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**Do Lizards Break Their Tails to Escape from Predators?**

**50secs.**

*Find out why lizards break their tails - by accident or design?*

### *Acronyms*

## *News*

### **Nigeria, Others Benefit from Global Book Programme** **1min. 51secs.**

Seven African countries including Nigeria are the biggest recipients of books donated by an U.S. non-governmental organisation that has been giving books to developing countries since 1962. The other countries are Zimbabwe, Zambia, Uganda, Liberia, Ghana and Ethiopia.

South Africa has recently been added to the list, making history as the recipient of the 40 millionth book.

The NGO, *Brothers Brother Foundation*, BBF, donates books to developing countries to help them “grow academically and achieve heightened scholastic performance,” said Mr. Luke Hingson, President of BBF. The organisation distributes about three million books a year to developing countries. More than five million books have been donated to Africa so far.

“About two million went to Zimbabwe, one million to Liberia and 600,000 to Ghana. Other big recipients have been Zambia, Uganda, Nigeria and Ethiopia,” Hingson said, in a statement released by the United States Information Agency (USIA).

A number of institutions have contributed to the success of BBF’s book donation programme, Hingson said. More than 50 publishers donate their publications, including Lippincott-Raven, McGraw-Hill, Simon & Schuster, Scott-Foresman Highlights for Children, Zaner-Bloser and John Wiley and Sons. Funding comes from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), U.S. Department of Agriculture, USIA and U.S. Government’s Ocean Freight Reimbursement Programme.

The receiving countries also play a role. The books list donated by publishers are shown to them to choose from so that they get only what they need.

*Newslink Africa.*

### **Bears: Seen More in Soups Than In the Wild** **1min. 40secs.**

The bear, a heavy, carnivorous animal with shaggy hairs and hooked, deadly claws, are everywhere highly threatened with extinction, because they are valued for food and medicine. This is the conclusion of the first global assessment of the state of bears by the international conservation organisation - World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

The survey cited logging, farming, hunting, conflicts with man and international trade as additional threats to the animals.

Hunting has devastated the three Asian species - called *sloth*, *sun* and *black* bears. The *sun* is feared to be extinct in India. Farming and the drug trade have made the grizzly bear extinct in Mexico. In Europe and North America they are threatened by human/animal conflict and by trade.

Bears are hardly known in Africa. The international trade in bear parts involves Asia, Europe, North and South America and are used in traditional Chinese medicine for treating diseases of the heart, liver, and haemor-

rhoids. The WWF report released July 27<sup>th</sup> also said that bear paws are eaten as a delicacy.

“The market in Asia is stocked with bear parts,” said Elizabeth Kempf, WWF Species Information Manager and co-author of the survey titled: *Wanted Alive! Bears in the Wild*. “While bear numbers slide downward, animals in the Americas are being increasingly targeted by traders,” she added.

*WWF*

### **Scientists Fight Mitsubishi Project**

**1min. 23secs.**

Recent plans by a multinational company, Mitsubishi, to build a massive salt factory in Mexico has brought together over 30 of the world’s most distinguished scientists in a spirited opposition to the project.

The project is planned for a location called Laguna San Ignacio, declared a World Heritage Site in 1993 by UNESCO. The lagoon is also the last, undisturbed birthing place for the endangered pacific gray whale.

Mitsubishi plans to pump 6,000 gallons of water per second out of the lagoon and flood 116 square miles of land in the process. The scientists declared the project an unacceptable risk to the environment. They have taken out newspaper adverts against the project in the U.S.A.’s New York Times and San Francisco Bay Guardian and in Mexico’s La Reforma newspapers.

Leading the group, Dr. Roger Payne, the renowned biologist who co-discovered that humpback whales sing, drafted the scientists’ declaration. It said in part, that, “Mitsubishi needs to recognize the weight of scientific opinion against their plans to turn the California gray whale’s last pristine breeding ground into a salt factory.”

*Agitprop*

### **Zambia Takes Stock of its Environment**

**1min. 45secs.**

Zambia has about 8,000 plant and animal species within its borders. An on-going survey of biological diversity also found that the country has 16 varieties of ecological habitats, about 500 forests and botanical reserves, and a rich network of protected areas including national parks, bird sanctuaries and game management areas. Protected areas cover nearly half of the East African country’s land area of about 750,000 square kilometers.

