

GREENPEACE
AFRICA



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NEWSLETTER

Volunteer Edition 2019

une chance aux forêts
du bassin du Congo

Converted to the Cause

By Andoh Ashu Rex

Congo Basin Mobilisation Officer, Andoh Ashu Rex, reflects on the moment he realised he was on the wrong team and decided to make it right.



“ I had been working for the enemy. ”

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Standing with the Indigenous People of The Congo Basin

The land grabbing activities of multinational companies like Sudcam in the South of Cameroon have led the total destruction of thousands of hectares of forest in the Congo Basin.

Last year, Greenpeace Africa launched an awareness campaign calling on Sudcam to engage in a conflict resolution process with local and indigenous communities and stop deforestation.

Sudcam has cleared over 10 000ha of forest for a rubber plantation and some local communities and indigenous communities in the South region have been displaced and are yet to see adequate compensation for their land.

There has also been irresponsible acquisition and management of land for growing natural rubber and non-respect of customary land tenure rights and compromising local food supplies for local and indigenous communities.

 **Cameroonian Volunteer Facebook Page**

Cameroon - facebook.com/environmentalambassadorsofcameroon



As leadership author, Jim Collins rightly said; “Get the right people on the bus and in the right seat.”

I started my Greenpeace Africa journey on the other side of the fence. After two years of unemployment and another two years of landing very low-paying jobs, I finally got the chance to work at a well-known American multinational, Herakles Farm. I was finally going to be able to put my university degree to work.

Herakles Farm was in the palm oil and timber business and, naturally, found itself at the centre of Greenpeace’s crusade on exploitative industries in the Congo Basin – since these industries are responsible for the destruction of the fourth largest carbon reservoir in the world. Back then, we saw Greenpeace as the villain.

In 2014, I resigned from my job at Herakles Farm and decided to go back to school to study my Masters in Natural Resource Management, due to the heavy sanctions they were under as a result of the multitude of environmental violations they had committed. Greenpeace Africa had spearheaded these sanctions.

But, instead of feeling despondent or resentful, I was intrigued by how a small group of people was able to take on an economic giant with such conviction.

It inspired me to apply for the Greenpeace Africa volunteer programme in 2015, and I got accepted.

After my induction, I became a convert. I got on the right bus and certainly chose the right seat. I understood the importance of what this organisation was doing and the amount of change they had wrought. I saw what the organisation was trying to do to protect the environment for local communities.

I finally acknowledged who the real villains were, and how they pretend to be heroes with false offerings of “riches”, when all they want is to exploit us and our birthright. I had been working for the enemy.

I have since become the Greenpeace Africa Mobilisation Officer in Cameroon. I work closely with local communities to ensure that they understand why it is so important to stand up for the environment. I help them understand that it is the only way we will ever win.

I am happy to say that, like me, many more people have hopped onto the right bus. Our volunteer base keeps expanding more and more each year. I am very proud to be spearheading an environmental movement right here in my home country. It fills me with so much joy to see so many young and old people becoming so passionate for the right cause.

As Greenpeace Africa celebrates its 10-year anniversary, all I can say is we will continue fighting and winning, for the sake of our environment. We may have come a long way in this battle, but we still have a very long way to go. ●

Bravery Behind Bars

By Kaly Ba

Senegalese volunteer and activist, Kaly Ba, writes about how authorities locked him up for twelve hours for peacefully protesting in Dakar.





© Greenpeace / Clément Tardif, Protest at ANAM against Tonnage Fraud in Dakar, Senegal, -Jul, 2018.

As we sat in the cell, we were trying to make the situation as normal as possible – however, the team back at the Greenpeace Africa office were very stressed and concerned about what was going on. The officers on duty kept saying that they understood that we were standing up for the greater good, but that they had no choice but to arrest us.

We were detained for half a day for standing still in front of a building holding banners in protest.

I have been a volunteer and activist for Greenpeace Africa since 2016. Before joining Greenpeace, I was a member of the organisation called Civil Forum that fought against corruption in Senegal. I then joined a very popular civil society movement called Y'en a Marre (Fed Up). This movement of citizens, journalists and musicians had inspired other initiatives for the respect of the constitution and the preservation of democracy.

For two years, we organised demonstrations, petitions, boycott campaigns and non-violent direct actions. We sensitised young people in many

areas in Senegal about the need for a voter registration card and to vote. I was the coordinator of the movement in my area for two years and was responsible for gathering, coordinating, directing and executing protests.

