

THE OCEAN: LIFE AND LIVELIHOOD

by Princess Flora Achu, Yaoundé, Cameroon (22 years)

Nkeng and his friends Paul and Aneng live on the shores off Limbe. They are hard working playful young men. Nkeng has dreams of becoming a software engineer and Paul and Aneng plan to get into business school. Every Friday and Saturday morning Nkeng wakes up early and says his prayers and gets out to meet his friends on the shores before two old boats they got from their fathers who were fishers.

They set sail into the deep paddling and throwing their locally woven nets. They catch all sorts of fish, swimming and playing all kinds of games they designed. Having fun. When it is 3pm the friends do not need the clock to tell them the time. All they need is the sun for that. So they sail back to shore with the spoils from their long day.

While on the shores they sell the fish they got from their day to "Mama Rose" or "Mami Burning fish" as she is famously known. She roasts this fish and sells to locals and especially to tourist who enjoy this delicacy. During the evening hours the boys gather round the fire over a fire drinking palm wine and talking about their day and their dreams. They plan to use the money from the sale of the fish they catch to pay for their tuition so their dreams can come true.

One sad Friday the boys get to the shore and all they see is crude oil on the surface of the ocean. Dead fishes floating on the surface of the ocean in oil, sea birds with wings and feathers covered. An oil pipeline broke releasing thousands of litters of oil into the ocean killing millions of fish, sea weed and birds and killing with it the dreams three hard working men and disrupting their livelihood and that of Mama Rose and leaving behind many sad locals and tourists.

If only we could give importance to the ocean and taking care of the ocean as it takes care of us keeping it clean, using alternative means of transport to move crude oil, not throwing waste into the ocean and recycling it instead dreams and livelihood of many would not be at stake and the ocean will be a healthier place to be.