Guidelines for the survey were provided by the international Convention on Biodiversity [CBD]. The convention requires all member countries to count their species and make a statement about what is there, how it is being used, whether this use is threatening some species survival and what needs to be done to conserve them.

The survey found a close interdependence between Zambia’s plant and animal life. ‘Plants provide habitat for animals while animals help in seed pollination, dispersal and germination,’ the report said. The ecological habitats are useful for recycling nutrients and freshwater, protecting soil erosion, climate stabilization and crop production.

Zambia’s survey was publicized by the country’s renowned ecologist, Professor Emmanuel Chidumayo in a report titled: *How Many of What*. The survey is funded by the Global Environmental Facility [GEF] through the United Nations Development Programme [UNDP]. It is hoped that the survey results will be used to develop a biological diversity strategy and action plan for Zambia.

*Kobus*

**Certification Costs May Discourage Green Farmers**

**1min. 52secs.**

There is a growing demand in Europe and America for pesticides-free food and produce. Many farmers in the developing world are looking forward to boom times as they work to meet the high demand. But import regulations put in place by the European Union [EU] may discourage nature friendly farming (also known as organic farming) in the developing world. They have already led to accusations of “bio-imperialism” against Europe.

The regulations setting certification standards for entering the EU market have been described as being insensitive to conditions in the developing world and small-scale farmers. An example is the stipulation that organic farmers separate their fields with strips of uncultivated land. This has been rejected as a luxury that poor farmers cannot afford.

Another major obstacle is the demand that farmers who want certification pay for consultants, usually based in Europe, to certify their farms as organic.

“Getting the certification needed for entry into European markets can be costly and bureaucratic for small farmers in the South,” said Nick Robins of the London-based International Institute for Environment and Development and co-author of *Changing Consumption and Production Patterns: Unlocking Trade Opportunities*.

Although trade opportunities in organic farm produce is still growing it is already worth about US\$11 billion. African countries appear not to be aware of this market. But South American economies are retooling their agricultural systems to service it. Chile alone exported over 2,000 tonnes of organic produce in 1998, earning about US\$3 million dollars.

PANOS

**Friendlier Fire Extinguishers Needed**

**1min. 13secs.**

Foams used to fight fires from airplane crashes can contaminate groundwater, researchers have found. Fires from aircraft crashes are characterized by burning fuel which water cannot deal with. Therefore, aqueous film-forming foams, known as AFFF, were specially developed to act quickly to extinguish fires by spreading a thin film of water over burning fuel.

AFFFs are known to contain fluorocarbons and hydrocarbons. These are some of the chemical compounds that made aerosol sprays, coal and petroleum suspect in environmental pollution.

Dr. Jennifer Field of Oregon State University, U.S.A. decided to find out what happened to the AFFFs released into the environment. She monitored groundwater at military bases and old fire training facilities no longer in use and made the shocking discovery that AFFFs do not breakdown in the environment. In some cases the AFFF she found in ground water actually foamed.

Studies have continued to determine the actual risk that AFFF pollution could pose to human health.

*Environmental News Network*

## *Features*

### **A New Way of Communicating Research Results**

**2mins. 1sec.**

A report suggesting new tips for bridging the gap between researchers, policy makers and development practitioners has been published. Written by Darren Saywell and A.P. Cotton, the report hopes to ensure that useful results of development research reach the poor and the organisations that claim to represent them.

The report is based on research conducted by the University of Loughborough examining current approaches to sharing research findings. It explored existing strategies for communicating results, their constraints and factors that aid effective communication.

The researchers found that most development research remains inaccessible to the poor and relevant non-governmental organisations because information is shared only at the end of the research project.

According to the report, “a research contractor would, at this stage, aim to satisfy the donor agency by producing a report to match the funding available, rather than focus on end-user needs.”

The solution is to share information throughout the life of the research project.

“Sharing of information (should) occur before, during and certainly after the research has been completed,” the report stated. “This approach offers opportunities for feedback and learning during the research life cycle.”

Other suggestions for effective communication include establishing a clear picture of the target audience and ensuring that research outputs are accessible, attractive and simple to use. Also, a variety of media must be used to package and disseminate the information produced in brief summaries.

The authors of the report believe that sharing research findings and conclusions is a continuous process and it is central to the entire process of planning and executing a development project.

