

UNEP In Ogoniland Newsletter

May - June 2011

United Nations Secretary-General visits Nigeria

The UN Secretary-General, Mr Ban Ki-moon, recently concluded a two day official visit to Nigeria.

The Secretary-General held meetings with President Goodluck Jonathan, the external Affairs Minister Odein Ajumogobia, the Chairman of the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) Professor, Attahiru Jega, and the Governors' forum.

Shortly after his meeting with the INEC Chairman, the Secretary-General remarked that Nigeria's present offered a bright hope for the rest of Africa.

He hailed the just-concluded general elections as credible and commendable but expressed regret at the post-election violence and shared his condolences over those who lost their lives.

“Since the admission of Nigeria into the UN half a century ago, Nigeria has maintained a steady and strong partnership with the UN. Just a week after your independence you dispatched your men and women as members of the peace keeping force.

Now you are the forth largest troop and police contributing country, starting with Dafur and nine other different areas where your men and women have contributed greatly to the peace and stability of the world and I deeply appreciate,” the Secretary-General said.

The Secretary-General also visited the Maitama General Hospital in Abuja and the Dutse Makaranta Health Care Centre also in Bwari.

On 21 June, Member States of the General Assembly confirmed Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's appointment for a second five-year term until December 2016



United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon visit to the Maitama General Hospital in Abuja

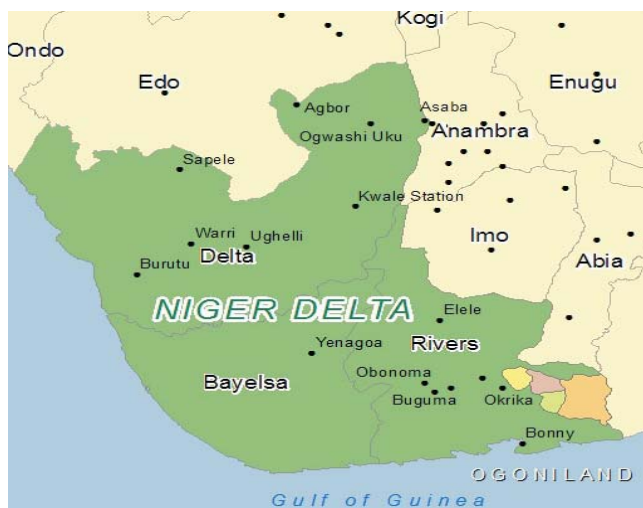


At the request of the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is conducting a comprehensive, independent assessment of the environmental and public health impacts of oil contamination in Ogoniland, Rivers State, Nigeria, and options for remediation. The fieldwork and laboratory analysis are now completed. The report is being finalised.

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Your questions answered

To keep stakeholders informed about the environmental assessment of Ogoniland being conducted by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), here are more answers to commonly asked questions about the project. See also the April 2011 edition.



Map of southern Nigeria showing Ogoniland (coloured areas)

Where exactly is Ogoniland?

Ogoniland is a kingdom covering some 1,000 square kilometres in Rivers State, southern Nigeria, near to the border with Cameroon. (See map). Ogoniland is situated in the Niger Delta region, which is the third largest mangrove ecosystem in the world.

Who has worked on the environmental study?

UNEP recruited a team of international scientists comprising leading experts in disciplines such as contaminated land, water, forestry and public health, who worked under the guidance of UNEP staff members. This team was supplemented by local experts, academics and support staff.

As with all major environmental assessments conducted by UNEP, the work in Ogoniland was carried out to the highest international standards and in full compliance with relevant international best practices.

Though oil production in Ogoniland has ceased, the UNEP assessment team visited all accessible oilfields and oil-related facilities in the region, including both pipeline and facility rights of way as well as decommissioned and abandoned facilities.

Where were the scientific samples analyzed?

More than 4,000 samples of soil, groundwater and surface water, sediment, air and fish tissue were collected at different depths and at strategic locations in the landscape. To carry out the scientific analysis of the samples in strict compliance with international standards, laboratories were appointed based on a competitive international bidding process.

The appointed laboratories were expected to meet a number of requirements, such as certifications like ISO 17025, UKAS or equivalent for quality assurance, plus having a proven track record in dealing with international projects, preferably within a conflict setting, and permits to import soil, water, biological samples for analyses.

After a stringent evaluation of the bid documents, Alcontrol Laboratories UK and ALS Scandinavia in Sweden were contracted to carry out environmental sample analysis and fish tissue analysis, respectively.

How can I find out the facts about my community land?

If the UNEP project team visited your community land and took samples, then you will be able to find out what the scientists discovered there.

In addition to the information contained in UNEP's assessment report, fact sheets for more than 60 of the major sites investigated will be available on the UNEP website and these will provide detailed information about the levels of different substances found and options for cleaning up the pollution.

Once UNEP's report is published, what happens next?