When I joined Greenpeace Africa as a volunteer, I immediately wanted to become an activist. I was drawn to the organisation because of the French activists who infiltrated the Fessenheime Nuclear Power Station, and I was hungry for action!

I lobbied for us out on the streets, and I had made a lot of proposals in that direction. So, when the office informed me that one such protest was on the cards, I naturally jumped at the opportunity to be part of it - front and centre.

After several meetings, some activists tried to delay the demonstration because they were just afraid to participate in it - I don't blame them, the risks were real. But several more meetings later, we decided to carry out the action. On the 18th of July 2018, the Greenpeace activists based in Dakar, would conduct our first direct non-violent action.

That morning we took to the headquarters of the National Agency Maritime Affairs to demand investigations on their publication, and tonnage fraud of fishing vessels. We sieged the entrance of the building where the agency is based with very explicit banners about our demands.

Even in light of the abuse the security guards inflicted on us, we stood our ground, good and solid. After their futile attempts to scare us into leaving, they eventually called the police, who handcuffed us and took us to the police station where they kept us in a cell. We did not feel alone; activists, volunteers and staff were outside for the entire time that we were locked up. ●

The “Arctic 30”

In 2017, an international tribunal awarded the Netherlands €5.395.561,61 plus interest in damages over the high-profile Greenpeace ‘Arctic 30’ dispute with Russia, concluding proceedings which resoundingly reaffirm the right to peaceful protest at sea.

The award followed a lengthy legal battle dating back to the unlawful boarding, seizing and detention of the Greenpeace ship, Arctic Sunrise, following a peaceful protest in international waters in September 2013.

The 30 men and women on board, known as the ‘Arctic 30’, spent two months in prison – first in the Arctic city of Murmansk and later in St. Petersburg – before being released on bail and finally freed altogether by an amnesty adopted by the Russian Duma.

The Arctic Sunrise itself was returned to Greenpeace after nine months at the port in Murmansk, having suffered considerable damage during the arrest and subsequent detention inside the Arctic Circle. Inflatable boats and other equipment had also sustained serious damage.

f Senegalese Volunteer Facebook Page

Senegal - facebook.com/
GreenpeaceJambarSenegal

Pollution by The Bottle

By Janet Chemitei

Greenpeace Africa volunteer and current Miss Environment Kenya, chats about the country's dependency on the (plastic) bottle.



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“As a young child, I remember being baptised in a river, very clean and fresh with nothing to worry about. Right now, I cannot even imagine dipping my feet in the water. So much has changed since then; plastic pollution is rife.”

Top 10 Contributors to Plastic Pollution

The equivalent of one truckload of plastic enters the ocean every minute — but where is it all coming from? Up until recently, we weren't sure. But to solve the plastic pollution crisis, we knew we needed to arm ourselves with the best information possible.

So, together with our partners in the #BreakFreeFromPlastic movement, we enlisted the help of 10,000 volunteers across 42 countries to embark on the world's most ambitious plastic clean-up and brand audit project yet.

We now have the most comprehensive snapshot to date of how corporations are contributing to the global plastic pollution problem.

The Top 10 are:

1. **Coca-Cola**
2. **PepsiCo**
3. **Nestlé**
4. **Danone**
5. **Mondelez International**
6. **Procter & Gamble**
7. **Unilever**
8. **Perfetti van Melle**
9. **Mars Incorporated**
10. **Colgate-Palmolive**

Coca-Cola came out top in the African audits and plastic bottles seemed to be the biggest contributor to plastic pollution on the continent.



On 28 August 2017, environmentalists felt happy with their progress and achievement – the entire population however, zero enthusiasm. The plastic ban was supposed to work and save our environment from the agony and ugly menace that plastics come with.

As a young child, I remember being baptised in a river, very clean and fresh with nothing to worry about. Right now, I cannot even imagine dipping my feet in the water. So much has changed since then; plastic pollution is rife.

Despite the ban, plastics continue being a huge part of our lives; packaging, bottling, you name it all! And while there is a slight reduction in the number of plastic bags that find their way into rivers, single-use plastic bottles have been quite the accessory of water bodies, drainage systems and landfills. They are disposed of and left laying down begging for attention; yet the only action they might get is being kicked when it comes across someone's way.