*id21 Report.*

### **Widows Fight for Fishing Rights in South Africa**

**2mins. 58secs.**

About 14 widows of fishermen in Cape Town, South Africa are battling for equal fishing rights with men. Their fishing rights stopped at the death of their husbands, and they were left to raise their families on meagre incomes in their small fishing town of Kalk Bay.

The widows, consisting of 73 year old Sybil Edwards and 13 of her friends aged 56 to 88, now want something back from their hometown. They are battling for their own share of fishing rights, previously known as quota allocations. They plan to hire local Kalk Bay fishermen to fish for them if they are successful.

The widows have filed applications for fishing quotas annually since 1994. But every time they have been turned down.

“We don’t know why they aren’t giving it to us. We’re just living on hope,” said Mrs. Edwards, whose husband was a fisherman for more than 40 years.

Applications are made through the Fisheries Transformation Council, set up to open up the formerly dominated industry to new entrants. They are processed by the Marine Coastal Management and approved by the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism.

Melody Kingma, spokeswoman for the widows, said that they plan to use the revenue generated from the fishing rights to set up medical and welfare facilities for widows and disabled Kalk Bay fisherfolks.

One of the widows, Mrs. Gairnssa Fortune, said the group had not received an adequate explanation why their applications had been rejected.

“I just think they don’t want to share the money with us,” she said.

Most of the widows survive on monthly pensions of about US\$100. Few of them are able to save. Monica Collison, 68, who raised seven children on her own after her husband died 20 years ago, said Kalk Bay lacked such facilities as a chemist, butchery, bakery or supermarket, forcing the women to travel to shops elsewhere for their basic needs. They fear becoming ill and unable to get care locally.

Wilhelm Kroon, assistant director of Resources Control of Marine and Coastal Management, could not comment on why the widows had been turned down.

“They must comply with the criteria, then they must hope for the best,” he said. “The cake is only so big and there are so many people that want to get into the industry.”

*Africa News Online*

### **Wars Without Anti-Personnel Landmines**

**2mins. 1sec.**

More than 250 million anti-personnel landmines (APLs) are stockpiled. And after several years of campaigning for their elimination, only 12 million mines have been destroyed. But anti-landmine campaigners believe the world has never been safer from the destructive explosions of landmines in peacetime. An estimated 10 percent of the world’s population suffer some form of disability. Many of them are victims of antipersonnel landmines.

For example nearly every nation has signed the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines. About 38 countries that produced the mines in the past have banned production. Several of the remaining 16 that have not forsworn production have not produced a mine in several years. And of the 34 key exporters of the mine, only Iraq has not committed to stop exportation. More importantly, belligerent nations no longer use landmines as a matter of course during warfare.

A recent landmark report reviewing global efforts to eliminate APLs revealed that millions of stockpiled mines have been destroyed, production is declining and international trade in them has ended. The report, *Landmine Monitor Report 1999 - Toward a Mine-Free World*, was published by the Landmine Monitor Core Group; a coalition of private groups working as the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. More than 80 researchers in 100 countries and a network of 1300 NGOs contributed to the production of the 1100-page book.

The report was launched recently at the meeting of parties to the Landmines Convention in Maputo, Mozambique and its authors promised to update and present it annually as a campaign tool.

*Newslink Africa*

**Acid Rain or Global Warming?**

**2mins. 9secs.**

The race to reduce the quantity of industrial pollutants in the atmosphere could run into a hitch very soon, if an alarm raised recently by a University professor proves to be true. Michael Schlesinger, professor of atmospheric sciences at the University of Illinois, U.S.A., warned that efforts to reduce acid rain might actually increase global warming.

Sulfur dioxide and carbon dioxide, two chemicals emitted into the atmosphere from industries and automobiles, are responsible for acid rain and global warming. In the air, the sulfur dioxide mixes with oxygen and water to form compounds that fall back to the earth with rain as acid rain.

To stop acid rain, industries have been cutting the sulfur dioxide component of their industrial waste emissions, leaving carbon dioxide. This has had an un-intended effect on the atmosphere - known as global warming.

Whereas, carbon dioxide tends to trap sunlight, raise atmospheric temperature and create the greenhouse effect, sulfur dioxide mixed with water and oxygen in the atmosphere reflects sunlight back into space, thereby achieving a cooling effect.

