to the Commission had the potential to contribute to poverty reduction as well as stimulated economic growth in areas where it was taking place. ASM directly employs over 1 million people and creates employment opportunities for over 5 million more in downstream industries and markets.

Small scale gold mining in Ghana was given legal backing in 1989 through the Small-Scale Gold Mining Law (PNDC Law 218) which set out the conditions under which small scale mining in gold could be undertaken. According to the law “no licence for small-scale gold mining operation shall be granted to … any person who is not a citizen of Ghana”. Thus, the law restricted small scale gold mining (SSM) to Ghanaian citizens and set out the steps by which those wishing to undertake SSM needed to take. In the years since the law was passed artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) has grown and today is an important economic and livelihood activity.

The growth in ASM can in large part be attributed to the rise in the price of gold and has been facilitated using technology and equipment which hitherto were not available to ASM. As the gold price rose, the gains from mining gold made ASM attractive, as what could be considered as lucrative gains could be made for people with minimal input. Again, the growing numbers of unemployed youth also saw the sector as attractive due to the low barriers for entrance.

However, despite the legal provisions for small scale mining, majority involved have failed to obtain licenses to mine and illegal gold mining activities (galamsey) have grown. It has involved not only Ghanaians, but also foreigners who have been actively participating, both in terms of offering financial and other resources to facilitate mining, but have also been directly mining for gold. The Chinese have been the visible face of foreigners in illegal mining activities in Ghana, but foreigners from across Africa (particularly West Africa) and beyond have been doing galamsey.

Illegal gold mining has been on the increase for several years and has been directly linked to very destructive impacts on agricultural lands and the environment, particularly rivers and other water bodies. Major rivers have been polluted and are unfit for use while gapping and very dangerous pits have been left over in farmlands and riversides. There have also been negative impacts on health as whole communities and people working in galamsey have been exposed to health and safety risks associated with dust inhalation, mercury poisoning and major injuries from a sector where safeguards are few and industrial accidents are prone.

Meanwhile, in the midst of the campaign, in July, some 22 artisanal miners were feared buried alive when a pit they were mining in collapsed on them at Nsuta near Prestea in the Western Region of Ghana. After 6 days of rescue efforts failed, the rescuers gave up and the pit was closed. Galamsey, despite all the efforts at proscribing it is very much alive.

To the state, the cost of galamsey both in economic and environmental terms is massive. The unauthorized (illegal) appropriation of gold means that all the revenue gained from galamsey is not taxed. On top of that the cost of reclaiming land and water bodies destroyed from galamsey activities has been estimated to run into the hundreds of millions of dollars.

The environmental costs of and spread of galamsey activities has resulted in a pub-
lic outcry as images of the destroyed lands and polluted water bodies brought to the forefront the extent of the problem at hand. Warnings from the Ghana Water Company that if left unchecked, galamsey activities would lead to an acute water crisis, with the country having to import potable water, have stoked up the calls for something to be done immediately to deal with the issue.

In March this year, the Minister of Lands and Natural Resources issued a three-week ultimatum to galamsey operatives to cease their activities or face the full rigor of the law.

Truth be told this was not the first time the Minister of Lands and Natural Resources or the government has taken a stance against illegal mining. In 2013, President John Mahama’s government constituted a task force whose members included the Ministers of Interior and Defense, as well as Lands and Natural Resources, which oversaw action taken against galamsey. The task force at the time directed the impounding of equipment and the arrest of illegal miners, many of whom were foreigners. Further back during the presidency of John Agyekum Kufuor in 2006, the armed forces were galvanized against illegal mining in response to the complaints from the large-scale mining companies that illegal miners were encroaching on their concessions.

The difference this time round is the media involvement and lead of the campaign. Both state sponsored and private media came together and in April with big fanfare, launched the Media Coalition’s campaign against illegal mining. In the days leading up to the launch the media went on an all-out blitz to inform people on the launch with floats and signs and other paraphernalia. Not only was the Minister for Lands and Natural Resources in attendance, also there were the Ministers for Water Resources and Sanitation; Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation and the Minister for Information. Government agencies such and the National Council on Civic Education (NCCE) have also joined the coalition and are supporting the campaign. In addition to the support from government, a wide range of groups have joined the coalition. These include religious bodies such as the Christian Council of Ghana and, the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council; political parties such as the Progressive Peoples Party; advocacy groups such as Occupy Ghana and even industry players such as the Ghana Chamber of Mines.

The Campaign has not only called on government to stop illegal mining but has also successfully advocated for government to, for the moment ban all small-scale mining. Occupy Ghana for instance has argued that the failure of Ghana’s Parliament to ratify small scale mining leases makes the leases granted by the Minerals Commission to small-scale gold mining illegal. The Association of Small Scale Miners has been unsuccessful in arguing against this stance, and the Minister for Lands and Natural Resources has placed a six month ban on all small-scale mining activities, legal or illegal. He has threatened to extend the ban to one year if illegal mining activities are not brought to a halt by the time the six-month period is up. “The fight against illicit mining is ongoing and till these six months, if we are unable to clear the system and rid out all the illegal people who are doing the mining, we will not be prepared to engage and bring you back…..”

The judiciary have not been left out, and have been swept up by the campaign as well. In April, the Chief Justice designated 14 courts - 7 High Courts and 7 Circuit Courts to deal with issues of illegal gold mining. The designation of the courts to deals with this was “in furtherance of “the recent groundswell of public revulsion and media and civil society advocacy against the menace of illegal mining.

Neither have the armed forces been left out. President Akufo Addo noted earlier this year that “Ghanaians would continue to rely on the efforts of our security forces, with the Army in the forefront to help deal with the problem “. It must be pointed out that not all trust the army though, as some allege they are rather protecting and facilitating illegal gold mining.

In the meantime, the Minister and his deputies have been visiting gold mining communities and sites to spread his message and in some cases, has caused the arrest of illegal gold miners and confiscation of equipment.

Not everyone has warmed up to his message or to the campaign though, there is resistance to it. A few communities have railed against the campaign and the actions taken to stop illegal gold mining, arguing that it was an attack on their livelihoods and unless viable alternatives were presented to them, they would take matters into their own hands. Some have threatened to hit the governing New Patriotic Party where it hurts them most, not voting for them during the next elections.

While all agree that the challenges brought about by illegal artisanal and small-scale mining must be addressed, the question of how seems to be on the back burner.

In March, a Multilateral Mining Integrated Project (MMIP) was proposed as part of government’s efforts to tackle the galamsey problem. The project was expected to put forward a “broad understanding of the reality and challenges faced by authority responsible and all other related MDAs to ensure evenhanded and equitable oversight of mineral resources. The project is to reduce illegal small-scale gold mining to the barest minimum and find alternative livelihoods for those involved”. The MMIP is expected to be a multifaceted project that not only helps stop illegal gold mining but also promotes responsible, legal gold mining practices. Since the launch of the project however, little seems to have taken place with regards to actualizing the initiative.

Ghana’s President Akufo Addo spoke to the need to approach the issue in a manner that looked at the wellbeing of small scale miners. In his May Day address to workers, he stated that the government was not seeking to put people out of work through its efforts to end galamsey, but that it was looking to ensure that mining be conducted in a sustainable manner. According to him “this present generation does not own the earth, we hold the lands in trust for generations yet unborn and we cannot destroy it. We are arranging for small-scale mining to be conducted in a sustainable manner.”

While campaigns such as the ongoing media campaign against illegal gold mining may, in the short term, focus the attention of the public on the ills of the practice and help policy makers by drawing attention to issues such as the pollution of water and destruction of lands, it is unlikely to succeed in putting a stop to illegal artisanal and small-scale gold mining.

Policy makers must necessarily take a long-term approach to addressing the situation, in the words of President Akufo Addo” Since the Almighty blessed us with precious minerals, there will be mining in our country.” How it will be done in a way that also brings benefits to Ghana and its citizens needs to be clearly thought out.

* Pauline Vande Pallen is programme officer, Third World Network-Africa.
'Blanket ban on small scale mining is unfair'

As part of a drive against illegal small-scale gold mining the government of Ghana has imposed a ban on the operations of licensed ASM gold producers. Godwin Amarh, General Secretary of the *Ghana National Association of Small Scale Miners (GNASSM) spoke to African Agenda about the effects of the ban and the GNASSM's views on illegal small-scale gold mining and how to deal with it.

**Anti-galamsey Campaign**

We don't have any problem with the fight against galamsey. Indeed, we support it and have been instrumental in helping the security agencies arrest some of the illegal miners. The Ghana Water Company and the Water Commission can confirm that we facilitated the destruction of 2,650 'dredgers' with the arrest of 262 operators leading to improvement in the quality of water available for processing by the Ghana Water Company.

We however, take issue with the campaign as it has failed to differentiate between illegal and legal artisanal and small scale mining. Again, the Minister of Lands, Minerals and Natural Resources did not do due diligence before issuing the initial 3-week ultimatum and finally the ban. It was only after the expiry of the ultimatum that he followed up with a visit to assess the situation. We have been unfairly demonized leading to a unilateral 6-months ban on small scale mining. As responsible citizens, we believe, mining, large or small scale should be done leaving behind the barest minimum of environmental footprints and thus support every and any measure to ensure that. However, a blanket ban on small scale mining is not just totally unfair, unjust and uncaring but also an attempt to kill small scale and indigenous entrepreneurship in Ghana. Immediately, what this ban means for us legal small scale miners is the loss of revenue, in the region of US $560million and the cost of restarting operations US $221million (this includes civil works, dewatering, maintenance of equipment etc) . People have procured loans from the banks for equipment, people have hired equipment and the associated costs, who is going to pay all these? The whole small scale mining chain has been hit hard by this ban. The banks and other financial institutions, equipment leasing companies, not to talk about the hundreds of thousands who are directly or indirectly dependent on legal artisanal and small scale mining.
Proposal

From the beginning we sent a proposal to government on how to tackle the galamsey menace and its negative impact on society. Our position was that government needed to set up a task force to rid our water bodies of those dredging them for mining purposes, stop those mining in the forest reserves and also 'formalise' those illegal miners who can be formalized or give them concessions and deal ruthlessly by the law with the recalcitrant ones. These fell on the deaf ears because of the huge public outcry being fed by the media onslaught on galamsey and more particularly and out of ignorance, on artisanal and small scale mining in general. It is even strange that the ministry which issued licenses to small scale miners will turn round and bow to media misinformation that it does not know the difference between galamsey and legal artisanal and small scale mining. Meanwhile, the Ghana National Association of Small Miners (GNASSM) is a mandatory association required by the Mining Act of 2006 and was formed in 2011 with the support of the Minerals Commission and has branches in all mining districts of Ghana. The aim of the association is to ensure members carry out their operations efficiently, effectively and sustainably, liaise between them and large scale miners, the Minerals Commission, and other government agencies.

