



THE EXTRA STEP INITIATIVE

August 9, 2019

PRESS RELEASE BY THE EXTRA STEP INITIATIVE ON THE SOOT OVER RIVERS STATE

The Extra Step Initiative and Eugene Abels on the 1st of August 2019, have filed a suit (FHC/PH/FHR/140/19) at the Federal High Court Port Harcourt for the enforcement of the fundamental right to life and to a general satisfactory environment favorable to our development.

BACKGROUND:

The prevalence of particulate matter has persisted for the last four years and we have done all things legally possible, but government at all levels have failed to act and bring this scourge to a stop and save our flora and fauna.

LEGAL ACTION:

We have been forced by the scary 'medical opinion' arising from a survey of 22,081 medical records by the Rivers State Government and a paragraph state thus:

"...in reference to respiratory, skin and reproductive conditions related to soot, clearly shows a significant rise in some of the assessed health events following exposure to the putative factor, presumably the soot incident in the state" ...Page xxvii

In the light of this scary report amongst others, and buoyed with the fact that Nigeria is a signatory to the '**Africa Charter on the Right to a Clean Environment**' which has even been domesticated, we are left with no option than to approach the courts for enforcement of our rights.

We wish to commend the former Rivers State Commissioner for Environment Prof. Roseline Koinya and her team for generating the report on Soot, even though it took too long when placed beside the many years of inaction.

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OUR DESIRE:

1. We hope our step will compel all the state actors to declare a health emergency in Rivers State and get the residents screened for cancer and respiratory related ailments.
2. This action we hope will lead to a major door to door public health campaign through the length and breadth of Rivers State, on emergency measures such as: bathing in our polluted rivers, eating seafood from these polluted rivers, outdoor exposures for people within the vulnerable spectrum, and the consequences of illegal artisanal refining on our kith and kin.
3. It is our desire that the State Ministry of Environment, in partnership with stakeholders and development partners of interest, set up air quality monitoring stations across the state. Daily Public Health Advisory should be issued, based on the daily air quality readings.
4. We also hope that this action will instigate further studies on health impact, to track emerging health trends, that may be linked to prolonged exposure to particulate matter.
5. We desire a reorganization of the security architecture for purposes of accountability and transparency whereby dedicated tank farms and jetties be created for the reception of exhibits seized from non-licensed persons or groups. This reorganization should include the office of the Auditor General to account for the seized assets, NOSDRA, DPR, EFCC, the state authorities and NESRA to geo tag spill sites and appropriately place liability.
6. We believe that the current activities of non-state actors in artisanal refining has made the Department of Petroleum Resources to become 'reactive'. They need to be retrained, re-maned and equipped with mobile testing equipment to enable them prevent the infusion of adulterated products into the nation's supply chain.
7. We believe that the time is right for an internationally driven **Environmental Audit** to be conducted in Rivers State, bearing in mind that the state has been the 'kitchen' for the hydro carbon industry for the past 60 years. It is our firm belief that it is time to assess the state of our flora, particularly in the areas with a high incidence of artisanal refining.
8. You may read up our petitions on: www.eugeneabels.com


Eugene Abels
Chairman 09/08/2019