At international negotiations, member governments of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC] favor de-coupling both chemical compounds from each other in order to stop acid rain.

‘It is ironic that in working to solve one environmental problem you exacerbate another problem,’ Schlesinger said.

Studies by Schlesinger and his colleagues have found that decreasing the sulfur dioxide emissions led to significant regional warming in North America, Europe and Asia.

“Thus it appears that mitigation of acid rain problem by future reductions in sulfur dioxide emissions exacerbates the greenhouse-warming problem by enhancing the warming in and near the regions where the sulfur dioxide emissions are reduced,” Schlesinger said.

*Environmental News Network*

**Sea Turtles Sustain Their Nesting Grounds**

**2mins. 9secs.**

There is evidence that the survival of wild animals and of their habitat depend equally on each other. For example, the endangered sea turtles need fragile coastlines to survive. New research now shows that the coastlines may need the turtles even more for the survival of their ecosystems.

The loggerhead turtles of the United States of America are known to travel nearly 2000 kilometres to lay their eggs at the same sandy beaches where they once hatched. And environmentalists have fought hard to preserve the beaches for them. Research by a student of the University of Florida [UF] on Florida’s Melbourne Beach shows, however, that eggs laid by the endangered turtles hold essential nutrients that may strengthen vegetation along the shore, preserve the sand dune system, and feed a variety of other wildlife in the ecosystem.

Sarah Bouchard, a UF student, found that nutrients inside the turtles’ eggs support a wide range of beach life.

“Crabs, birds and racoons eat the eggs and scatter them across the dune. Plant roots grow towards the eggs and break through the shell to reach the nutrients inside and when the hatchlings emerge from surviving eggs, the fluid inside the shells remains in the ground and still provides nourishment for the dune ecosystem,” Bouchard discovered.

More than 65,000 nests are laid each year along Florida’s beaches. The sea turtles travel from their feeding grounds in the Bahamas, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Florida Keys and other locations in the southeast and the Caribbean to the nesting beach.

Future studies would look at what would happen to the life support system of the beach if the sea turtles no longer nest in the area.

*Environmental News Network*

### **Army Worm Threatens Food Supply In Ghana**

**1min. 39secs.**

Army worm has invaded Ghana’s three arid northern regions, destroying grain crops including sorghum, maize, millet and rice. Grazing animals have also died which ate leaves infested with the worm.

The pest has so far destroyed over 72,000 hectares of crops in the Upper East region. Another 10,000 hectares of grains have been destroyed in the Upper West region. And about six districts in the Northern region are severely affected.

Concerned that more than 50 percent of this year’s grain crops could be lost to army worm invasion, Alhaji Amidu Sulemana, Regional Minister for the Upper East, warned that “[their] survival in [the northern region] would be under threat.” The Minister has urgently requested for insecticides and spray guns from the Central Government in Accra.

Army worm invasion is caused mainly by a degraded environment and lack of rains. Agriculture Ministry officials say a big rainfall will stop the invasion.

Vice President, Professor John Atta Mills, who visited the area, promised government assistance in form of seeds for replanting and fertiliser to farmers whose fields have been cleared of the worms.

Meanwhile Ghana’s National Disaster Management Organisation and the Ministry of Food and Agriculture lead the war against the worms, as prayers for rain are offered at religious centres.

*Edward Ameyibor*

### **Ghana: A Firm Resolve to Stem Deforestation?**

**2mins. 41secs.**

Ghana, which lost two-thirds of its forest this century, has taken steps to stem deforestation and encourage conservation. The country has replaced the law that allowed forests to be logged every 15 years with one that stipulates a 40-year logging cycle.

Other steps taken include a ban on the exportation of unprocessed logs from 14 species of commercial timber, including mahogany. A current review of the legal system shows that it does not deter illegal loggers.

Ghana’s forest cover has dropped from 23 million hectares in 1901 to 8.3 million hectares today. Government and environmentalists are trying to halt the alarming loss to preserve the country’s forest ecosystem.

“The period of 40 years adopted is based on the average time for 14 of the most desirable commercial species

to mature for harvesting,” explained Mr Walter Gyabaah-Atuoni, Forestry Officer for Offinso District in Ashante region. “This is strictly enforced although there are frequent clashes these days with sometimes armed illegal loggers who operate during the night.”