The assessment report will be officially handed to Government of Nigeria. The report findings and recommendations will then be considered in detail by the Presidential Implementation Committee (PIC), which comprises representatives of all key stakeholders.



An aerial view of oil contamination in one of the creeks in Bodo West
Photo: Mazen Saggat

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UNEP has already recommended a Transition Phase as the next key step during which time numerous tasks will be completed to enable the clean-up to proceed with the minimum of delay including contract documents being drawn up, detailed clean-up designs being completed and the location of treatment centres within Ogoniland finalized.

When will the clean-up of Ogoniland begin?

UNEP is advocating for the clean-up to commence with minimum delay. Due to the dynamic nature of the environment there is a risk of the pollution footprint spreading further, exacerbating existing conditions.

Why only clean-up Ogoniland? What about the rest of the Niger Delta?

Clearly, pollution does not respect political boundaries, so it is well known that contamination occurs well beyond Ogoniland in other parts of the Niger Delta.

However, Ogoniland is viewed as a “test-case” with the rationale that what is demonstrated to work there in terms of remediating and cleaning-up oil contamination could then be replicated elsewhere in the Delta.

Therefore, the success of a clean-up operation within Ogoniland is extremely important for the entire region.

Is UNEP recruiting staff to work in Ogoniland?

As UNEP's environmental assessment is in its final stage, no recruitment is currently under way. Indeed the UNEP team in Port Harcourt is progressively being reduced now that the assessment phase is completed.

Your questions for the UNEP project team may be sent to: ogoniland@unep.org.



King G. N. K. Gininwa participated during the tree planting initiative

Green Frontiers action for World Environment Day



Students from Government Secondary School Onne, Eleme LGA simply gain experience in tree planting techniques

With the awareness and advocacy concluded in the four local government areas in Ogoniland, the UNEP team leveraged support from all communities visited which created a sense of anticipation for the tree planting events that took place to mark World Environment Day 2011.

The communities mentioned that aside from planting trees in specific compounds in their community, public places like churches, hospitals, village squares and school premises will not be left out.

All community leaders and key stakeholders during the advocacy visits were provided with information on the tree planting exercise and the forests theme of World Environment Day on 5 June. All awareness and advocacy visits were highly interactive and participatory.

The first tree planting event took place on 31 May, which kicked off a series of local events planned for the next fortnight with the involvement of the schools participating in the pilot of UNEP's Green Frontiers schools programme.

A volunteer and campaigner for tree planting in Gokana LGA, Mr. Mike Kobah, at the community sensitization in Bodo pledged to support the initiative and also to assist UNEP in monitoring the trees planted in Gokana.

The Ebubu Council of Chiefs stated they appreciated the capacity building aspect of the initiative as they expect it to rekindle the love for agriculture in the younger generation.

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In Khana LGA, the Youth leader of Kpean Community, Mr. Petaba Lemii Donaldson, pledged the youth support for the initiative and stated they were going to participate in both the earmarking of sites and the tree planting.

The Paramount Ruler of Onne Community, Chief Godwin Ollor, thanked UNEP for extending the initiative to Onne and said he would ensure that the trees for planting are evenly distributed in all sub-clans in the community to promote participation by everyone; he also stated the community will support the Green Frontiers Club members in monitoring the trees planted.

He also appreciated that trees of economic value were chosen as this will not only improve the economy of the Onne people but also build their love of nature.

The Green Frontiers Club members, after the sensitization in their schools, conducted a one-on-one awareness campaign amongst other students and in their various communities. In course of their sensitization, they stated the benefits of planting the trees both in the school premises and in the communities and sited the theme of the World Environment Day 'Forest Nature at our Service' as one of their criteria of planting trees to commemorate the WED.

The Club members being the front line of the activity will take the lead in planting the trees in the remaining communities, and in the process teach the community members all they have learned from UNEP and the Rivers State University of Science and Technology about how to plant trees and care for them.



The Tree Planting Initiative was embraced by all schools. Students of Government Secondary School Kwawa in Khana LGA show the enthusiasm in the campaign.

By Josephine Nzidee, Community Liaison Assistant

Tree planting continues



In Ogoniland, primary and secondary pupils from Green Frontiers Clubs organized tree planting events to mark World Environment Day on 5 June, in conjunction with UNEP and the Rivers State University of Science and Technology. (See page 3).

The 800 trees to be planted by the pupils, other community members and UNEP staff are also being pledged to the global "Plant for the Planet: Billion Tree Campaign", run by UNEP. This means the Ogoni community will contribute to the target of planting at least one billion trees worldwide this year.

See also www.unep.org/billiontreecampaign. Tree planting will also take place in the neighbouring Cross Rivers State, where the government has announced that it will plant 5 million trees within its state.

Did you know?

Land and waterways in Ogoniland are considered sacred in some parts, some members worship the land, known as "teere jian", and waterways, known as "dee dor".

For more information on UNEP's Environmental Assessment of Ogoniland Project

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