For us this 6-month ban is a lazy man’s approach to solving the problem. There are no clear strategies for solving the problem 5 months down the line so far it has been ad hoc and firefighting approach. A knee-jerk reaction which will not solve any problem except to render legal small scale miners jobless and penniless. It also seems like a way of making sure Ghanaians do not have access to the minerals because not only is the small scale sector the legal preserve of Ghanaians but also it is predominantly Ghanaian operated. This onslaught on small scale mining amounts to ‘killing local industry’. Our clarion call is therefore, ‘Save small scale mining, say no to galamsey’.

Media misinformation

We believe, the media, which lacks understanding of the industry and the challenge that faces it is clouding the issues. In the long term, the current approach is not a sustainable solution to the problem. In fact, Government hasn’t taken any active steps to stop the issue. We have had engagements with many government agencies on the issue, the Council of State, Water Commission, Minerals Commission, Ghana Water Company etc. We realized that most of them lack understanding of the issue especially once they have allowed themselves to be led by the media. Gradually, they came round to understanding the issue but the challenge now is dealing with the ‘monster’ that the media has made of small scale mining.

We have even gone ahead to engage the media itself who somehow admit there could be legal small scale miners but are resisting the need to differentiate between galamsey and legal small scale miners. The irony of the situation is that some large scale miners are doing more damage to the environment than the small scale miners. Take the Western Region for example. 90 percent of the devastation in the region is caused by some large scale miners who are even using prospecting licences for mining. But nobody is talking about that. We think the media is misinforming the public about small scale mining and needs to be made to appreciate the complex nature of the issues. The multiplier effects of small scale mining and the value chain addition in the local economy seems to have been lost on them. Local refiners, the local jewelry sector, and exporters have all been affected by this ban with the resulting loss of livelihoods by many thousands.

Foreign small scale miners

On the issue of foreigners in the small scale mining we think the blame should go to some of the mining lease holders and government agencies especially the local ones who should know better because foreigners are not allowed to do small scale mining. When as district or local authority you see many foreigners in your area and it doesn’t mean anything to you then you should be held responsible for whatever they do. No Municipal or District Chief Executive can plead ignorance of what is happening in his jurisdiction as head of the local security committee. Foreigners are no longer even allowed as support services providers for small scale mining as this has also become reserved for Ghanaians. So there is no justification for any foreigner to be found in any small scale mining operation.

Alternative livelihood

This may not be possible. Especially if the income realized from small scale mining is much more than the alternative being offered.

Solution

This is a national challenge but the solution is at the local level. Every mining activity takes place at the local level so local enforcement is critical. In fact, the district mining committees should be seen to be working. Government agencies responsible for the enforcement of the Mining Law should be up and doing. That is where the solution is.”

“This is a national challenge but the solution is at the local level. Every mining activity takes place at the local level so local enforcement is critical. In fact, the district mining committees should be seen to be working. Government agencies responsible for the enforcement of the Mining Law should be up and doing. That is where the solution is.”
Tanzania has gone from being an insignificant gold exporter to Africa’s fourth largest after South Africa and Ghana. Fifty tonnes of gold is exported annually, corresponding to more than US$1 billion. Today, there are six large gold mines in Tanzania, all of which are controlled by international companies. In addition, there are about 300,000 Tanzanians working in small-scale gold mining and 250,000 involved in the extraction of a wide variety of precious stones, of which diamonds, tanzanites, rubies, sapphires and emeralds are the best known.

In 1967 the Arusha Declaration, introduced the blueprint of the policy of socialism and self-reliance, a policy which directed the government of the day to place all means of production and exchange in the hands of the State. The policy was followed with a massive nationalization of various economic sectors, amidst deteriorating relations with the Western powers.

In and around 1985 the then President Ali Hassan Mwinyi liberalized the country’s economy following an agreement with the International Monetary Fund. This went hand in hand with deliberate measures taken to attract Foreign Direct Investment into the country again. The process of economic liberalization prompted high marginalization of the rural poor; including peasants, pastoralists and small scale miners leading bitter conflicts over natural resources.

There was however a surge in the ASM sector in Africa in the 1970s and 1980s, when large-scale mining virtually disappeared in some countries due to deep financial and economic crises.

Over the past three decades, the artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) sector in Tanzania has been increasingly important for poverty alleviation nationally. ASM activities, taking place in many regions of the country, play a significant role both as a direct source of employment in mining communities and in generating additional jobs and revenues in the rural economy.

The situation has been followed by forceful eviction of artisanal and small scale mining activities, posing a serious threat to the livelihoods of many small scale miners.
miners which has become rampant due to political scheming, negative public perception and absence of secure land tenure. Although the government had set aside a number of locations for small-scale mining including: Kilindi district (Tanga region), Kilosa and Mvomero districts (Morogoro region), Maganzo, Kishapuand Ibadakuli (Shinyanga region), Mererani (Manyara region), Mpwapwa (Dodoma region), Nyarugusu and Rwamngasa (Mwanza region) and Manyoni (Singida region) protection of the rights of small-scale miners and maintaining the gazetted small-scale mining areas became a challenge once lucrative deposits were discovered.

Tanzania’s mineral sector is guided by various policies, rules and regulations closely connected to its historical, political and economic dynamics at both national and international level. While some of the shifts represent recognition of failure of the previous existing policy prescriptions and frameworks, the most recent shifts have aimed fundamentally at repositioning and consolidating the neo-liberal agenda around Africa’s natural resources.

Political perceptions and attitudes towards the ASM sector are central to progressive policy processes. To a large extent, however the ASM has been viewed politically as a marginal sector because of its geographic remoteness, rudimentary nature, association with the higher profile LSM sector, and Government and public perceptions of its significance in relation to other sectors such as agriculture.

Before multinational mining companies arrived in Tanzania, the mining of minerals was largely conducted by small-scale miners. Although national poverty reduction papers in the early 2000s overlooked artisanal mining, by 2003 they began to emphasize that, “the livelihoods of artisanal miners need to be balanced with commercial mining.”

There is evidence that artisanal mining enabled Tanzanians to accumulate capital and move up career ladders into brokering and dealing. Some people were able to invest in more stable businesses such as shops, restaurants and guesthouses. No other sector or job creation program has been able to inject such income in rural areas, stimulate cash flow and reduce poverty.

The isolation of ASM in Government mineral sector policy priorities as well as from wider social and environmental policies was quite significant. Conflicts between large mining companies, existing local communities and small-scale miners over land and mining rights, compensations and taxes to the government are common and often lead to violent confrontations. It is acknowledged that small scale mining can contribute to the economic growth of an area. The profit made on the small scale mining is often used and/or invested locally, which means that it has a positive effect on the local community. Further, more job opportunities in the small-scale mining industry reduce the migration from rural to urban areas.

The increasing discontent among the Tanzanian public, civil society groups and politicians about the state of affairs in the Tanzanian ERI has resulted in increased government action that resulted in the appointment of a commission to probe mining contracts. The Presidential Mining Review Committee chaired by retired Justice Bomani released its report in 2008. The findings of the Bomani Review Committee emphasized the need to amend the mining legal framework and associated mining policies, so that Tanzanian citizens have greater opportunities to benefit from and participate in the mining sector. This led to the passing of Mining Law of 2010, which among things strengthened legal recognition of ASM in Tanzania.

The legislation in Tanzania currently, leaves room for the presence and development of a small-scale mining industry and promises increased support in the form of access to advice and training, credit, low-cost equipment and specially reserved mineral-rich.

As a policy response, the Ministry of Energy and Minerals has formulated strategies aimed at formalising small-scale mining, initiating measures for improving information on ASM, and developing extension services aimed at assisting miners. Government policy papers recognized that detailed knowledge of dynamics in mining communities is vital to regulate extraction activities effectively, and the official government policy objectives have been to promote small-scale mining cooperatives, to encourage partnerships that promote small-scale miners’ productive capacity.

On the one hand, it is important to stress that small scale mining has a positive effect on a country’s economic development; on the other, it can also have adverse effects on individuals, the local community and the environment. If the small-scale mining industry is to realize its potential, an institutional, organizational and technological upgrading is necessary.

- Artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) can make a positive contribution to inclusive and equitable sustainable development and growth. ASM provides a livelihood to millions of people, many of whom are women and children. We cannot simply ignore the ASM sector, or write it off as environmentally and socially unsustainable.

- Instead, improving the sector through better governance and protection of rights can become a tool to promote food security, economic growth, gender equality, as well as security and stability across the developing world.

- But progress is hampered by informality, poverty, marginalization, limited capacity and negative perceptions of ASM, often underpinned by a lack of knowledge, resources and due understanding of the sector’s potential to contribute to sustainable development.

- Fragmented responses, usually driven by international agendas, not local priorities, have failed to bring about the broader transformations in knowledge, policy and institutional systems needed for systemic change.

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THE ETHIOPIAN ASM MODEL

*Ethiopia having realized the important role ASM could play in its socio-economic development decided to formalize it and provide it with the necessary support. Directly engaged in ASM are some 1m people with about 5m direct and indirect beneficiaries according to a 2012 Ministry of Mines report. ASM has proven to be a ‘primary source of employment for job seekers from various parts of the country who are relatively disadvantaged in the labour market’ because of lack of skill, low skills etc. Of course with income generated from ASM, other economic sectors like agriculture, services, transport and infrastructure etc are stimulated. The rural-urban drift is also curtailed, foreign exchange earnings increased and smuggling of minerals reduced considerably.

The Ethiopian government recognizing the increasing number of people in the sector and the high risks associated with ASM decided on ‘creating’ a ‘win-win’ situation for both miners and the state.

The costs or qualifications required to gain an artisanal mining licence are often prohibitive in many African countries. In Ethiopia: Proclamation No. 678 of 2010 specifies that no financial resources or technical or professional competence is required to acquire an artisanal mining licence. Licence fees are set by the state, but are invariably low, and artisanal mining is exempt from taxes: the only universal payment that the artisanal miners make is the mineral royalty (8% for gold). Artisanal mining licences, unlike any other mining licence except those for construction and industrial minerals, can be obtained through state governments rather than through the mines ministry in the capital, Addis Ababa. This reduces bureaucracy and opens up the sector to those who cannot afford to travel.