Nairobi for instance, (and I have been here for almost four years now) which you

might think would be the embodiment of cleanliness as the capital city, is not even close.

The governor of Nairobi introduced a monthly clean-up exercise which only worked well on that day and a few days afterwards, simply because the spirit of a cleaner and healthier environment seems to be exclusively locked within our boundaries, our homes and our workplaces.

Matatu (minibus) passengers and drivers carelessly throwing emptied bottles of water, fruit juices and soda are a common occurrence – even though the public vehicles already have dustbins hanging or placed somewhere in them.

As I go to class every day, I always come across used bottles in a ditch or drainage filled with stagnant water, just floating and looking uglier by the day. As long as it is not at any business owner's door, it is left to be. How long are we going to depend on others to do what all of us should be doing without being directed to do so?

Greenpeace Africa volunteers are keen to change the mindset of plastic dependency.

For a while now we have been conducting plastic surveys and audits, so we get to know and understand everyone's story in a bid to find an easy and effective way of curbing the growing single-use and disposal of plastic epidemic.

We engage both men and women from universities to the women who sell groceries to us in markets. In Githurai for example, we have been able to reach out to a number of vendors, enabling us to find an effective approach to curb single-use plastic.

It is for our own benefit that we practice reducing, reusing and recycling, as tough as that may sound. We need to adopt sustainable practices that result in less pollution. After all, we all share the same Earth. ●

**f Kenyan Volunteer
Facebook Page**

Kenya - facebook.com/
greenpeacekenya





Taking the First Step

By Felly Shab Momi

Our first ever volunteer in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Felly Shab Momi, talks about how they started the volunteer group in his country.



“ That’s when my new adventure started. ”



I wanted Greenpeace Africa to be involved in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) because it was a better way to teach people about environmental issues in our country, precisely on forest illegalities, and to help mobilise them to fight together so that we can have a sustainable solution.

I wanted Greenpeace to help people act like ecologic citizens whenever and wherever.

One day, when I was a student, one of my friends invited me to a meeting hosted by their students' club, named Biogenese; and unexpectedly, for the first time, met members of Greenpeace Africa Congo Basin Forest who were the guest speakers at the event.

It was also my first time hearing about Greenpeace. I immediately knew that this was the organisation that could really make a difference. Even though Greenpeace Africa was working with Biogenese club as a partner, it wasn't enough. They needed to create their own volunteer base, with a diversity of people from all walks of life, instead of remaining a Biogenese partner restricted to students.

We had given our details to Greenpeace staff, looking forward to additional information, hinting that we really needed the organisation to be more present in the DRC. And after several days, we were surprised to receive an invitation email to become Greenpeace Africa volunteers. I responded ecstatically.

That's when my new adventure started.

As a Greenpeace volunteer, I am supporting their campaign in my country, since deforestation occurs in the Congo Basin at an alarming rate. We also identify other environmental issues and try to find suitable solutions with the assistance of the organisation. The biggest part of our work, is mobilising people with outdoor activities, and urging them to sign petitions and be counted.

Through my interactions with community members, I realised that most of the Congolese people don't have environmental knowledge, but it brings me a lot of joy to share my skills with others and to put my skills into practice.



We try to lead by example, by acting like ecologic citizens and Greenpeace environmental activists in our homes, families, universities through speaking about our work to the media. Our passion is to serve as Greenpeace Africa volunteers who inspire young people to become environmental activists. ●

 **DRC Volunteer Facebook Page**

DRC - facebook.com/GreenpeaceVolunteers-DRC

Crossing Borders with VUMA.EARTH

Greenpeace Africa has recently launched VUMA.EARTH - an online campaign platform for ordinary citizens to run environmental petitions.

VUMA.EARTH means "to be in agreement" in Southern African Nguni languages and "to spread [news] like wildfire" in Swahili. VUMA encapsulates both concepts of "Awareness" and "Consensus" in both regionally prominent languages.

The platform seeks to grow an environmental movement and give a voice to millions of Africans across the continent, transcending borders and environmental issues. The tool provides a space for Africans to start campaigns that address issues pertaining to the environment that affects their local communities.

VUMA.EARTH is a full-on campaign management tool that allows users to set up petitions, easily communicate with supporters and set up offline events. A particularly useful function of the platform, within the rural African context, is the ability to capture signatures offline for later use.

