

spotlight

2021 Issue 4



Held in early October, the week of action was timed to coincide with the annual meetings of both the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Photo credit: Corporate Accountability and Public Participation Africa (CAPPA)

Challenging the private water industry

Together, we demand an end to water privatization across Africa

“Privatization has proven to be a failure—the only solution is protecting people’s right to water.”

AKINBODE OLUWAFEMI | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
OF CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY AND PUBLIC
PARTICIPATION AFRICA (CAPPA)

Take action!

Echo the demands of the Our Water, Our Right Africa Coalition:
CorporateAccountability.org/ProtectTheWater

Support this work:

CorporateAccountability.org/Spotlight

Water privatizers, backed by international institutions like the World Bank, have long had their sights set on the African continent as the next market for water privatization. That’s why, in early October, we supported the mobilization of resistance across the region, led by our longtime ally Corporate Accountability and Public Participation Africa (CAPPA).

Organizing in solidarity with the newly formed Our Water, Our Right Africa Coalition, the first-ever Africa Week of Action Against Water Privatization featured groups from Cameroon, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, and Uganda coming together to escalate pressure on corporations like Veolia and Suez, as well as the international entities supporting them, to stop the push for water privatization.

Together, we also released a report on water privatization in Africa and a position statement endorsed by more than 100 groups around the world, garnering significant media attention from journalists across the continent, as well as public support from notable public water champions such as two former U.N. special rapporteurs and U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore.

Your support is generating visibility that will make a significant impression on governments and public officials who are charged with managing water across Africa. And as activists and organizers representing African civil society and labor take action, we hope that you’ll continue joining us in supporting these demands!

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Practicing hope and determination

Dear friend,

As we head into 2022, I'm feeling both hopeful and determined—and I hope this letter finds you in similar spirits.

The truth is, hope doesn't always come easy, but I've been practicing hope as a discipline since my early days of organizing. It's what keeps me pushing on in the face of enormous challenges. And every small step forward, every hard-fought victory, every glimmer of progress—they all feed my hope and my determination to continue the necessary work of these times.

When I look back over the last year, amid all the heartbreak and struggle, there were also many shining moments that grew my hope. Especially close to my heart is our innovative organizing with our close allies to challenge water privatization in the Africa region. This work, which is the result of a years-long process of relationship-building and strategic campaigning, will have a tremendous impact on the ability of water privatizers to profit from people's most basic need for water in the region.

And there are many other moments—from our powerful organizing at the U.N. climate treaty negotiations and global tobacco treaty negotiations, to our exposing of Big Food and Big Soda's interference in public health policy.

I fully expect 2022 will bring more challenges. And I know that Corporate Accountability is well-positioned to meet them with the same grit, creativity, and adaptability that we've been practicing. Together with members like you and our allies all over the globe, we will continue to achieve victories and make significant progress toward holding the most abusive corporations on the planet accountable.

I'm honored to do this transformative work rooted in justice alongside you. And I wish you many New Year blessings.



Onward,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Patti Lynn".

Patti Lynn
Executive Director

Infrastructure that works for the people

You're demanding an end to corporate handouts in key legislation

The U.S. infrastructure bill has been an important issue for our campaigns this year. And although the plan still has a long road ahead, we are excited to report that we played a key role in ensuring that the bill does not include any provisions for water privatization!

"What we need right now is bold and equitable investment in our public water systems, not more corporate handouts that undermine the human right to water."

ALISSA WEINMAN | U.S. POLITICAL ORGANIZING DIRECTOR

Over the summer, we and our allies met with elected officials and organized thousands of people to reject water privatization in the bill. You took action and joined us in demanding that your Senators reject the false notion that water privatization is a "solution" for maintaining our public water systems—and it worked.

To be clear, the U.S. government must do more to advance water justice and equitably address the climate crisis. Still, we are celebrating this victory and applauding the tremendous effort by allies and people like you in making this milestone possible.

Your steadfast support enables us to engage in the kind of grassroots organizing that helps protect public water access worldwide.

I hope you feel proud of this victory while we, together, look ahead to the greater changes we must secure.

Q&A

Member spotlight: Andy Bartholomew

Andy is a software engineer in Los Angeles, where he lives with his wife, cat, and, in a few months, their first child.



What inspired you to become involved with Corporate Accountability?

I came across The Omnivore's Dilemma by Michael Pollan at a time when I was really frustrated with the way businesses focus entirely on making money and pretending that this will automatically produce the best outcomes for people.

As a software engineer and a person with wealth, I've had to resist the idea that "smart technologists" can simply solve the world's problems with money or data. All of this led me to realize that the injustices in our world can only be solved by organizing movements, especially those that are led by the people who are most impacted by these problems.

Why is it vital for our campaigns to succeed?