Artisanal miners who gain a licence are offered a large degree of security. Although small- and large-scale licences take precedence over artisanal licences, the licensing authority is obliged to give 90 days’ notice and the option of an alternative mining area or financial compensation when revoking an artisanal licence. Artisanal miners are also given a guaranteed market: all artisanally produced minerals, can be obtained through state governments rather than the mines ministry in the capital, Addis Ababa. This reduces bureaucracy and opens up the sector to those who cannot afford to travel.

Measures taken to improve ASM challenges in Ethiopia

Legislative

- Mining license for AM cooperating issued by regions
- ASM is incorporated in the Mineral policy.
- ASM is recognized in the Mining law.
- ASM is incorporated in poverty reduction strategy of the country.
- ASM is incorporated in GTP (Growth and Transformation Plan of the country)
- Mining proclamation is revised in favour of ASM
- Proclamation to promote and transaction of precious metals No 651/2009 is enforced.
- Proclamation to amend the National Bank of Ethiopia establishment No 591/2008 is enforced.
- A number of directives on gold foreign currency purchase are enforced.
- Artisanal mining licences are often prohibitive in many African countries.

Administrative

- The government established a Directorate under the organization of the Ministry to administer all matters pertaining to ASM in the country. And also gold trade and value chain Directorate is established to facilitate the gold transaction.
- Decentralization of gold purchase center to regions.
- Extending services to ASM
- ASM communities are offered extension services by various stake holders in terms of
- Training on Environment and safety.
- Training manuals
- Conduct awareness creation through consultation and National Experience Sharing conference.
- Demarcating mining areas for ASM.

Financial support

- The government established Microfinance institutions in all regions to issue soft loans to formalized miners.
- The government is supporting formalized miners through a World Bank program.
- The government is supporting formalized miners through a World Bank program.

Stake holders in formalization process

1. Ministry of Mines
2. Regional Mining agencies.
3. Federal and Regional cooperative agencies.
4. Local administration
5. Micro and Small scale enterprise agency.
6. Local administration Audit.
8. Geological Survey of Ethiopia/GSE/

Result obtained

- More than 100,000 miners are organized in cooperatives all over the country
- More than 50,000 miners are organized in micro and small scale miners all over the country.
- The amount of gold purchased by NBE (National Bank of Ethiopia) increased from 735kg in 2009 to 8386 kg in 2013.
- Other economic sectors in the mining areas are stimulated.
- In many ASM community areas food security is ensured.
- Enrollment of school age children highly increased and dropout fall down to the minimum level.

* From various sources, including the Ministry of Mines, Ethiopia, EEITI (Ethiopian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative Final draft Report-2016).
Continental efforts on ASM

The African Mining Vision (AMV), ECOWAS Minerals Development Policy, ECOWAS Directive on Harmonisation of Mining Principles, and the ECOWAS Mineral Development Policy Final Supplementary Act, which African governments are signatories to call for conscious efforts by governments to develop the artisanal and small scale mining (ASM) sector.

African Mining Vision Action Plan (2011)
PROGRAMME CLUSTER 4 - ARTISANAL AND SMALL SCALE MINING

Context
Artisanal and small scale mining is widespread in Africa and exploits a very large number of minerals. These range from diamonds and a variety of other gemstones, to precious metals, such as gold and tantalite, to industrial minerals, including limestone for aggregate and agricultural purposes, clays for pottery and other uses and many other non-metallic minerals. Generally, small scale mining makes a positive contribution to African economies but, more importantly it sustains livelihoods, especially given the large numbers of people involved.

Yet this sector is beset with a number of challenges which prevent it reaching its full developmental potential. Many of these are well known and include inadequate policy and regulatory frameworks; the limited technical capacity of miners; inadequately explored mineral bearing areas; lack of access to finance and appropriate technologies; and regrettably, child labour issues. These challenges generally lock small scale miners in a cycle of subsistence operations with significant negative consequences on the environment and human life. Further, the ASM sector is also prone to trade in conflict minerals as many of the miners operate outside the law for various reasons.

The ASM sector can be transformed into an engine for sustainable development, particularly in rural areas, if these challenges are adequately addressed through a series of well targeted interventions. These should recognise the need for ASM policy to be embedded into a broad rural development strategy, taking into account the poverty cycle that limits the development of the ASM sector in Africa. ASM interventions ought to also target transforming operations into viable ones, whenever possible.

Programme cluster goal -
To create a mining sector that harnesses the potential of artisanal and small scale mining to advance integrated and sustainable rural socio-economic development

Action Plan

Expected Accomplishment:
A viable and sustainable artisanal and small scale mining sector that contributes to growth and development

Activities: At national level
- Regularise and mainstream ASM into broad stream rural economic activities;
- Develop policies to encourage technical assistance for artisanal miners to upgrade them to small and medium scale mining enterprises and promote local service providers in the sub-sector;
- Develop programmes to upgrade knowledge, skills and technology in the ASM sector;
- Develop models for partnership with government and large-scale mines to facilitate access to technology, skills, knowledge and markets;
- Develop a financing and marketing strategy appropriate to the needs of ASM;
- Determine geologically suitable areas for ASM;
- Develop methodologies or templates for distinguishing potentially viable ASM operations for targeted support;
- Develop and strengthen ASM associations;
- Implement international guidelines banning the use of child labour.
At sub regional and regional levels
- RECs to harmonize ASM policies, laws, regulations, standards and codes;
- Coordinate and facilitate technology development and transfer;
- Develop a regional tool kit for engagement between LSM and ASM
- RECs to lead initiatives to formalize and upgrade skills, knowledge and practices in the artisanal and small-scale mining sector;
- Develop and coordinate measures for building capacity of miners, including examination and certification of miners
- AUC/NCPA to lead efforts to develop continental policies, laws, regulations, standards and codes to promote sustainable ASM;
- Adopt measures to address illicit trade in minerals

Monitoring Indicators:
- Degree to which knowledge and skills of ASM operators improve
- Level of improvement in the operations of ASM
- Increase in number of ASM operators being mentored by LSM
- Degree to which ASM integrates into broad economic activities.
- Extent to which child labour is reduced and subsequently eliminated

ECOWAS Minerals Development Policy (2011)

Article 2.8: Development of Artisanal and Small-scale Mining

Member States undertake to:

a. Improve Artisanal and Small-scale Mining activities through specific institutional and legislative frameworks.
b. Encourage the formation of cooperatives in the ASM sub-sector.
c. Encourage technical and financial assistance programs for the benefit of Artisanal and Small-scale Mining activities
d. Strengthen professional organizations for information sharing and technical capacity enhancements for the ASM sub-sector.
e. Develop training curricula and good practices relevant to the social context and supported by technology transfers.
f. Promote the harmonious co-existence between Large-scale Mineral Operators and ASM operators.
g. Encourage the establishment of a coordinated system of licensed Mineral Buying Centres/Agencies in the Community.


Article 11 Subsection 6:

Member States shall take step to enact appropriate legislation to provide for artisanal and small scale mining rights to citizen and ensure safe, efficient and environmentally sustainable artisanal and small scale mining. Member States shall take measures to establish adequate, legal, economic and technical oversight to improve the working and living standards as well as the yield of artisanal activities. Furthermore, Member States are to ensure peaceful cohabitation between large scale and artisanal and small scale mining.
Miguel López took cover in the shade at the entrance to the hilltop cemetery. It was approaching noon in the mountains of western Honduras, and the sun beat down on the Azacualpa Environmental Committee members gathered to discuss their ongoing battle with Aura Minerals, a Canadian mining company. Located within a community land title (ejido) that goes back nearly two hundred years, the cemetery is on the chopping block of the company’s San Andrés mine.

The sound of beeping trucks and machinery drifted from the gold mine below. A bit further on, the road began to parallel the edge of the open pit. According to López, the president of the Azacualpa community-based environmental group, communities were forced to relocate in the late 1990s by Greenstone, the first of three Toronto-based companies to own the mine.

“They got rid of a community,” he said of San Andrés. The residents had to move to the other side of the open pit operations. “They relocated everyone.”

Alongside the pit, a small group of houses inhabited by San Miguel community residents who refused to leave are now perched disturbingly close to cyan-colored ponds gathering sodium cyanide solution and gold leached from the heaps of earth and rock blasted from mountainsides. López added that a number of bodies were exhumed from a cemetery there without community consent.

López doesn’t want history to repeat itself in Azacualpa.

Earlier this year, El Salvador enacted a historic ban on all metal mining in the country. But communities in neighboring Honduras, Guatemala, and Nicaragua continue to battle existing and potential mining projects. In an effort to bring together and leverage these struggles, representatives from organizations and communities in all four countries met in Nicaragua in April to forge a new Central American Alliance against mining.
“A race began in Central America to reform [mining] laws,” he said. The laws kept royalties down to as low as one percent, prioritized foreign investment over environmental regulations, and disregarded potential community concerns and opposition. This included El Salvador’s new mining law in 1996, Guatemala’s in 1997, the year following the peace accords that ended a 36-year armed conflict. Honduras passed a new mining law in 1998, the month after Hurricane Mitch, when large areas of the country were still underwater and in a state of emergency. In Nicaragua, the Special Law for the Exploration and Exploitation of Mines came into effect in 2002.

Although Honduras, Guatemala, and now El Salvador have since passed newer legislation, these laws set off a wave of new mining projects in the region. Twenty years later, the region is facing the negative impacts of those projects, said Landa. These include pollution, ecosystem destruction, water scarcity, health problems, and community divisions. But mining is also often linked to violence. Honduras, for example, is one of the most dangerous countries in the world for environmental defenders, according to the London-based NGO Global Witness, Landa pointed out.

“Extractivism is a new low intensity war,” he said. He explained that although it is a conflict that can seem invisible to the broader public, within the communities, its consequences abound.

Bordering Mexico in the western highlands of Guatemala, the Huehuetenango department has been home to intense community struggles over mining and hydroelectric dam projects. Indigenous activists have been killed, and community leaders have been detained on and off for years on a variety of charges of which they are nearly invariably acquitted.