A court recently fined three illegal loggers a total of 400,000 cedis (approx 160 dollars) and confiscated their chain saws for smuggling 113 illegally sawn lumber. Forestry officials pooh-poohed the fine, saying that the smugglers could easily get 10 times more money for the lumber. The Ministry of Lands and Forestry estimates the country loses over 10 million dollars from timber smuggling. A new forestry law with stiffer deterrent is said to be before the Ghanaian Parliament.

With the rains in full scale in the forest belts, campaigns have started once more for tree planting. Most districts have mounted competitions among schools on tree planting while NGO’s are actively preaching protection of the environment through expansion of the country’s vegetation. Small scale carpenters and the agriculture workers union of the trade union congress - TUC - are both advocating for a ban on timber exports. But the government is unlikely to respond since timbers exports are the fourth largest foreign exchange earner.

That is the dilemma of Ghana. While government wants to preserve the environment and promote bio-diversity, it needs the dollars to finance imports.

*Edward Ameyibor*

### *Special Features*

#### **Quote on Nature and the Spirit of Man**

**33secs.**

“One of the challenges of conservation is to develop proper balance about the necessities of modern life - the need to earn a living and therefore to live where economic opportunity exists; to enjoy the advantages of urban life as well as the advantages of vacationing in the countryside; to have sparkling rivers and remote valleys; and to ensure that flights of wild birds will continue to uplift the hearts of men.”

*Conservation Quotations/George B. Hertzog, Director of U.S. National Parks Service.*

### *Children’s Section*

#### **The Tortoise and the Palm Nut**

**5mins. 24secs.**

Once upon a time, there was great famine in the land of the animals. Food was very scarce and every animal, bird and insect was famished. So every edible thing had great value. And the pre-occupation of every creature in the animal kingdom was survival through hunting and foraging for food.

One day, the tortoise went in search of food and found a palm-nut. As he picked it up, it fell off his hand and rolled into a hole beside the palm tree. Determined to retrieve his palm nut, he entered the hole and continued until he saw a fairy and inquired after his palm nut. The fairy informed tortoise that her child had eaten the palm nut.

Tortoise started crying. He wailed and panted, threatening to kill himself if he was not given back his palm nut. In the alternative he requested that the fairy’s daughter be given to him in exchange for the palm nut. After all entreaties failed to appease tortoise, the fairy gave him a “food drum” as compensation. Each time this drum is beaten, food of assorted kinds would come out of its base. The fairy warned, however, that the drum must never be washed. If washed, the fairy continued, its efficacy would vanish, and the drum would produce no more food.

Tortoise thanked the fairy and left with the food drum. On getting home, he summoned his wives and his children and shut them up in a room.

He beat the drum. Food of various types filled the room and they all ate to their heart's content. After the meal, tortoise warned them to keep sealed lips as he would not want to share the bounty with the other animals and birds. He also warned them never to wash the drum for any reason whatsoever.

So while all the other animals and birds were growing thinner and thinner, tortoise and his family grew fatter and fatter. When queried by the other animals, tortoise said he and his family were being fed by his dead mother and requested those who want to be similarly fed to kill their mothers. Since the other animals and birds do not trust tortoise, they did not kill their mothers, but left tortoise alone and no longer sought to know the source of his nutritious meals.

After a while, however, tortoise went on a long journey and while he was away, his wives observed that the food drum had become very dirty. So, they washed it to make it clean once again. After the washing, they dried it in the sun, preening themselves that they had done a good job. However, when they became hungry and they beat the drum nothing came out of it. They sent word to tortoise who returned quickly and set out to get another drum.

He went to the same palm tree and, fortunately for him, found another palm nut, which he intentionally dropped into a hole at the foot of the palm tree. The palm nut rolled harmlessly into a corner of the hole and got stuck there. Immediately tortoise went after it. And when he confronted the fairy, he accused her daughter of having eaten his palm nut. The fairy denied this and picked up the palm nut from where it was. Tortoise declared that that was not his nut and insisted that he would either kill himself or be given another drum. He, however, made one mistake - he did not ask the fairy to beat the drum before he slung it over his shoulder and sped home happily.

On reaching home, he summoned all the members of his family into his room, locked the doors and began beating the drum. They all waited expectantly for food but, to their dismay, only harmful insects like bees and wasps came out of the drum and stung them mercilessly. As the doors were locked, Tortoise and his family had no escape route. So the insects stung them so much that they fainted and were hospitalised.