Corporations already wield so much power in our society. Their expectation of exponential growth harms everyone and prevents us from focusing on the greater good. And it's especially disturbing when we are told that things like libraries, the postal service, and even our water supply aren't worthwhile just because they don't turn a profit.

That's why it's important for us to establish that "shareholder value" is not the only thing that must be prioritized when making policies—and that people's health and well-being are just as, if not more, important to uphold as corporate profits.

What keeps you motivated to continue being part of this movement?

Looking at the state of the world and its trajectory can be depressing. At times, I start feeling like real change is impossible. But I remind myself that I am doing this work not because of any guaranteed outcomes, but because taking action in itself is worthwhile.

Whether it's knocking on doors, making phone calls, attending rallies or writing letters, there's been a value in just getting to know people and being in community with them. We're all part of a movement demanding a fundamental transformation of values that will one day lead to a more equitable society. I think that's powerful.

The racist roots of Big Tobacco

Tracing the history of one of the world's deadliest industries

"Forgetting the history of the tobacco industry means letting it get away with addicting yet another generation to its deadly products."

MICHEL LEGENDRE | LONGTIME ORGANIZER WITH CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY AND CAMPAIGNS DIRECTOR AT WORTH RISES

As part of the lasting legacy of white supremacy that we strive to dismantle, recognizing the racist roots of Big Tobacco is critical to informing our work of challenging racism in the industry in all its forms.

Recently, we co-hosted a webinar with two of our closest allies: the African-American Tobacco Control Leadership Council (AATCLC) and the Center for Black Health & Equity. The webinar focused on Big Tobacco's centuries-long targeting of Black communities

as well as potential solutions for holding the industry accountable for its abuses. And it was a huge success! More than 100 people attended, including government officials and representatives of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, to learn about Big Tobacco's historic and current tactics of targeting Black communities. And they left with crucial information that will help them in their work to curb the industry's continuous attempts to reinvent and transform itself. Thank you for all you make possible!



It's critical that we ensure government officials at all levels understand and guard against the deadly tobacco industry and its racist impacts. Image credit: Cori Lin

Learn more!

Watch a clip from the webinar:
CorporateAccountability.org/Tobacco21

Climate justice here and abroad

How we're expanding the Make Big Polluters Pay movement in Latin America

"Climate justice means working in international solidarity with and centering the leadership of communities on the front lines of climate change and corporate abuse."

NATHALIE RENGIFO | LATIN AMERICA CLIMATE CAMPAIGN DIRECTOR

Over the years, there has been a lot of impressive progress in the campaign to kick Big Polluters out and make them pay. From the United States to Nigeria, Vanuatu, Peru, and beyond, people and communities all over the world are demanding that Big Polluters pay for the damages they've fueled and caused.

With this in mind, we spent the last few months organizing with allies from across the world, such as *Árvore Água*, a Brazil-based collective of grassroots organizations focusing on climate and water justice. With thousands of followers on social media, *Árvore Água* has a wide reach in the Latin America region, particularly among Indigenous communities in Brazil.

Focusing specifically on the intersection of the climate crisis, transnational corporations, and human rights, we launched a social media campaign, created multilingual educational materials, and co-published a booklet about the Make Big Polluters Pay movement. Our campaign raised the visibility of the role of Big Polluters in fueling climate change and its impacts in Latin America and the Caribbean. It also highlighted the struggles of our Latin American allies and their leadership in challenging corporate power and advancing real solutions to address the climate crisis in the region.

Movement building is an integral part of our campaigns. We know that we



Since its launch, our multilingual campaign with *Árvore Água* has garnered tens of thousands of likes and comments from people all across Latin America. Image credit: *Árvore Água*

cannot achieve systemic change alone, and our partnership with *Árvore Água* will go a long way in expanding our climate campaign in Latin America and the Caribbean. Your support is critical to connecting our work to similar struggles and movements worldwide. Thank you!

Learn more!

Read about how the rallying cry to Make Big Polluters Pay resounded at the recent United Nations climate talks:
CorporateAccountability.org/COP26PollutersPay

Plan for a legacy gift

Sustain our campaigns to protect human rights, people's lives, and the planet.

Contact Marcia Whitehead, Managing Director, at 617.695.2525.

Visit our website at CorporateAccountability.org/LegacyGiving

Send in the enclosed envelope.

Why legacy giving?

By leaving a legacy gift to Corporate Accountability, you can feel confident that your values and commitment to social change will carry on, and you provide the organization with a secure source of income. That helps us be more fearless and strategic in our work to challenge corporate power.

Thank you for your partnership!



"As an organization, Corporate Accountability addresses the essential issues and gets things done. I'm proud to continue my support because I know that together, we can transform the world."

ANN-MARIE JUDSON | PEACE AND JUSTICE ACTIVIST



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