“[The abuses don’t] stop the struggle. On the contrary, the struggle has expanded in Guatemala,” said Rubén Herrera, coordinator of the Departmental Assembly of Huehuetenango in Defense of Territory (ADH).

Herrera himself has spent time behind bars on charges related to community struggles in Santa Cruz Barillas, in the northern part of the department. Last December, Hidro Santa Cruz, the company behind the fiercely contested Canbalam dam project in the municipality, announced that it was leaving the country, but criminalization of those who protested the project continues. Herrera is one of many Huehuetenango activists with pending arrest warrants. Whether dams or mining - and many activists link the two due to the high electricity and water demands of the latter - the story is similar, participants at the Managua event emphasized.

“We have a permanent history of resistance and struggle,” said Herrera. “The only path for us is to continue the struggle.”

In Nicaragua, struggles and conflicts continue in gold mining areas in Santo Domingo, Limón, and Bonanza, along with opposition to exploration and concessions elsewhere. As in Guatemala and Honduras, community leaders and others confronting mining on the ground in Nicaragua frequently face threats, intimidation, police repression, and criminal charges.

“There’s an aggressive policy in the country to promote mining,” said Angélica Alfaro, a Nicaraguan consultant researching mining in the four Central American countries.

Organizations and communities dealing with mining in Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador have coordinated and worked together for years, whereas their counterparts in Nicaragua have largely been facing the situation alone. ACAFREMIN hopes to change that, and many participants in the new alliance are taking notes from the communities and social movement organizations in El Salvador whose efforts resulted in the national ban on metals mining passed March 29.

The mining ban doesn’t mean the struggle is over, though, Salvadoran activists and analysts said at the event in Managua a month after their legislators unanimously voted to ban metal mining. The specific regulations still need to be passed, and the ban could potentially face a legal challenge, said Rodolfo Calles, a member of the Salvadoran Ecological Unit (UNES). Nonetheless, the mining ban, the first of its kind in the world, is a testament to the unrelenting grassroots struggle around the country.

“It’s been the fruit of more than 12 years of struggle,” said Calles. “The protagonists in all of this have been the communities.”

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The Office of the U.S. Trade Representative will initiate an out-of-cycle review of the eligibility of Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda for trade preferences provided under the African Growth and Opportunity Act as a result of a petition arguing the countries’ ban on imports of secondhand clothing and footwear violates requirements they must meet to receive and maintain AGOA benefits.

The review, announced in the Federal Register on June 20, stems from a petition the Secondary Materials and Recycled Textiles Association (SMART) sent to USTR in March. SMART argued that the used clothing ban imposed by the three countries, as well Kenya, contravenes Section 104 of AGOA, which states that to receive and maintain benefits, countries must, among other requirements, establish or make continual progress toward establishing “a market-based economy,” as well as pursue “the elimination of barriers to U.S. trade and investment” and “economic policies to reduce poverty.”

USTR has opted not to include Kenya in the out-of-cycle review because the country has rolled back increased tariffs on used clothing and has committed “not to ban imports of used clothing through policy measures that are more trade-restrictive than necessary to protect human health.”

SMART executive director Jackie King told Inside U.S. Trade that the association agreed with USTR on its decision not to include Kenya in the review. Kenya has committed to USTR in writing that it will not pursue the ban and that it will roll back tariffs to pre-2016 levels, King said.

Tariffs stemming from the ban have caused substantial downsides for the industry SMART represents, creating “exceptional circumstances” justifying an out-of-cycle review, the association argues in its petition. USTR consulted with Congress on the decision to hold an out-of-cycle review of Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda, the Federal Register notice states.

Comments to USTR are due June 30, a hearing will be held July 17, and post-hearing comments are due July 21, according to the notice.

A finding of non-compliance with AGOA’s requirements could result in the termination of a country’s beneficiary status by the president, or the withdrawal, suspension or limitation of duty-free treatment for certain articles from a country found to be non-compliant if the president determines that would more effectively promote compliance with AGOA-eligibility requirements.
If it is determined the ban breaches AGOA commitments, SMART wants AGOA benefits suspended for the countries subject to the out-of-cycle review until the policies upholding the ban are reversed and further actions to enforce the ban are frozen. King noted that a quick reversal of tariffs and a renunciation of the ban by the three countries would be preferable to going through the entire out-of-cycle review process.

She added that SMART has worked with its Canadian members as well as the Textile Recycling Association in the United Kingdom to discuss the downsides of the ban for those governments as well as negative economic impacts on Uganda, Tanzania, and Rwanda.

King also said SMART plans to reach out to committees in the House and Senate as well as lawmakers who represent regions in which a significant number of residents are affected by the tariffs and ban.

According to SMART's submission, the ban, first proposed at an East African Community heads of state summit in 2015 and endorsed in a March 2016 communiqué, has had a "dramatic negative impact on the industry."

Not addressing the ban would set also set worrisome precedent, SMART states, incentivizing other AGOA members to test the willingness of the U.S. to hold AGOA countries accountable to the requirements of the preferences program.

"If the U.S. government allows the EAC to continue to receive AGOA benefits in the face of a used clothing ban, there is a very large risk that other African governments and AGOA beneficiaries will see this as their opening to defy U.S. policy and take advantage of U.S. generosity promoted by AGOA while simultaneously doing considerable harm to U.S. industries," SMART said.

"It is particularly galling that the EAC governments would eliminate secondhand clothing imports at the same time our country is providing unilateral access to the U.S. market that is specifically designed to benefit African textile and apparel exports," the association added. "The ban also represents a slap in the face of U.S. exporters and taxpayers by abusing U.S. generosity offered via the AGOA program."

The used clothing import ban is slated to come fully into effect in 2019, but increased tariffs have already created a "de facto ban," King said.

In June 2016, Tanzania doubled import duties on used clothing, boosting tariffs from $0.2 per kilogram to $0.4 per kilogram, the petition states. Kenya and Uganda quickly followed suit with similar tariffs. Rwanda also increased import duties on used clothing by 1,150 percent -- from $0.2 per kilogram to $2.5 per kilogram -- and by 900 percent on used shoes -- from $0.5 per kilogram to $5 per kilogram.

"These tariff increases are so high that they amount to a de facto ban on our industry and make clear that these countries are moving full steam ahead on implementing it," SMART's petition states.

Some SMART member companies have tried to shift exports outside of the EAC, King said, but many have had to lay off employees.

In a survey of its member companies, SMART found that 40 percent of respondents have reduced employment by 25 percent or more since the duty announcements were made in "anticipation of implementing the full used clothing ban."

More than 88 percent of respondents saw a revenue drop of 25 percent or more since the duty increases were implemented. A complete ban would force more than 52 percent of respondents to cut employees by 50 percent or more. Ninety-four percent of respondents also predicted their revenues would be slashed anywhere from 25 percent to 75 percent if a full ban were put into effect.

"Based on these findings, SMART estimates the implementation of the interim duty increases put into place by certain EAC countries last summer has led to a current loss of 5,000 jobs in the private sector of the U.S. used clothing industry and the loss of another 19,000 in the not-for-profit sector," the petition states.

The EAC is "one of the most important markets" for the used clothing industry, SMART said, representing a total of about 22 percent or $124 million in exports if direct exports, worth $24 million, and re-exports, worth $100 million, are combined. Up to 40 U.S. used clothing exporters directly trade with EAC countries, and a large number of other companies and charity organizations that supply raw material processed and exported to the EAC are also impacted by the increased duties.

"Industry-wide, we estimate conservatively that at least 40,000 U.S. based jobs within the private sector in collection, processing and distribution will be negatively impacted by this ban," SMART states. The not-for-profit sector would see 150,000 jobs impacted, the petition states.

The petitioner also argues that the ban will harm charities that sell donated used clothing, depress prices for secondhand clothing and negatively impact EAC economies.

According to the petition, buying, selling, repairing and altering used clothing results in hundreds of thousands of jobs in the EAC.

Further, a ban on secondhand clothing would allow China and other countries from Asia to fill demand for low-price clothing with "cheap substitutes" and incentivize illegal smuggling.

"While it is generally accepted within the EAC that the ban on used clothing imports is to protect and expand local textile manufacturing, paradoxically no duty increases have been announced for imports of Chinese and other Asian produced textiles," SMART states.

"Increased low-quality imports from Asia already have and will continue to do far more to displace the domestic textile industry than the presence of used clothing ever would, while the contraband will create headaches and corruption from the border to the selling point and lead to a loss of government revenue from a previously legal source."

The association also argues that it is misguided to blame used clothing imports for the declining textile industry in EAC states. Instead, the root cause of the industries slowdown was the termination of the Multi Fiber Agreement in 2005. The MFA regulated apparel and textile trade with quotas, and restrained textile and apparel producers such as China, allowing other developing countries to compete for limited access to developed countries’ markets.

"While it was in place, the MFA had limited the number of textiles that any country could export to developed nations, effectively restricting Chinese shipments and enabling African countries to compete. Once the MFA ended, African markets (and others throughout the world) were deluged by cheap and low-quality new imports from countries like China, costing hundreds of thousands of jobs and decimating the African industry. -- Jack Caporal

* Culled from Inside US Trade
The European Union and Brazil opposed the elimination of a range of green box direct payments for cotton as demanded by the Cotton-4 countries - Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Chad - in the unresolved Doha agriculture negotiations at the WTO, reports *D. Ravi Kanth.*

**EU and Brazil oppose end to "green box" cotton payments**

The EU-Brazilian opposition would ensure that green box subsidies will not be touched despite their trade-distorting effect, trade envoys told the SUNS.

In their sustained efforts for securing a meaningful outcome on the cotton subsidies at the World Trade Organization’s eleventh ministerial meeting in Buenos Aires in December this year, the four West African cotton-dependent countries - Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Chad - had for the first time put forward a range of proposals on cotton subsidies in the unresolved Doha agriculture negotiations at the World Trade Organization.

They proposed that both green box direct payments on cotton as well as trade-distorting Amber box (Aggregate Measurement of Support) subsidies must be tackled in one go.

At a meeting of trade envoys of select countries convened by the chair for the Doha agriculture negotiations, Ambassador Stephen Karau of Kenya, on 30 June, the C-4 countries circulated a proposal demanding the elimination of green box payments, which run into over ten billion dollars, along with the steep reduction commitments in the most trade-distorting Amber box (Aggregate Measurement of Support) subsidies, based on the formula approach of the Doha revised draft modalities text of December 2008.