VUMA EARTH



A Nation in (Water) Crisis

By Shannon Van Vuuren

*South African volunteer,
Shannon Van Vuuren,
recounts how life changed in
Cape Town during one of the
country's worst droughts*



“ Nothing else matters when the rain stops, and all the fear and uncertainty around the time was just a taste of that. ”



© Greenpeace / Kevin Sawyer, © Greenpeace / Kevin Sawyer, Locals Collect Water at Brewery Spring in Newlands Cape Town, RSA, Feb, 2018, Cape Town, RSA, Feb, 2018.

A woman residing in a small flat, working five days a week in an office, who dropped her tie-dying hobby, amidst the Water Crisis doesn't make for an interesting read.

I've been passionate about various environmental issues since a young age, and water consumption made that list prior to the drought. However, seeing how most friends, colleagues, strangers and even businesses were doing their bit to reduce their water consumption really surprised me – but not as much as how drastically things changed!

Besides YouTube-inspired homemade water saving contraptions (which all help by the way) – buckets became an addition to the local “flora” found in most homes. Friends visiting from Johannesburg had to get used to showering with a bucket and using the same bucket when needing to flush away their “number 2”.

The “if it's yellow let it mellow” policy was introduced in most public toilet facilities that I came across including restaurants – and,

as a little bit of a *germaphobe*, this was an adjustment to usually finding a freshly flushed public loo for my sanitation needs.

Another realisation was how pressure reduction could make such a big difference. It was fantastic to see innovative tap fittings (aerators) being installed in various facilities. After having used one, I really just cannot bear it when anyone fully opens a tap when washing his or her hands.

Cape Town residents started collecting their own free spring water that runs down the slopes of the mountain. This then later resulted in awareness (to most residents' horror) that most spring and/or storm water actually runs out to sea!

Awareness grew and people also started to become aware of just how they were indirectly impacting water consumption by eating excessive meat or buying excessive clothes to name only two examples. (Whether most residents cared or thought they could do anything about this, is another story).

Any ignorance around this was soon met with a price hike in food, as the agricultural sector was affected by the government's water restrictions. A few friends who grew vegetables had to give up on their gardens as water restrictions intensified and they had to bear the burn on their pockets.

Many individuals and companies took advantage of the crisis, loading their vans with lots of water bottles filled with spring water to sell, and well-known retail stores were selling massive quantities of bottled water for “4 for the price of 3” to fearful residents.

Landscapes became dry and deserted. Plant and animal numbers declined – and the impact on other species was also apparent. Beekeepers had no honey to harvest from their beehives because there were little to no flowers for bees to get nectar from.

The only real silver lining was having the perfect excuse for not washing my car or when someone caught me wearing the same clothes the next day. Nothing else matters when the rain stops, and all the fear and uncertainty around the time was just a taste of that. ●

The People Vs Mega Water Users

While the people in South Africa struggle with very complex water issues, mega water users like coal mines, Eskom and others have access to high-quality water.

An estimated two-thirds of South Africa's water goes towards irrigation for agriculture, which creates an important land-water connection that should not be ignored. However, single water users can also use mind-boggling amounts of water.

Protests were recently held at Coca Cola offices against their water-intensive production processes and Eskom has the dubious honour of using 10 000 litres of water per second.

Eskom is also the only strategic water user listed in the National Water Act, which means that the utility would get access to water above every other user, even in the case of a catastrophic drought or ‘Day Zero’ scenario.

In countries where water supplies are fast depleting, like South Africa and Kenya, coal-powered energy is no longer an option. Renewable energy is the only choice.



**RSA Volunteer
Facebook Pages**

Cape Town - facebook.com/greenpeacelocalgroupcapetown
Durban - facebook.com/greenpeacelocalgroupdurban
Johannesburg - facebook.com/GreenpeaceVolunteerNetworkJohannesburgSouthAfrica



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So whether you want to talk on the phone about how you are making a difference, or want to share your thoughts on Twitter, you can!



Log on to our website to get the latest news, read blogs and campaign updates – as well as information about petitions, events, volunteering and fundraising.
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10 years, 10 000 thank-yous.



Thanks to our activists, Greenpeace Africa has reached a 10-year milestone in defending the African environment. You too have the power to help us expose environmental threats and lobby to protect our home. Simply donate online at africadonate.greenpeace.org

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SCAN
ME!

