

# Sorgearbeit im Zentrum der Wirtschaft

## Extractivism, climate crisis and ecofeminist development alternatives in Africa

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*WoMin, launched in October 2013, is an African ecofeminist alliance which works in alliance to make visible and publicise the impacts of extractives on peasant and working-class women; to support women's organising, movement-building and solidarity; and to advance, in alliance with numerous others, an African post-extractivist, ecologically just, women-centred alternative to the dominant destructive model of development.*

The world's elite accumulates its wealth through a destructive economic system that has led to an unfolding ecological and climate crisis in Africa and elsewhere in the world. The extractives sector and the global elite through the exploitation of productive and reproductive labour of peasant and working class people, and through the downward raiding of natural resources upon which the majority of Africa's people survive. The extractives sector in its widest definition includes mining, oil and gas extraction, dirty energy (including large dams and other large-scale renewable energy projects), industrial agriculture, fisheries and forests and mega infrastructure projects. Social reproduction refers to the many

activities and processes which occur within and outside of households and which are necessary to reproduce people and their labour power (especially of the working class) on an ongoing basis. Access to such resources is guaranteed by the **power of elites** to shape and implement law and policy in their interests and is regulated and controlled through processes of **militarisation and securitisation**.

Despite laws, policy frameworks and human rights provisions for the right of communities to Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC), which includes the right to say no, there is often inadequate provision for the exercise of community consent, and when communities express their right to say no, **they confront violence as well as criminalisation** by the state and other elites.

*Violence is deeply embedded in an extractivist patriarchal logic. Extractivism destroys ecosystems, the livelihoods, lives, health and well-being of affected communities, harshly exploits the cheap labour of African men and the unpaid labour of African women and is deeply implicated in climate catastrophe.*

Across the continent, WoMin has recorded the **rape and gang rape of women by the military, police, private security and forest wardens** in and around extractives sites. As a response, we have worked with allies to undertake analysis of the political economy of violence and extractivism, support women's organising and trauma relief, document women's stories in ways that respect and protect them, and we will in the coming period work with women to take up their cases through campaigns and legal action where they choose this.

African economies remain largely reliant on natural resource extraction

and raw material exports to the detriment of other economic sectors. The raw material commodity markets are notoriously unstable and prone to deep corruption, as evidenced in well-established patterns of illicit financial outflows (money that is illegally earned, transferred or used) from African economies. The scale of looting is well captured in the results of the High Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa which reported in February 2015 that Africa was losing more than \$50 billion every year to illicit financial flows (IFFs). According to the AU-UN report, **Africa lost approximately \$850 billion in illicit financial outflows between 1970 and 2008.**

Despite, and in spite of, the unfolding ecological and climate crisis, rich governments and global institutions, such as the OECD, operate under a 'business as usual' growth-obsessed development paradigm which hinges on increased minerals extraction, which will create even more devastation. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development Countries (OECD) projects a **tripling of GDP in its 36 member countries by 2060**, and associated upscaled demands of resource extraction – minerals, metals, fossil fuels and biomass. This quantifies to a growth in the total mass of extracted resources from 79 to 167 billion tonnes per annum (a 111% increase) between 2011 and 2060. The global energy transition may increase the overall demand for specific metals such as copper, lithium, cobalt and nickel.

Africans are living an unfolding climate crisis. **The period from 2015 to 2019 will be recorded in history as the warmest five-year period on record since the late 19th century.** The global average temperature for 2019 lies at around 1.1 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, and with the extreme heat in Europe, the unprecedented warming of the arctic and the rampant forest fires, the planet is already lapping up against the maximum projected increase of 1.5 degrees promised at the Paris COP in 2015. The world is on course to a conservatively estimated average global temperature increase of more than 3 degrees Celsius.

In the African context there are particular vulnerabilities to climate change –given the existing propensities to drought, malarial zones that remain uncontrolled, and that the majority of Africans, women in particular, do not have the savings, work and social networks to survive the shocks and pressures that come with climate change. **By 2050, Africa is expected to lose 50% of its birds and mammals, and Asian fisheries will most likely completely collapse.** In the African context, the readiness of states (finance, policies, programmes and systems) to support the adaptation of peoples to a climate changed world, and respond to ever-increasing disasters of drought, hurricanes, flooding and the accompanying large-scale displacements of people is extremely fragile.

*Confronted by the climate crisis, WoMin resolved early in 2019, to work to strengthen the African Climate Justice movement with a clear ecofeminist contribution. Our work to support communities and women within them stop dirty and destructive large-scale energy and propose renewable energy alternatives has been expanded to embrace a clear climate justice agenda, which will make visible the climate costs in Africa, and argue for the polluters to pay their climate debt to support Africans and women in particular survive a climate changed world.*

In all of this – the raiding of natural resources to support the extractivist logic of the dominant system and the unfolding and related ecological and climate crisis – **women are the ones who carry the load** because of their gender prescribed roles to supply reproductive goods and take care of ‘the family’. They are the ones who have to walk further in search of clean drinking water and safer energy and put food on the table under increasingly difficult circumstances. In addition, **dislocations** linked to extractivist projects and the climate crisis are fuelling already high levels of **violence against women** across the continent.

*A World Bank research report notes that climate change, will transform more than 143 million people into „climate migrants“. Most of this impact will be in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America. When communities are displaced, women and children are the most affected by violence, often sexualized in nature.*

Across the continent, communities of peasants, indigenous peoples, fisherpeople, forest dwellers, and artisanal miners (with women well represented in these struggles) are rising up and saying **NO** to destructive development projects. They are defending a way of life without which they would not survive, and they are defending nature and ecosystems that are deeply threatened. In their NO, they are saying a clear **YES** to development alternatives. Alternatives that are living indigenous and ecologically responsive ways of producing, seed saving, water and forest protection, ubuntu/common humanity and respect, localised decision-making etc. They aspire to the redistribution of wealth which requires radically reduced consumption in wealthy parts of the world (including in pockets of the global south), public investment in social services and public infrastructure that benefit communities and not corporates, markets that enable and support and don't exploit, etc. WoMin and its allies on the continent support the building of campaigns from the local to the continental level based on the Right to say NO!

WoMin works with partners and allies to make visible, support and advance these development alternatives. Women in these resistances or potential resistances offer certainty in political position and in the defence of this position because of their prescribed role in care: Women do not vacillate because their survival and that of their families is at stake. And so it is women in these struggles who are the foundation of new radical women's movement/s on the continent defending land, nature and life of the majority of Africans.

Dieser Blogbeitrag ist in Teilen aus der Organisationsstrategie von **WoMin** entnommen.



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### Teil 10 der Blogserie „Sorgearbeit im Zentrum“

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