The morale of this story is that we must try to be honest in all our dealings and not engage in getting or taking what does not belong to us.

*Character Moulding Stories for Better Citizenship*

### **The Lost Quill**

**3mins. 21secs.**

Once, in ancient time, Elephant and Rhino had a little argument, which led to a big fight. Both were short-tempered animals. Rhino fought bravely and wounded elephant several times with his sharp horn; but his bad temper and rage made him fight rather blindly.

Elephant, however, kept his temper under control and, because he was much bigger and stronger and could use his strong tusks, he was soon winning. Eventually, Rhino had to give in. Bruised and torn with many gashes in his thick hide, he limped away.

Rhino was in great pain and bleeding badly. He sought out Porcupine, whom he thought might be able to help him. He begged her to give him one of her longest and sharpest quills so that he could use it as a needle to sew up the deep gashes in his skin.

Porcupine who was not too happy about being awakened from her daytime sleep, was anxious to get back to bed. And so, to get rid of Rhino she agreed to lend him her best quill on one condition - that Rhino would return it when he had finished with it. She also felt rather sorry for Rhino.

“My quills,” she squeaked, “are all that I have to protect me against my enemy, Lion. So, I am depending on you, Rhino, to bring that quill back.”

Rhino solemnly agreed to this and gave her his word that he would return the quill the very next day.

Rhino sewed up his torn skin, using fiber from a baobab tree. (To this day you can see the rough, scarred ridges on his hide.) Satisfied with his handiwork, he lay down in some soft grass for much needed, healing sleep. He placed Porcupine’s quill carefully beside him for safekeeping.

One evening, a few days later, Rhino happened to meet Porcupine. He suddenly remembered his promise, but try as he might, he just couldn’t remember where he had left the quill, or what had become of it. All he remembered was sewing himself up with the quill held in his mouth. ‘Goodness me!’ he thought, ‘Could I have swallowed it by mistake?’

After a great deal of thought, Rhino came to the conclusion that if he had swallowed the quill, then sooner or later it would meet the same fate as all other things he swallowed each day. He explained all this to Porcupine and apologized, promising soon to return the quill.

And that is why Rhino began to kick his dung about. He has been searching ever since, in the hope of finding that lost porcupine quill among his droppings.

*When Hippo was Hairy*

**Can Python Bites Protect Victims From Other Snake Bites?                    1min. 7secs.**

No, it is not true. There is no scientific evidence to show that a python bite can make you immune to all snake bites, as some East African traditions claim. Although pythons do bite, they belong to a group of snakes called ‘constrictors’ which are not poisonous. To kill their prey, they wrap themselves around their victims and squeeze them to death.

Bites from all animals may cause infection and diseases. Pythons will bite if they are frightened. People who are bitten by a python may die if the wound becomes seriously infected, but not because of poison. People have been known to die from a python bite because they were ‘scared to death.’ So, we would ask that you leave all snakes alone. Unless you know a lot about snakes and how to identify them, you could be in for a rude shock.

*Chongololo*

**Do Lizards Break Their Tails to Escape from Predators? 50secs.**

This is true. Most Lizards are small and have many enemies. They use speed, camouflage and tail dropping to escape from predators like cats, snakes and birds. Scientists have studied lizards and seen that the tail has some weak sections that can be broken by the strong tail muscles. A broken piece of tail keeps wiggling and twitching because there are special muscles in it. As a predator watches the wiggling tail, the lizard can run away. There are more than 3,000 species of lizards in the world. They are reptiles, related to crocodiles and snakes. Most of them live in warm climates and eat insects and spiders.

*Chongololo*

**Action for Women's Inheritance Rights 1min. 13secs.**

A loose coalition of women's rights organisations from eight West African countries recently observed the first ever *Day of Action for Women's Inheritance Rights*. The day, July 29, 1999 was observed in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo, with support from the International Human Rights Law Group based in Washington D.C.

The Day of Action for Women's Inheritance Rights is part of a long-term campaign to bring national and regional attention to customary practices that deny women their right to inherit land and other property. The programme started at a meeting called by the International Human Rights Law Group in Ghana in November 1998. At the meeting, the women agreed to implement a programme of activities, including the Day of Action for Women's Inheritance Rights, aimed at overcoming these problems.

