

PETROLEUM IN NIGERIA 2002

1. IJAW, Ogoni ACCUSE GOVERNMENT OF BETRAYAL

Ijaw and Ogoni in the Niger Delta have vowed to resist Federal Government's new policy thrust to focus more on oil exploitation and production in the offshore fields rather than on-shore where over 70 per cent of existing oil output is done. Accusing the Federal Government to have connived with oil companies to begin accelerated development of offshore fields, the two ethnic nationalities claimed that it was a careful way to abdicate the responsibility of developing the Niger Delta region by the government.

Source: *RESISTANCE OILWATCH NETWORK BULLETIN Number 31 – August 2002*

2. PIPELINE RUPTURE: SHELL REPAIRS FACILITY REFUSES TO CLEAN CRUDE OIL SPILL

On June 28, 2002, SPDC's pipeline located at an area in the community of the rural Ikata peoples called Akbor ruptured and spewed large quantity of crude oil into the communities sources of water; lakes, rivers and farmlands. The Paramount Ruler of the community, Chief ThankGod Ozor, 49 years old, and father of 8 children who is concerned about the devastation of the community environment and its effect on the rural economy, spoke to ERA Field Monitor. "This crude oil spill occurred on the 28th of June, 2002, we noticed it when our women who were going to their farms that morning returned to my palace to report that their cassava, and yam farmlands are covered with crude oil. I summoned my council of elders, women and youths of my community and told them to be calm that Shell is coming to clean the spill. After then, we invited Shell; they came and repaired their leaking pipeline, but did not clean the spill. Our lakes and rivers which are our only source of drinking water are covered with crude oil. We are still pleading with Shell to clean up the spills in our rivers, lakes and farmlands. This is not the first time this kind of a thing is happening. In 1983 at Agbeupa area and in 1996 at Isioku area in our community, their pipelines spilled crude oil too, and destroyed our farmlands.

This time around we are not prepared to accept Shell's claim that we sabotaged their pipeline. They only told us that we can't prove it. They have been doing that.

They don't ever compensate us for the damage done to our rivers, lakes and farmlands". Chief ThankGod Ozor, 49 years old, and father of 8 children ERA investigations revealed that since 1964 when Shell started its operation in the community, the facilities and pipelines have not been changed or replaced. But Shell's officials visited the community with armed mobile policemen to intimidate local folks. Since this incident occurred Shell has not cleaned the spill and has even refused to accept responsibility for the spill and the resultant destruction of sources of livelihood.

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Source: RESISTANCE OILWATCH NETWORK BULLETIN Number 33 – Octobre 2002

3. SHELL IS TOO TRICKY TO HANDLE. RURAL PEOPLE CRY OUT AGAINST SHELLS REFUSAL TO CLEAN SPILL

a) ABOUT THE COMMUNITY AND PEOPLES

Ikata is a relatively big rural settlement in the Ekpeye ethnic nationality in the Niger Delta (administratively located in the Ahoada-East Local Government Area, Rivers State, Nigeria). The population of the community is about 3,600. Subsistence agriculture and fishing are the major occupations of the people. Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) started its oil activities in the community in 1964.

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ERA investigations revealed that since 1964 when Shell started its operation in the community, the facilities and pipelines have not been changed or replaced. But Shell's officials visited the community with armed mobile policemen to intimidate local folks. Since this incident occurred Shell has not cleaned the spill and has even refused to accept responsibility for the spill and the resultant destruction of sources of livelihood.

c) LET LOOSE SPIN-DOCTORS ON LOCAL IKATA PEOPLES

Despite the change in government from the military to a civilian government in Nigeria, Shell seems to be holding tenaciously to its old ways and unpopular tactics: "When this spill occurred and Shell came here (Ikata Community) on August 20, 2002. They came with armed mobile policemen, one person who introduced himself as Mr. John Dee, one Jude Ndubisi and another Deifa, they said that the persons mentioned are representing their Community Relations Department and Ministry of Environment. We allowed them to clamp the pipeline and they promised to come back. We have not seen them again.

When we waited and we didn't see Shell, we went to the Rivers State Ministry of Environment in Port Harcourt, Rivers State headquarters and reported the matter to the Commissioner of Environment who denied knowledge of the spill. He advised us to pursue the matter as Shell is too tricky to handle.

We are still pursuing the matter. Our primary demand is that, they should clean the spill, other demands are secondary. Example, if we put compensation as the first thing, for how long can they feed us no matter how rich they are?"

Chief Franklin Ituma, 59 years old, father of 10 children, a farmer and member of the Ikata Council of Chiefs.

d) SHELL SPILL SPREADS TO OTHER COMMUNITIES

The Ikata Community is connected to other communities in the Olobo, Owu and Ochiba lakes. These lakes whose branches are emptied into the upper Orashi River, Omelema, Omokua, Odaga, Emoh and Elok communities in the Central Abua Central Local Government Areas of Rivers State had on September 20, 2002 in a joint media statement on a local radio in Port Harcourt, Rivers State FM Stereo, appealed to Shell to come and clean the spill and provide alternative source of drinking water for the affected communities. The Olobo, Owu and Ochiba lakes in Ikata community are tributaries of the Upper Orashi River. The Upper Orashi River cuts across heartland of the various communities in Abua Central Local Government Area ERA observed a rapid off-site migration of the crude oil spill into community streams, lakes, rivers and farmlands affecting neighbouring communities. The consequences of the spill on the people and their environment is grave. The site and environs is covered with releasing offensive odours. Also, the community's living quarters is located about kilometers from the site of the spill. The impact of the spill and the environment is considerable.

There is very low infrastructural development in the community, i.e. poor housing situation, non-existent portable water supplies and medical facilities. In return for their oil, the oil rich communities are visited with polluted water, destroyed livelihoods and intimidation.

Source: *RESISTANCE OILWATCH NETWORK BULLETIN Number 34–
December 2002*