



## CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ALLIANCE

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### **Nigerian Environmental and Human Rights Advocate Visits Sacramento to Urge Air Board to Reject International Forest Offsets in State Cap-and-Trade Program**

**Sacramento** — An environmental and human rights advocate traveled from Nigeria to urge the California Air Resources Board to reject a controversial proposal with wide-reaching implications for the global climate and for communities internationally and in California most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

[Fyneface Dumnamene Fyneface](#) joined representatives of environmental justice and environmental organizations Thursday at a rally during the midday break from an Air Board hearing to protest expanding the state's cap-and-trade plan to include offset credits generated under the United Nations' Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) program. This was the third in a series of recent workshops hosted by the Air Board to drive forward its proposal to expand the California Cap-and-Trade program to include an exceptionally risky REDD offsets scheme.

"We have seen that in Cross River State, Nigeria, REDD denies forest dependent communities' access to their heritage," said Fyneface, "REDD robs them of their livelihoods, violates their rights, and divides them along traditional and cultural lines. From our experience in Nigeria REDD is a false solution to climate change."

The pay-to-pollute scheme enables partner states and provinces in tropical regions to generate credits called "international sector-based offsets" from their remaining tropical forests and to sell those credits to polluters in California to ostensibly "offset" carbon emissions from the industrial burning of fossil fuels.

After the rally, Fyneface planned to attend the hearing to share the findings of [Seeing REDD: Communities, Forests and Carbon Trading in Nigeria](#), a report he co-authored for the Nigerian NGO Social Action, which highlights significant human rights, land tenancy and economic justice concerns associated with REDD.

"We found in our investigation that REDD project funding arrives to the Nigerian federal government, and moves to the state and even local governments, but rarely trickles down to the people on the ground," said Fyneface about REDD implementation in Nigeria. "Lack of accountability is a real problem, and California officials do not apparently understand how serious the situation is on the ground in potential partner jurisdictions such as Cross River State in Nigeria."

The threats posed by REDD to forest communities in Nigeria are shared by forest-reliant communities in states and provinces in other countries around the world such as Brazil, Mexico, and Indonesia that are proposed to link with the California REDD program.

But, expanding California's cap-and-trade program to enable polluters to buy REDD credits also harms Californians – overwhelmingly low-income communities and communities of color – those who live near the refineries, power plants, oil and gas extraction sites and other high-emission industries that are the main cause of local and global climate disruption

“The Air Resources Board must recognize the urgent need for immediate air quality improvements and greenhouse gas reductions in low-income communities and communities of color in California,” said Tere Almaguer, Youth Program Coordinator at [PODER](#), who attended the COP 21 in Paris last December. “International sector-based offsets will exacerbate environmental justice issues and ARB has failed to address concerns from impacted communities living on the front lines of the climate crisis with some of the top offset users in our backyards. Expanding cap and trade to include REDD will only allow the corporations killing our communities to continue to pollute. Our communities need real climate solutions, not false solutions like REDD.”

Additional offset programs prevent our state from focusing on implementing solutions that benefit the most impacted communities in California. REDD is an unnecessary offset program, and not currently approved in the AB 32 Scoping Plan.

While there is clearly an urgent need to preserve and restore tropical forests worldwide, REDD is not a scientifically sound mechanism to accomplish this goal. The climate science is clear: sequestering carbon in land-based ecosystems, such as forests, does not “neutralize” emissions from the burning of fossil fuels. Such sequestration is only making up for emissions from past deforestation and land-use change.

“Keeping the world's forests standing is a parallel imperative to immediately reducing our reliance on fossil fuels,” said Gary Graham Hughes of Friends of the Earth – U.S. “We call on the State of California to stop wasting precious time and to develop policy that reduces emissions at home as soon as possible.”

Creating new international expansion opportunities that allow companies to continue to pollute, while paying for projects that ostensibly reduce emissions around the world with virtually no way of verifying their efficacy and ethical conduct compromises, rather than enhances, California's climate leadership.

“If we are to have any chance of fighting back against climate change,” said Sandra Lupien, Senior Campaign Strategist at Food & Water Watch. “California must drop this proposal to include REDD offsets in the state's cap-and-trade plan, and instead of relying on market mechanisms, focus on permanently eliminating greenhouse gas emissions here at home.”

According to the [Air Board's online notice for this hearing](#), ARB will accept written comments from stakeholders on this proposal until May 13, 2016 at 5:00 p.m. Pacific Time.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

- [Nigeria: A new generation fights for a pollution free future – Amnesty International Interview with Fyनेface D. Fyनेface](#)
- [California Environmental Justice Alliance](#)
- [Cap and Clear-Cut: Article in East Bay Express](#)
- [California plays fast and loose with environmental justice and climate science: Friends of the Earth – US](#)
- [Food & Water Watch comments on expanding California's Cap-and-Trade Program to include REDD credits](#)

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[California Environmental Justice Alliance](#) is a statewide, community-led alliance that works to achieve environmental justice by advancing policy solutions. We unite the powerful local organizing of our members in the communities most impacted by environmental hazards – low-income communities and communities of color - to create comprehensive opportunities for change at a statewide level. We build the power of communities across California to create policies that will alleviate poverty and pollution. Together, we are growing the statewide movement for environmental health and social justice. [www.caleja.org](http://www.caleja.org)