In a letter calling for support for the campaign, Marie-Elena John Smith, Africa Co-ordinator for International Human Rights Law Group appealed for more efforts to raise awareness of the "critical problem" at the international level.

"These practices persist despite the presence of statutory laws in most countries that provide at least limited protection of women's rights to inherit, and result in the pauperization of millions of women and children."

The group is currently circulating a letter addressed to the United Nations [UN] and the Organisation of African Unity [OAU] recommending measures for eliminating gender-based abuse of women.

*International Human Rights Law Group*

**Ghana Develops Blueprint for Women Empowerment 1min. 5secs.**

Ghana's National Population Council plans to focus attention on women and the girl-child in the new millennium. Speaking in Accra recently Richard Turkson, Executive Secretary of the council, said that women empowerment, girl-child education and elimination of unsafe abortion would form the core of its programme.

The council would work closely with government ministries, departments and agencies and NGOs to intensify public education about gender issues, Turkson said. He added that such partnership produced a number of policy initiatives for population control in the past. Past successes of the council include the following policies: a medium term health strategy; national reproductive health policy; draft national adolescent reproductive health; national communication strategy and a children's bill passed recently by parliament. The council's activities have also produced a decline in fertility rates from more than six children per woman to less than five children.

*Africanews*

**The Miracle Potato**

**45secs.**

About two months ago we reported that a high yielding breed of potato had transformed the lives of villagers in southwestern Cameroon, and that the miracle was being introduced into Obudu Cattle Ranch in southeastern Nigeria. Now we can tell you that a potato with similar qualities has been developed in the United States of America.

Called the transgenic or dual-purpose potato, the U.S.A. species reportedly can increase the farmer's earnings by as much as US\$200 per acre. It also can be used for both food and for the industrial production of ethanol used in the preparation of medicines.

*Environmental News Network*

**On a Collision Course with Spaceship Earth**

**52secs.**

Just think about it. While you are sleeping tonight a massive space object, the size of a huge rock boulder could veer off its course and crash into the earth.

You may think that this is not likely to happen. But there are people who believe this is a strong possibility, and they met in July at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, U.S.A. at an International Asteroids, Comets and Meteors Conference.

Astronomers think that only about one-tenth of all space objects orbiting near earth have been identified and that there is a real possibility that one of them may come crashing into the earth someday.

*National Geographic News*

**Ghana's Forests**

**26secs.**

There are 280 Forest Reserves in Ghana containing 190 timber tree species, but only 50 have been commercially exploited. The law allows up to 1.4 million cubic metres of timber to be harvest annually. Ghanaians use about two cubic metres of wood per person yearly while Nigerians consume about one-and-a-half cubic metres per person each year.

*George Ameyibor/ Obasi Ogbonnaya*

**How Much Waste Does Your Car Produce?**

**31secs.**

Do you know how much carbon dioxide waste your car produces? Let us give you a clue. If you drive an average European car that does about 13 kilometres to a litre of petrol, when you have logged 16,000 miles, the carbon dioxide waste produced by your car would be the equivalent of three times the weight of your car! Think about that.

*WWF*

**More Now Flee Environment Than Warfare**

**43secs.**

Environmental refugees fleeing from drought, floods, deforestation and degraded land totalled 25 million last year, creating 58 percent of the world's refugees - outnumbering for the first time, those displaced by war.

## *Useful Quickfacts*

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"Everyone is aware of the environmental problems of global warming and deforestation on the one hand and the social problems of increasing poverty and growing shanty towns on the other," according to the International Federation of the Red Cross *1999 World Disasters* report, an annual survey of humanitarian trends. "But when these two factors collide, you have a new scale of catastrophe."

*WWF*

### *Acronyms*

<b>AFFF:</b>	Aqueous Film-Forming Foams
<b>APL:</b>	Anti-Personnel Landmines
<b>BBF:</b>	Brothers Brother Foundation
<b>CBD:</b>	Convention on Biological Diversity
<b>EU:</b>	European Union
<b>GEF:</b>	Global Environmental Facility
<b>IPCC:</b>	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
<b>NASA:</b>	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
<b>NGO:</b>	Non - Governmental Organisation
<b>OAU:</b>	Organisation of African Unity
<b>UN:</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDP:</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNESCO:</b>	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
<b>USAID:</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>USIA:</b>	United States Information Agency