A sustainable green future for young people now and future generations, is what climate warrior and eco-feminist Adenike Oladosu focuses her energy and passion on. “Climate change is the single biggest threat to the world. It is the defining issue of our time.” During the course of her undergraduate studies in Benue State, Nigeria - the food basket of the nation, Adenike saw first-hand the devastating effects of climate change that led to violent clashes between the local farmers and herdsmen, who were competing for the remaining fertile land that had not been washed away by floods that were becoming commonplace in the area. “When the floods came the herdsmen would drive their cattle to north central to find grazing pastures, which put them into conflict with the farmers who themselves were struggling due to the climatic conditions.” Adenike says that these clashes are incorrectly interpreted, as issues driven by differing religious beliefs, ethnicity or language. “There is strength in our diversity, but climate change has created enormous rifts in communities who should be working together, but end up desperately fighting for their survival.”

Climate change makes a country fragile. In her own country, she says that the degradation of the landscape has created multi-dimensional problems, like increased poverty, food insecurity, hunger, gender inequality and a weakened state, where vast areas are a security risk for ordinary citizens. Articles on her website, www.womenandcrisis.com indicate that the Sahel is one of the world’s most degraded landscapes, resulting in the displacement 33 million people from their livelihoods. These displaced people are then vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups in the region, which drives the threat of violence in insecurity. “Terrorism is a war between the un governed and the governed territory and there is a clear line between climate change to the security issues that we are witnessing across our continent. It’s not just Nigeria and Chad, but even extends to hotspots in Palma, Mozambique that has been battling with extremist fighting since 2017, that recently saw attacks on local and international businesses and citizens. For every terrorism zone, there is always a climate change hotspot. Lake Chad that sits in Sahel has shrunk by 90%; displacing more than 10.7 million people. Also, the countries that surround Lake Chad (Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon and Chad) are also on the severe list in the global terrorism index. Finding the right solutions to the defining issues of our time matter in time like this. Terrorism cannot be defected through arms and ammunitions especially in a climate change induced scenarios as in the countries listed in the global terrorism index. The more people are vulnerable to climate change, the greater the recruitment into armed group which fuels terrorism. The loss of livelihoods continue to be a big challenge toward the sanity of our world today. “For every terrorism zone, there is always a climate change hotspot. Lake Chad that sits in Sahel has shrunk by 90%; displacing more than 10.7 million people. Also, the countries that surround Lake Chad are also on the severe list in the global terrorism index. For me it’s about finding the right solutions to the defining issues of our time matter in time like this. Terrorism cannot be defected through arms and ammunitions especially in a climate change induced scenarios as in the countries listed in the global terrorism index. The more people are vulnerable to climate change, the greater the recruitment into armed group which fuels terrorism. The loss of livelihoods continue to be a big challenge toward the sanity of our world today.” Adenike sees terrorism as a war between the un governed and the governed territory. Which is why she says they use the tactics of displacement, food insecurity, lack of employment and poverty to recruitment more people in expanding their reach. Ever the optimist, Adenike believes that change is possible with
forward-thinking climate initiatives, like the great green wall initiative that seeks to will bring about much needed change towards a more sustainable future. The ambition is to, by 2030, to restore 100 million hectares of currently degraded land; sequester 250 million tons of carbon and create 10 million green jobs. Ecosystem restoration in itself is a solution. Of which the restoration order follows from; Niger, Mali, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Chad, Sudan, Mauritania, Senegal to Djibouti with a total of 156.1 million hectares.

It is crystal clear why we need eco activists like Adenike to establish and grow movements of youth climate activists across Africa. Like the Fridays for Future global movement, which she joined and started the Africa chapter in 2018. For her change starts with education. She believes that if a person does not understand where the issue comes from, even if you are presenting them with solutions, they won’t fully understand the initiative, which leads to low levels of support and uptake. “In Africa we lack education. We don’t necessarily know how our actions impact the climate and we hold onto many superstitions and outdated beliefs related to what causes changes to our climate. We have to start changing the mindset of people in our continent, and that starts with education.” She believes that when a person is empowered through knowledge that is relevant to them, then they are able to make informed choices that lead to positive changes in their livelihoods and ultimately sustainable future.

The clock is indeed ticking. Climate scientists and activists warned in 2018 that the world and humanity had 12 years left if all global citizens did not take collective and immediate action to end all the contributing factors impacting the health of our planet. This week, celebrated Earth Day on April 22nd with a number of climate activists taking to the streets to raise the alarm and call for collective action. “There is no time. The changes to our climate and environment is happening at the speed of light. We now only have 10 years left to try and reverse the catastrophic damage we are creating, but we can and must move towards a greener and more sustainable future.” Adenike believes that the green recovery will not only help turn the clock back, but will boost the global economy, increase human security, protect our bio-diversity and jobs for us now and for future generations. When asked what she would say to the African Union leaders about climate change? “Oh that’s easy, I want to ask them, what it will take for Africa to recover greener? I want to know where the blueprint is for our post-Covid recovery process? To our global leaders, I want to ask of them, what it will take for them to finally act on climate change. I want to ensure that they take the climate crisis seriously and moreover I along with other young people in our movement will hold them to account to ensure that they keep their commitments to climate change, otherwise there is no future for any of us.” She adds that it’s important that leaders and policy makers understand that climate change is not just agriculture, but it’s interconnected to transport, water and sanitation, finance, gender, military, so it touches every aspect of the live and livelihood of a countries citizens.

Although she acknowledges that if you want to create change as a young person, you have to work extremely hard to have your voice hear, in the short time that she has taken on the mantle of climate activist, Adenike has enjoyed a number of accolades for her work. She has passionately advocated to world leaders and the like about the challenges and impact of climate change in Nigeria. In 2018, she was recognised as one of the three young black activists in Africa trying to combat climate change alongside
two other young activists, Vanessa Nakate and Elizabeth Wathuti, by Greenpeace UK for the UK Black History Month. Later that year, she attended the COP25 gathering in Spain, as part of a Nigerian youth delegate, where she gave a passionate address on climate change in Africa and its effects on the lives and futures of young people. In 2019, Adenike received the Ambassador of Conscience Award from Amnesty International Nigeria. She also addressed world leaders at the UN youth climate summit and participated in the 2019 Climate change conference in Madrid along with Greta Thunberg, where she drew the attention of world leaders towards the Nigerian and African climate movements.

For her though, it’s not about the accolades or attention, but rather about bringing attention to the urgency of climate change. “My fighting climate change is because I want generations to live in a place free of pandemic and crises, but we need everybody to come of board if we are going to change our planet and our futures. And we need them now.”

Learn more about Adenike and her work here:

- Facebook: @Oladosu Adenike
- Instagram: @an_ecofeminist
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- Twitter: @the_ecofeminist
- Website: www.womenandcrises.com