Though the proposal is not circulated officially, participants who took part in the...
meeting said the C-4 countries had made these two proposals.

First, the Cotton-4 said, the developed countries must eliminate the green box payments.

And second, those members - both developed and developing - who undertook Aggregate Measurement of Support (AMS) commitments in the Uruguay Round must agree to steep reduction commitments as per the formula approach in the revised draft modalities of December 2008.

The four West African countries also proposed that the developing countries without AMS commitments must agree to a 10% overall limit on their cotton support programs in line with the de minimis disciplines.

China, according to the C-4 proposal, can only spend up to 8.5% of its de minimis support as per the commitments that China undertook in its accession protocol of 2001.

Surprisingly, the proposal on the elimination of green box measures for cotton from the four West African countries faced fierce opposition from the European Union and Brazil.

At the meeting, the European Union and Brazil opposed elimination of green box payments on the ground that reduction commitments involved only trade-distorting domestic support or AMS payments in the unfinished Doha agriculture negotiations.

The EU and Brazil, however, said they will support steep cuts in the AMS in line with what will be agreed for reducing the overall trade-distorting domestic support.

The United States opposed the proposal from the C-4 countries on grounds that India and China are exempt from any cuts.

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Surprisingly, the proposal on the elimination of green box measures for cotton from the four West African countries faced fierce opposition from the European Union and Brazil.

Incidentally, Brazil, which had championed the cause of agriculture reform by forming the G20 group of developing countries on the eve of the Cancun Ministerial in 2003 (as a counter to the EU and US closing ranks to ignore their own subsidies, but try to pry open developing country markets for their own subsidised exports) has now joined hands with the European Union for drafting a proposal on how to reduce subsidies in domestic support.

The trade ministers stressed "the crucial role of the cotton sector in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), notably as regards the fight against poverty and the contribution to food security in the cotton producing and exporting African countries and LDCs."

They said: "Trade Ministers gave a clear and specific mandate for addressing the cotton issue at the WTO in the Ministerial Decision on Cotton adopted on 1 August 2004 in Geneva and on 22 December 2005 in Hong Kong, calling for the cotton issue to be addressed "ambitiously, expeditiously and specifically".".

The trade ministers urged "WTO members granting domestic support that distorts the international market to strive for further progress in the work on cotton, with a view to achieving the objectives established for this vital issue."

The four trade ministers said they are "deeply concerned with the international context, characterized by the resurgence of protectionism and the uncertainty surrounding the WTO ministerial trade negotiations in the lead up to the Eleventh WTO Ministerial meeting."

However, the prospects for an outcome on cotton at Buenos Aires remain bleak unless the four countries wage a grim fight on a make-or-break footing at Buenos Aires, said several trade envoys.

"D. Ravi Kanth wrote this for SUNS #8496."
Are the World Bank and AIIB locked in a failed development model? 
By Bretton Woods Project

In April, at the closing of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) spring meetings in Washington DC, the World Bank Group (WBG) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) signed a memorandum of understanding "to strengthen cooperation and knowledge sharing between the institutions." The agreement was signed a year after both institutions signed a co-financing agreement outlining "the co-financing parameters of World Bank-AIIB investment projects" (see Observer Summer 2016).

The Bank and AIIB have co-financed five projects together since. Co-financing and cooperation between the Bank and AIIB reflect the trend toward increased coordination and joint financing by multilateral development banks (MDBs) to meet what is claimed to be a yearly $1 trillion to $1.5 trillion infrastructure financing gap in developing countries by 2020. The MDB focus on leveraging private sector investments for mega-infrastructure projects was evident in the 2017 Global Infrastructure Forum (GIF) outcome document.

The World Bank-AIIB trajectory is at odds with principles for better MDBs outlined in the Eurodad, Afrodad and Latindadd April concept paper Public Development Banks: towards a better model, which argued that MDBs must prioritise development outcomes over profit and stressed that, historically, infrastructure development has been primarily publicly financed. María José Romero from Brussels-based network Eurodad noted that, "MDBs must support infrastructure..."
development that benefits communities and helps countries transition to a new development model.” In light of the evolving relationship among MDBs as reflected in the 2017 GIF outcome document, civil society fears that the AIIB, far from providing developing countries a different development and financing paradigm, is on its way to supporting existing development models that do nothing to assist developing countries transition from commodity-dependent economies (see Observer Summer 2017).

As noted by Professor Bill Laurence on the blog site Alert, civil society is also concerned that increased cooperation and norm-sharing among MDBs is leading to a race to the bottom in terms of environmental and social protections. Civil society was highly critical of the newly adopted World Bank Environment and Social Framework (see Observer Autumn 2016). Many within civil society echoed concerns raised by Professor Hongying Wang in her September 2016 paper for the Council on Foreign Relations that “the leniency of the new MDBs toward infrastructure projects that may have negative social and environmental consequences could make them more attractive to some borrowers, who prioritise faster and lower-cost financing. This could undermine the ability of other MDBs, including the World Bank, to uphold their standards.”

**WB-AIIB cooperation tested in Tarbela 5**

The Tarbela 5 dam in Pakistan provides an opportunity to assess how co-financing is affecting the AIIB and World Bank’s approach to environmental and social safeguards. The AIIB and World Bank are co-financing the dam together with the government of Pakistan. While the AIIB had committed that its $300m loan would not only finance the new construction but also address ‘social legacy issues’ from previous projects, closer scrutiny by NGO Bank Information Center (BIC) Europe and Pakistani researcher Naeem Iqbal cast doubt on that assertion. BIC Europe argued that the AIIB’s legalistic approach seems likely to leave many people displaced by the previous construction without remedy. The study also asserted that “though clearly part of the Tarbela 5 project, the World Bank removed the grid station from the project to avoid the AIIB having to address land acquisition and resettlement issues, according to the WB’s representative.” Finally, BIC and Iqbal noted that important access to information procedures did not follow best practice.

In a June article on news site Chinadialoge, Kate Geary, of BIC Europe, noted that while the AIIB “explicitly commits to the Paris Climate Agreement and the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals”, its energy strategy does not specifically stop the AIIB from financing coal. Geary noted that 31 Indian CSOs have written to the AIIB to express their concern that “the supposedly ‘green’ bank still may end up funding dirty fuels across Asia, including coal and gas thermal plants, as it does not exclude these.” Geary’s article also criticised proposed AIIB investments through financial intermediaries (FIs) and in India’s Infrastructure Fund in particular, referencing the negative developmental impacts of the International Finance Corporation’s (IFC, the World Bank’s private sector arm) investments in FIs (see Observer Autumn 2017, Autumn 2016).

In March 47 international and Indonesian CSOs wrote a letter to the AIIB requesting that they withhold support to the Indonesian Infrastructure Fund and Regional Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) citing concerns over social and environmental assessments and lack of appropriate consultation (see Observer Spring 2017). Disregarding the concerns, on 28 March, the AIIB announced that it had approved a $100 million dollar loan to the RIDF.

*The above article is reproduced from Brettonwoods Project, 3 July 2017.*
The International Monetary Fund (IMF) provides financial assistance to countries in economic trouble. But its policy proposals don’t always yield positive results for the countries it purports to help. For instance, critics have argued that the IMF inhibits government spending on public health and diverts resources from the health sector to repay external debt.

We set out to examine how IMF policy reforms affect government health systems in West Africa. IMF policies have real consequences for real people. Our research showed that in West Africa the IMF has exerted a unique influence on the evolution of health systems in a number of countries. Among them are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d’Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. These 13 countries have a combined population of more than 330 million.

It has done so through its trademark practice of “conditionality”. In exchange for loans, the IMF requires governments to adopt policies that prioritise short-term economic objectives over, for example, long-term investment in health systems.

West African health systems were weak thanks to legacies of conflict and weak state capacity even before the IMF got involved. Sadly, the policy reforms demanded by the IMF over the past two decades in exchange for loans have undermined the ability of national governments to repair their historical problems. In the process, hundreds of millions of lives have been affected.

Specifically, the IMF’s fiscal targets prompt reductions in health investment.
Wage and personnel caps, for example, limit the ability of clinics and hospitals to employ more doctors and nurses. The IMF also encourages decentralisation of health services to make them responsive to local needs, which in practice can hamper the delivery of adequate health care.

Our research contributes to decades-old debates about the harmful effects of the IMF’s lending programmes on the development of public health systems. It shows that these concerns still hold today. The research also suggests that the IMF’s self-proclaimed prioritisation of health in recent years has been largely cosmetic. West African health systems and the IMF

We searched archival material to conduct our research. This included IMF staff reports, government policy memoranda and correspondence between the IMF and national governments.

Strengthening public health care systems is central to achieving universal health coverage. This is a key objective of the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals.

West African countries have consistently lagged behind most other regions in the world when it comes to health system capacity. The region is home to nine of the lowest 20 ranked countries on the UN’s Human Development Index.

Infant mortality rates are also among the highest worldwide, with a regional average of 57.8 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2015. Public health spending also remains woefully inadequate at 2.4% of GDP for 2014 for the region.

Many attempts have been made to explain West Africa’s inadequate health systems. These include domestic factors, like legacies of conflict and weak state capacity. The failings of key intergovernmental organisations like the World Health Organisation (WHO) have also been blamed.

There’s no doubt that West African health systems were broken before IMF conditionalities. But in the last 20 years, it is the IMF that has set the fiscal and institutional parameters within which health policies can develop. These did not repair the problems that already existed. They may even have exacerbated some."

“It’s no doubt that West African health systems were broken before IMF conditionality. But in the last 20 years, it is the IMF that has set the fiscal and institutional parameters within which health policies can develop. These did not repair the problems that already existed. They may even have exacerbated some.”

Its critics complain that the IMF is responsible for designing inappropriate or domastic policies that undermine the development of health systems. But the organisation has argued that its reforms actually bolster health policy.

Our research suggests that this is not the case. The IMF’s policy reforms are actually hampering the development of West Africa’s health systems.

Linking IMF conditions to health systems

First, macroeconomic targets set by the IMF reduced fiscal space for health investment. The IMF has promoted social protection policies as part of its lending programmes. But these have been inadequately incorporated into programme design.

For example in 2005, when Malian government expenditure on health reached 3.0% of GDP, IMF staff encouraged authorities to reduce spending. They were concerned that “financing substantial increases of education and health sector wages ... might eventually prove unsustainable”. In Benin, authorities cut spending on health in 2005 to “ensure achievement of the main fiscal objectives” of the IMF.

Second, conditions stipulating wage and personnel caps limited staff expansion of doctors and nurses. An example is a series of IMF conditions aimed at reducing Ghana’s public sector wage bill in 2005. The Ghanaian Minister of Finance wrote to the IMF that “at the current level of remuneration, the civil service is losing highly productive employees, particularly in the health sector”. Wage ceilings remained until late 2006, and the number of physicians in Ghana halved.

Third, administrative reforms prevented adequate delivery of health care. For example, following IMF advice, Guinean authorities devolved budgetary responsibilities from the central government to the prefectural, or regional, level in the early 2000s. Five years later, an IMF mission to the country reported “governance problems” that included “insufficient and ineffective decentralisation”, while also noting deterioration in the quality of health service delivery.

Neocolonialism and policy space for health

How can the role of the IMF in influencing health policy in West Africa be explained? The organisation has long been regarded as a tool of the Western economic powers, primarily the US and Europe. The former imperial powers continue to use the IMF to promote a neoliberal agenda across the world.

As part of this neocolonial mission, the IMF has re-engineered the economic and political dimensions of sub-Saharan African countries via intrusive conditions. West Africa stands out as the region that had to implement a large share of such reforms over the past 20 years.

A country that receives an IMF loan typically experiences economic troubles. But even under constraining economic conditions, policy options remain. The question is who gets to define these policy options: the countries themselves, following domestic political processes, or the IMF?

The IMF has deprived West African nations of the policy space to adapt to local exigencies, undermining the delivery of effective health systems. Yet, domestic governments are equipped with local knowledge and are better informed on how crises are unfolding on the ground.

The IMF is headquartered in Washington DC. It is largely staffed with Anglo-Saxon economists who are tasked with leading responses to unfamiliar environments in faraway places. It is unsurprising that the organisation’s responses are so out of touch.

*Thomas Stubbs is Research associate, University of Cambridge and Alexander E. Kentikelenis is Research fellow in politics and sociology, University of Oxford. The article is reproduced from Third World Network Features.
Trump’s announcement was shocking, even though it was not unexpected.

It was shocking for showing the extreme lengths to which the President would go to deny scientific opinion on climate change and defy the position of almost all other countries, on an issue that may well determine the fate of the Earth and human civilisation.

Trump indicated the US is open to renegotiating the Paris agreement. But European leaders quickly responded there is no such possibility. The UNFCCC secretariat correctly pointed out that a single country cannot decide on a re-negotiation. Indeed, it would require a consensus of its 195 members to make amendments to the Paris Agreement or even agree to a re-negotiation.

That will not happen, as the agreement is a delicately balanced outcome which took many years of long and complicated negotiations to achieve. To re-negotiate it would in effect be kill it.

The best response to the Trump decision is for others to resolve to do even more to combat climate change. In the US itself, many states and cities have announced they will form an alliance and continue with their climate actions.

An increasing number of countries including China, India, Germany, France, Italy and Canada as well as the European Union leadership have announced they will honour their Paris commitments despite the US pull-out. There are no signs, so far at least, that any other country intends to follow the US out of Paris.

Indeed the Trump decision to leave Paris will be a milestone marking a huge loss of international prestige, influence and power to the US. In a world so divided by ideology, inequality and economic competition, the Paris agreement was one rare area of global consensus and cooperation, on climate change.
For the US to pull out of that hard-won consensus is a shocking abdication not only of leadership but of its membership of the community of nations in its joint effort to face up to perhaps its gravest challenge of survival.

The lack of appreciation of this great crisis facing humanity and the narrow-mindedness of his concerns was embarrassingly evident when Trump made his withdrawal speech. He was more interested to revive the sunset coal sector than in the promise of the fast developing renewable energy industries.

He was convinced reducing emissions would cost millions of jobs, ignoring the record of many countries like Germany that have de-coupled emissions growth from economic growth. He was miserly towards poor countries which are receiving only a fraction of what they were promised and what they need for climate mitigation and adaptation, while celebrating hundreds of billions of dollars worth of new deals for his armaments industry.

He complained that the US is asked to do more than others in the Paris agreement when in fact the US has the highest emissions per capita of any major country and its pledged rates of emissions reduction are significantly lower than Europe's. He saw the speck in everyone else's eyes while totally oblivious to the beam in his own.

Just as alarming as withdrawing from Paris is Trump’s comprehensive dismantling of Obama’s climate change policies and measures. This will make the US unable to meet the target it chose under the Paris agreement: a cut in emissions by 26-28 per cent by 2025 compared to the 2005 level. The gap between the US target (which is already unambitious compared to what the science requires and compared to the European Union) and the expected higher emissions levels influenced by Trump’s policies, will worsen the global shortfall in emission reduction.

What will now happen in the UN climate convention, home to the Paris agreement? The negotiations to establish the guidelines for countries to implement of the agreement will continue in the years ahead. A complication is that the US has to wait three years from November 2016 (when the agreement came into effect) before withdrawing from Paris and then wait another year for this to come into effect. The US will thus still be a member of the Paris agreement for the rest of Trump’s present term, although he announced he will not implement the Paris target that Obama had committed to. This defiance will likely have a depressing impact on other countries.

By also being still a member, the US could play a non-cooperative or disruptive role during the negotiations on many topics. We can anticipate that the US will challenge principles or actions that have already been accepted or that are to be transformed into actions, such as common but differentiated responsibilities to be operationalized in all areas; equal and balanced treatment for mitigation and adaptation; providing adequate financial resources for developing countries; transparency of actions and of finance; and technology transfer.

Since the Trump has already made clear the US wants to leave Paris, and no longer subscribes to its emissions pledges (nationally determined contributions) nor will it meet its US$3 billion pledge on the Green Climate Fund, it would be strange to enable the country to still behave in the negotiations with the same status as other members that remain committed to their pledges. How to deal with this issue is important so that the UNFCCC negotiations are not disrupted in the four years ahead.

Finally, the Trump portrayal of developing countries like India and China as profiting from the US membership of the Paris Agreement is truly unfair.

China is the number one emitter of carbon dioxide in absolute terms, with the US second and India third. But this is only because the two developing countries have huge populations of over a billion each.

In per capita terms, carbon dioxide emissions in 2015 were 16.1 tonnes for the US, 7.7 tonnes for China and 1.9 tonnes for India, according to one authoritative estimate. It would be unfair to ask China and India to have the same mitigation target as the US, especially since the US has had the benefit of using or over-using more than their fair share of cheap fossil-fuel energy for over a century more than the other two countries.

A recent New York Times editorial (22 May 2017) compared the recent performance of India and China with the recent actions of the US under President Trump. It states: “Until recently, China and India have been cast as obstacles…in the battle against climate change. That reputation looks very much out of date now that both countries have greatly accelerated their investments in cost-effective renewable energy sources - and reduced their reliance on fossil fuels. It's America - Donald Trump's America - that now looks like the laggard.”

It cites recent research that China and India should easily exceed their Paris agreement targets, with China’s emissions appearing to have peaked more than 10 years sooner (than pledged) and India expected to obtain 40% of its electricity from non-fossil fuel sources by 2022, eight years ahead of schedule. It criticises the Trump administration for destroying Obama’s initiatives based on his Paris pledge to reduce America’s greenhouse gases.

“China and India are finding that doing right by the planet need not carry a big economic cost and can actually be beneficial,” said the editorial. “By investing heavily in solar and wind, they and other countries like Germany have helped drive down the cost of those technologies where in many places renewable energy can generate electricity more cheaply than dirtier sources like coal.

“China has reduced coal use for three years in a row and recently scrapped plans to build more than 100 coal power plants. Indian officials have estimated that country might no longer need to build new coal plants beyond those already under construction….There are of course formidable challenges….Still, Beijing and New Delhi - not embarrassingly enough, Washington - are showing the way forward.”

By withdrawing from the Paris agreement and through his reversal of Obama’s climate change policies, President Trump has taken the US and the world many big steps backwards in the global fight against global warming. It will take some time for the rest of the world to figure out how to carry on the race without or despite the US. Hopefully the absence of the US will only be for a few years.

*Martin Khor is Executive Director of the South Centre, a think tank for developing countries, based in Geneva.
The Ogiek are one of the last groups of hunter gatherers in Kenya. Their ancestral land is in the Mau Forest in the Rift Valley of Kenya. For many years, the Kenyan government has threatened them with eviction, in the name of conservation. The African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights has however, ruled that the Ogiek have the right to live in the Mau Forest and that the government of Kenya was wrong to evict them.

Lucy Claridge is a human rights lawyer who works with the Minority Rights Group International. She was the lead lawyer for the Ogiek. She told the BBC World Service that,

“This is an extremely positive outcome. It sends a very clear message to the government of Kenya, but also to other governments in Africa, that they must respect the rights of their indigenous communities, and that includes their land rights.”

Daniel Kobei, Executive Director of Ogiek Peoples’ Development Programme, said in a statement,

“For the Ogiek, this is history in the making. The issue of Ogiek land rights has finally been heard and the case has empowered them to feel relevant. I know that the case also gives hope to other indigenous peoples: it has made the issues seem real.”

And in a statement, Claridge explains

Ogiek celebrating their victory

The Ogiek win huge land rights victory in Kenya

By Chris Lang
the significance of the ruling:

“Crucially the Court has recognised that the Ogiek - and therefore many other indigenous peoples in Africa - have a leading role to play as guardians of local ecosystems, and in conserving and protecting land and natural resources, including the Mau Forest.”

Minority Rights points out that this is the first time that the African Court has ruled on an indigenous peoples’ rights case, since it was set up in 2006. It is the largest case ever brought before the Court.

This is the first time that the Ogiek’s rights to their ancestral land have been recognised. The African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights is the highest human rights regional body, and Kenya is a party to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights. As Claridge explained to the BBC, this means that Kenya has to abide by the ruling.

Victory after eight years

In the judgement the African Court gave a timeline of the legal case:

- In October 2009, the Kenya Forest Service issued an eviction notice, that required the Ogiek and other settlers to leave the Mau Forest within thirty days.
- On 23 November 2009, the African Commission requested the Kenyan government to suspend the evictions.
- On 12 July 2012, following the lack of response from the Kenyan government, the African Commission referred the case to the African Court.
- At its 36th session, from 9 March to 27 March 2015, the African Court decided to propose to the Kenyan government and the Ogiek that “they engage in amicable settlement”. This attempt to settle the matter did not succeed.
- At its 40th session, from 29 February to 18 March 2016 the African Court decided to proceed with the case.

The Mau Forest Complex covers about 400,000 hectares. It was the largest area of forest in East Africa, but today large parts of it have been deforested. 35,000 Ogiek people are the claimants in this case. The Kenyan government argues that the Mau Forest is a water catchment and that the land belonged to the government.

The African Court stated that the Mau Forest is the Ogiek’s ancestral home, that the Ogiek rely on the forest for their livelihoods, religious and cultural life. The Court also stated that conservation of the forest was not a sufficient reason for evicting the Ogiek. It ruled that there was no evidence that the Ogiek had destroyed the forest, or that evictions of the Ogiek helped to protect the forests.

The African Court noted that the Mau Forest has been handed over to others, who are destroying the forest. In 2009, the New York Times reported that,

It was clear that timber companies are continuing to chew up large tracts of the Mau, knocking down giant trees and turning them into doors and plywood for export.

The African Court ruled that the Kenyan government violated seven articles of the African Charter.

Ogiek children - a future secured?


Women still trail behind men in all aspects of life, says UN

Women make 77 cents for every dollar men earn. Up to 90% of women workers are informally employed. Advancing women’s equality in total could bring a potential boost of US$28 trillion to global annual GDP by 2025 writes *Shanta Roy.*

The statistics unveiled at an annual meeting of women at the UN were disturbingly revealing: On a global average, women only make 77 cents for every dollar men earn.

There is still a “myriad of laws” in over 150 countries which openly discriminate against women, affecting more than three billion worldwide - and relating to virtually every aspect of women’s lives.

And more than half of all women workers around the world - and up to 90% in some countries - are informally employed, thereby losing out on equal pay and health and social security benefits.

An estimated 59% of women’s work in Latin America and the Caribbean takes place in the informal sector, with even higher levels among indigenous, Afro-descendants and young women.

The United Nations, which is currently struggling to resolve a widespread humanitarian crisis, also points out that half the world’s 224 million migrants and 19.6 million refugees are female.

Symbolic of the low priority given to gender issues, only 35 out of 193 member states have provided inputs to the UN, on the review theme, of how lessons from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are being reflected in their national processes and policies.

Still, advancing women’s equality in
have produced women Prime Ministers and Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka which rights, there has been limited progress, women’s rights and erosion of existing "bery," she told CSW delegates. UN Under-Secretary-General and Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka of South Africa, consistently less than men, complained 23%, means that women are clearly earning casm. "Women regard this as daylight rob- The global pay gap, at an average of equality? she asked, striking a note of sar- At another panel discussion on March 15, speaker after speaker lined out at the continued gender disparity worldwide which has reduced women - comprising half the world’s population - to “second class citizens”. “Women rights and opportunities are consistently neglected and even under threat - in all regions,” warned UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed of Nigeria, the second highest ranking official at the United Nations. “Just look around at who are sitting in governments and boardrooms. Do you see equality? she asked, striking a note of sarcasm. The global pay gap, at an average of 23%, means that women are clearly earning consistently less than men, complained Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka of South Africa, UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women. “Women regard this as daylight robbery,” she told CSW delegates. But despite the widespread denial of women’s rights and erosion of existing rights, there has been limited progress, largely in Asian countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka which have produced women Prime Ministers and total, could bring a potential boost of $28 trillion to global annual gross domestic product (GDP) by 2025, according to the United Nations.

Addressing the annual meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in March, speaker after speaker lashed out at the continued gender disparity worldwide which has reduced women - comprising half the world’s population - to “second class citizens”.

“Women rights and opportunities are consistently neglected and even under threat - in all regions,” warned UN Under-Secretary-General Amina Mohammed of Nigeria, the second highest ranking official at the United Nations.

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“Women regard this as daylight robbery,” she told CSW delegates.

But despite the widespread denial of women’s rights and erosion of existing rights, there has been limited progress, largely in Asian countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka which have produced women Prime Ministers and Presidents, long before the Western world.

At a panel discussion hosted by Sri Lanka on March 15, the country that produced the world’s first woman Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike, the Minister for Women & Child Affairs Chandrani Bandara Jayasingha pointed out her country was empowering women in the social, economic and political fields through progressive law reform and by formulating gender responsive policies and action plans addressing the needs of the communities.

The minister said eradicating rural poverty is a major concern of the government, and the year 2017 has been declared as the year of poverty alleviation.

In addition to the regular credit schemes of the government and the banks, the government has introduced several credit schemes to obtain easy credit for entrepreneur development.

A recent initiative by her Ministry is a policy directive issued by the Treasury for allocating a minimum of 25% of the annual investment for economic development of rural women.

At another panel discussion on March 16, titled ‘Ending Violence against Women: Prevention and response in the world of work,’ Manuela Tomei, Director of the International Labour Organisation’s (ILO) Working Conditions and Equality Department, said that violence against women is a violation of human rights, a threat to women’s security and health, and a threat to women’s empowerment.

She said that a survey conducted by ILO and Gallup found that one of the top three challenges women find in workplace is “abuse and harassment”.

The world of work goes beyond the physical workplace to include commute, social events and home, she said, stressing the importance of addressing the issue through an integrated approach that includes prevention, protection and assistance to victims.

Meanwhile, the number of women in executive government and in parliament worldwide has stagnated, with only marginal improvements since 2015, according to the data presented in the Women in Politics 2017 Map released on March 15 by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and UN Women.

The map shows a slight drop in the number of countries with a woman Head of State and/or Head of Government from 2015 figures (from 19 to 17).

However, the data reveals a significant increase in the number of countries with a woman Head of State and/or Head of Government since the IPU-UN Women Map’s first edition in 2005 (from 8 to 17).

But progress in the number of women Members of Parliament worldwide continues to be slow. IPU data shows that the global average of women in national parliaments increased just slightly from 22.6% in 2015 to 23.3% in 2016.

Women Speakers of Parliament have, however, significantly increased in number, now at an all-time high of 19.1%, but obviously still far from gender balance.

“These developments show that progress in gender equality remains slow in all structures of power and types of decision-making.”

“Power is still firmly in men’s hands, and although we have witnessed some positive trends - for example, the current record number of 53 women Speakers of Parliament out of 273 posts, globally - much remains to be done if women are to play on a level field with men,” said IPU Secretary-General Martin Chungong.

*Shanta Roy writes for the IDN. This article is culled from Third World Network Features.
On July 3-4 the African Union held its 29th annual Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, while the continent is faced with monumental challenges from Cairo to Cape Town.

Held under the theme of "Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investment in Youth", the gathering recognized the necessity of economic and social development to ensure a prosperous and sustainable future for Africa. A recent decline in commodity prices impacting the raw materials, energy and agricultural producing states illustrates the need to plan for an independent strategy of guaranteeing the health and well being of over one billion people.

The two leading economic countries on the continent, South Africa and Nigeria, are both in recession. Unemployment is growing and the national currencies of these states have fallen into precipitous decline. Bond rating agencies based in the United States are issuing reports that question the capacity of the ruling parties of each nation to engineer remedies that will make them more creditworthy to international finance capital.

South Africa and Nigeria encompass growing youth populations placing social and political pressure on their governments to address the need for employment opportunities. But the dependence upon foreign markets for the export of natural resources and cash crops systematically undermines strategic planning within the present world economic order, writes *Abayomi Azikiwe.*
and political pressure on their governments to address the need for accessible employment opportunities for all. Nonetheless, the dependence upon foreign markets for the export of natural resources and cash crops systematically undermines strategic planning within the present world division of labor and economic power.

Just three years ago western financial publications were hailing what they described as phenomenal growth in many African nations. Nigeria was proclaimed to have surpassed South Africa as the leading powerhouse of the region. Countries such as Angola, Algeria, Gabon, Nigeria and Ghana experienced an influx of foreign direct investment largely due to the rising oil and natural gas prices. However, by 2015 the prices of oil, natural gas and other resources had declined by over 60 percent.

These factors compounded the social and political instability brought about by U.S. and NATO wars against the governments in Libya and Ivory Coast, which resulted in the collapse of these societies fueling migration from Africa across the Mediterranean and into Southern, Central and Eastern Europe.

Similar western interventions in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan and the unresolved question of Palestine’s independence, have worsened the crisis of displacement. United Nations agencies have reported that the situation of dislocated persons domestically, as well as refugees and migrants, with estimates numbering 65-75 million people, easily surpasses any period since the conclusion of World War II.

In his opening address, AU Chairperson President Alpha Conde of Guinea noted that: “Aware of the importance of human capital, the AU has decided to harness the African youth, to find ways and means of developing the youth which constitute 70 percent of the total population. The holistic management of the challenges faced by the youth call on us to find alternatives to build economies that are resilient and capable of ensuring the space for the youth in our continent.” (Zimbabwe Chronicle, July 4)

If these issues are not the focus of AU policy the future painted by Conde would not be a desirable one. A region so rich in minerals and land could further deteriorate, making conditions unlivable to even larger numbers of people across the continent.

Conde went on to emphasize that: “It is imperative on us African leaders that if we don’t invest in the youth, we would have failed our duty and compromised dangerously the future of our youth. We would have condemned them to unemployment and immigration to become parasites and beggars.”

These observations are poignant in light of the hostility that African migrants are met with in Europe and the U.S. The migration issue is being utilized by the ultraright wing neo-fascist groups and political parties as a wedge to win political power and advance policies which reinforce racism and national discrimination against people from the former colonial territories of Africa, the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific.

Although the AU mandated at its conception in 2002 the full integration of women within the governing structures of national and regional centers of power there is still considerable work to be done in this arena. In some countries women are represented in significant numbers within cabinet and parliamentary bodies, the civil service and professional fields. However, the onus of the declining economic situation, foreign intervention and internecine conflict falls upon the backs of women and youth.

The 19th Ordinary General Assembly of First Ladies of Africa (OAFILA) took place simultaneously with the overall AU Summit. Ms. Amira El Fadil Mohamed, the Commissioner for Social Affairs of the AU Commission, stressed that there is a pressing need for a systematic and integrated strategy aimed at tackling all four areas of the thematic demographic dividend pillars. These areas include health and wellbeing; employment and entrepreneurship; education and skills development and rights and good governance. Without adequate progress in all four areas there cannot be long lasting growth, social stability and genuine development.

According to a press release issued by OAFILA on July 4: “Sustainable and affordable access to maternal and child health care, HIV testing and counselling and immunization services, according to the Commissioner of Social Affairs, will ultimately result in young people meaningfully contributing to the socio-economic development of their society, thereby enabling them to make the right informed decisions about their health.”

Ms. Mohamed said of the challenge that: “The youth of our continent need to be guaranteed social and economic develop-

Late Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi
opment if they are to contribute to their nations' and continents' economic development."

Mrs. Roman Tesfaye emphasized: "It is high time that African nations put in place favorable policies and increase youth targeted investments. We need to lift and break the barriers faced by African youth in accessing and utilizing reproductive health information and services."

Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe followed through on a previous commitment when he served as AU Chairperson. Mugabe presented a check for $1 million to the AU Foundation saying it was a "modest contribution" aimed at breaking the cycle of donor dependency. Zimbabwe and other anti-imperialist states had criticized the AU's readmission of the Kingdom of Morocco earlier this year absent of the resolution of the Western Sahara question. Now both the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) and their occupiers in Rabat are members of the continental organization.

Morocco has carried out a diplomatic offensive among the AU member-states. Its offers of economic assistance have swayed numerous governments to agree on a compromised position on the inherent anti-colonial mission of the organization.

In the aftermath of the 29th Summit, the Minister of Foreign Affairs for the SADR, Mohamed Salem Ould Essalek, said that the AU would deploy a taskforce to explore solutions to the Western Sahara crisis. The UN has gone on record calling for an internationally supervised referendum on the future of the SADR.

Nevertheless, Morocco continues to object to a plebiscite claiming that the Western Sahara is an integral part of the Kingdom. During the early 1980s, the SADR was admitted as a full member of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the predecessor to the AU. These decisions prompted the withdrawal of Morocco from the OAU/AU which lasted over three decades.

Essalek highlighted the decision of the AU Summit during the press conference in Algiers saying: "The AU will not accept the continuation of the conflict between the two states since Morocco has signed and adopted its constitutional charter whose articles 3 and 4 stipulate the imperative respect of the borders established at independence and peaceful dialogue between member countries."

He went on to say the AU Summit had: "Defeated the plan of the Morocco occupier attempting to repeal AU’s traditional decisions on the Saharawi cause."

Essalek claimed the decisions in Addis Ababa: "reiterates and reinforces the positions of the AU after the accession of Morocco, a decision that frustrates Morocco. This is the first time the AU has taken such a decision since 1991."

It will remain to be seen how vigorous the approach of the AU will be in regard to winning national liberation for the SADR. The resolution of this conflict and other border issues is essential in building the necessary political trust that can move the continent towards full social and economic integration.

Only a collective approach to genuine independence and sovereignty will lay the foundation for the realization of a functioning Pan-Africanism. Moreover, the AU member-states must transform their governing structures into truly representative institutions with the mandate of the workers, farmers and youth that can effectively break with the world capitalist system and move toward socialist reconstruction.

* Abayomi Azikiwe is Editor, Pan-African News Wire.
he shouts can be heard from a distance as one approaches Domboshawa, 30 kilometres northeast of the Zimbabwean capital, Harare.

Tokupai madomasi! Tokupai mbambaira! Do you want tomatoes or sweet potatoes? Muney marii? How much do you have?

Scores of women and children carrying bundles of vegetables, sacks of sweet potatoes and containers full of farming produce shout above the din of moving vehicles, trying to sell their produce for a meagre profit. Tsitsi Machingauta, 32, has a two-hectare farm in the area. She decries the numerous problems faced by smallholder farmers, which range from produce rotting in the fields due to the heavy downpours the country experienced this year, to a poor road network that restricts their access to markets.

“Even when supermarket chains come to buy our produce, they pay very little because we do not have the bargaining power. Because of the poor returns, we struggle to make a living, let alone to send our children to school,” Machingauta told IPS.

Machingauta, who is the founder and director of Women’s Farming Syndicate, an organization that supports women small-holder farmers in Domboshaw), explains how the lack of skills to make use of technology and limited time for training for women - compounded by climate change - has worsened the plight of women in the area.

According to the Government of Women’s Affairs, Gender and Community Development (MWAGCD), in Zimbabwe, women make up 70 percent of the rural population and 86 percent of women are involved in farming. Of the smallholder farmers who benefited from the government’s land reform program, only 18 percent are female; for commercial land, women constitute just 12 percent.

A study by the Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce (2016) on Women Agribusiness Entrepreneurs revealed that fewer women smallholder farmers meet the banking sector’s stringent borrowing requirements, and women are more likely to operate informally.

According to the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) report on Small Holders and Family Farmers, if women farmers had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20-30 percent, lifting 100-150 million people out of hunger.

Ali Said Yesuf, FAO Chief Technical Advisor, told IPS that in an effort to address these challenges, the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID) funded 72 million dollars to implement the Livelihood and Food Security Program (LFSP) to increase agricultural productivity and incomes, improve food and nutrition security, and reduce poverty in rural Zimbabwe.

“LFSP will actively address the specific constraints that smallholder farmers, particularly women, face in raising the productivity of their farms and participating in markets,” says Yesuf. The project covers eight districts in Zimbabwe.

The interventions take into account time constraints, which are as a result of women’s numerous domestic responsibilities. The LFSP promotes labour-saving technologies such as mechanised conservation agriculture, mechanised groundnut shellers, mechanised water abstraction technologies and more efficient wood stoves.

Yesuf said extension services and trainings have been carried out close to homes to avoid disruptions of women’s routines.

“Value chains such as poultry - broilers and indigenous chickens - and groundnuts that are perceived to be dominated by women are also given preference. This allows women to have some control over incomes that are derived,” Yesuf told IPS.

The LFSP has employed the Gender Action Learning Systems (GALS) approach which provides safe spaces for communities to integrate decision-making and power relations.

“Through this, households and communities have been engaged to promote non-oppressive practices, recognising the importance of role sharing,” Yesuf told IPS. As women are known for good saving practices, the LFSP has enhanced and built on such initiatives through the Internal Savings and Lending (ISALs) through training and capacity development and introduction of income-generating activities.

Women in the Midlands Province have transformed their lives through the Extension and Training for Rural Agriculture (EXTRA) project, a three-year project under LFSP. Vavariro ISALs in the Midlands Province is one such group whose members’ lives have been transformed.

“We started by contributing small amounts of money - as little as three dollars per person,” said Virginia Gomana, a Vavariro group member.

“Now we have ventured into big projects that we never thought we could do, such as goat rearing and market gardening, and this has enabled us to own our own homes. Vavariro has also become a platform where we are able exchange ideas, strengthen our skills,” she said.

Yesuf said that financial institutions have also been tapped to better support the needs of these women.

“Women are accessing loans from Micro-Finance Institutions (MFI) through the group methodology where there is group collateral and guarantorship,” he said.

*Sally Nyakanyanga wrote this for the IPS from Harare.
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“At its heart, the crisis in the [occupied Palestinian territories] is one of a lack of protection for Palestinian civilians - from violence, from displacement, from restrictions on access to services and livelihoods, and from other rights violations - with a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable, children in particular,” OCHA head David Carden said.

That crisis is particularly acute right now in the Gaza Strip, where a lack of electricity, on top of a 10-year Israeli blockade and successive military assaults, has brought the territory to the brink of collapse.

Demolition surge

Palestinians saw in 2016 the highest number of Israeli demolitions of homes and other structures since the UN began keeping records in 2009.

The number of donor-funded structures demolished was also unprecedented, nearly tripling from the previous year.
A total of 1,601 people were displaced due to all demolitions, about half of them children.

The majority lost their homes on the pretext that they were constructed without building permits from Israeli occupation authorities that are next to impossible for Palestinians to obtain.

But 156 people were made homeless by punitive demolitions or sealing.

In 2014, Israel resumed the practice of collectively punishing the entire family of a person accused of an attack against Israelis, a policy it has accelerated since then.

Israel's policy of revenge against family members of accused persons is reserved exclusively for Palestinians and is never used against Jewish settlers in the West Bank.

Israel's demolitions create "a coercive environment" leading to forced displacement and "forcible transfer," the UN states.

Thousands of families still displaced

Meanwhile, reconstruction in Gaza continues to face major impediments.

By the end of 2016, only 22% of homes destroyed during Israel's 2014 military assault that left more than 2,200 Palestinians dead had been rebuilt.

Nine thousand families - more than 47,000 people - remain displaced.

The UN says the quantity of cement allowed into Gaza is far short of the need, resulting in the ongoing suffering of these families.

Palestinians and international law experts have previously accused UN agencies of complicity in Israel's illegal blockade, by participating in the so-called Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism, through which Israel severely restricts the import of construction supplies.

Israel is also increasingly denying Palestinian employees with the UN and other aid organizations permission to enter Gaza. Almost a third of applicants were denied in 2016, up from just 4% the year before.

Impunity

Palestinian fatalities in Gaza and the West Bank did decline in 2016. In the West Bank, 99 Palestinians were killed, the UN says, a third of them children. Thirty-six Palestinians were killed in the Hebron area and 26 in Jerusalem.

But the UN does not attribute this drop to any positive change in behavior by Israel, noting "concerns" that Israeli forces are still responsible for extrajudicial executions when Palestinians posed no threat.

"While the trends vary from one year to the next, the pervasive lack of protection and accountability for violations of international law remains," OCHA's Carden said.

The report also notes that Israeli authorities have failed to take any steps towards accountability for civilian deaths in Gaza three years on from the 2014 offensive: "Impunity denies victims and survivors the justice and redress they deserve, and prevents the deterrence of future violations."

Earlier this year a report from another UN agency found "beyond a reasonable doubt" that Israel has imposed a system on the entire Palestinian people that meets the legal definition of apartheid - one of the major crimes listed in the founding statute of the International Criminal Court.

That report called for effective measures to compel Israel to respect Palestinian rights, including support for boycott, divestment and sanctions. Instead, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres quickly withdrew the report under pressure from the United States.

As the occupation enters its 51st year, there's little sign that any governments - or the UN itself - take seriously their own obligations to end their complicity in Israel's violations and begin to hold it accountable.

"Charlotte Silver is an independent journalist and regular writer for The Electronic Intifada. She is based in Oakland, California and has reported from Palestine since 2010. The article is from Third World Network Features."
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