

UNEP In Ogoniland Newsletter

September 2010

Communities thanked for fieldwork support

Through the support of Ogoniland community members of all ages, the scientific teams conducting the fieldwork for the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) have so far collected more than 2,300 samples of water, soil, sediment, plants, air and fish for analysis.

The local knowledge contributed by community members and their willingness to cooperate with UNEP staff and provide practical support has underpinned the significant progress made so far.

With fieldwork ongoing during September, UNEP continued to receive invaluable support from local community members, not least by enabling scientists to access land and waterways to take more samples, but also through guiding them to oil spill sites, helping to manually drill boreholes and groundwater monitoring wells and by providing personal accounts of their experiences with the impacts of oil contamination.

The UNEP study represents an unprecedented effort to examine the extent, nature and implications of oil contamination in Ogoniland.



Women in Sugi-Bodo, Gokana, providing local knowledge about the environmental challenges in their community



A fisherman at Kaa waterside, Khana, explains to UNEP's aquatic team how far he must travel before catching fish for local consumption

UNEP is also working with Nigerian government officials at the national and Rivers State level, traditional rulers, the chairmen of the local government areas of Ogoniland, universities, laboratories, health centres and the UN Development Programme.

Having completed training with UNEP earlier this year, 20 students from the Rivers State University of Science and Technology (RSUST) are also totally involved.

In September, UNEP's aquatic team continued its fieldwork, collecting water and sediment samples in rivers, streams, mangroves and wetlands, visiting such sites as Kporghor Stream, Dortereba Creek, Eya River and Onura Onne. On most days, the team included two scientists, five students and two local guides.

UNEP's forestry and agriculture team was also active conducting more soil infiltration tests and collecting soil samples around oil impacted sites. This part of the project includes examining the impact of oil contamination on crops, plant vitality and livestock.

Meanwhile, the health team began sampling outdoor air and trained RSUST students to administer a questionnaire.

The fieldwork will continue in October.



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 ongoing. The report writing will start in November. The report will be published in early 2011.

September actions in the field



UNEP has developed a robust procedure for labelling each sample which involves allocating an identification number and noting the exact location and date. Sediment samples like the one above are placed in coolboxes to conserve their organic compounds.



Scientist Jonus Palsson and Okpaku Ajubo, a student of RSUST, use a telescopic rod to take a sediment sample from a waterway at Bane community in Khana.



Public health expert Harlee Strauss reviewing medical records in K.Dere Primary Health Centre, Gokana. The health team has so far visited 19 medical facilities and the Rivers State Ministry of Health.



Public health expert Donna Vorhees carrying out air sampling on an oil spill site in Gio, Tai. Air samples are being analyzed for respirable particulate matter (PM2.5 and PM10) and several volatile petroleum hydrocarbons.



A UNEP team collecting ground water samples from a monitoring well in Korokoro, Tai LGA



The socio-economic well-being of the people in Ogoniland is of concern to UNEP, including access to safe and potable water. A woman fetching water from a well discusses the quality of water in her community.

Khana youths hear from UNEP

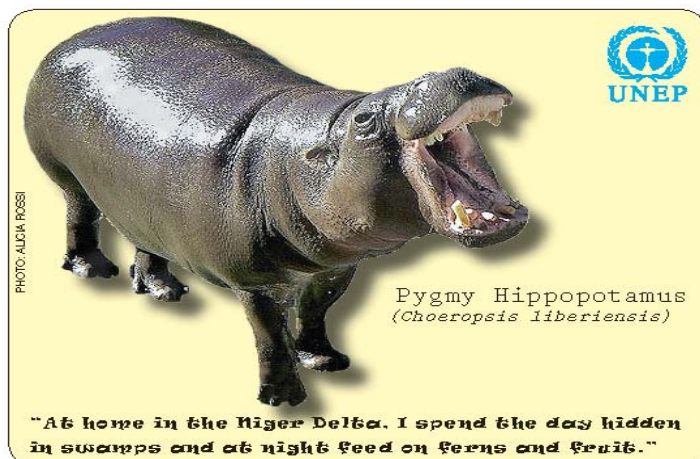
Around 400 young people attended a youth summit with the theme "Summit of Unity" held on 5 September at the Bori Police field in Khana Local Government Area.

UNEP's Community Liaison Assistant for Khana, Josephine Nzidee, was among the guest speakers and gave the audience a project update as well as distributing information materials. In her remarks, Mrs Nzidee thanked the youth leadership of all the communities for their cooperation and dedication to UNEP's environmental assessment.

The President, National Union of Ogoni students, Mr Emmanuel Goteh Bie, told the crowd that UNEP's project was laudable and urged students to support the project. The event, organized to help promote peace and unity in Ogoniland, featured youth leaders from various groups and communities from Nyor-Khana, Ken-Khana and Babbe kingdoms as well as traditional rulers, including Mene Suanu Baridam.

Also in attendance were the Vice Chairman of Khana Local Government Area, the Hon. Lateh Lah-Looloo; the Vice President National Youth Council, Comrade Marvin Yorbabna; and the Hon. Befii Nwile, a member of the Rivers State House of Assembly. The summit was staged by youth leader, Sunny Bekanwah.

Schools Programme



UNEP's schools programme will help educate young people about the importance of conserving Nigeria's wildlife

Meanwhile, the UNEP Project Team is preparing to launch a pilot environmental education programme. The programme will build on UNEP's ongoing outreach efforts in Ogoniland by focusing on primary and secondary school students.

The initiative will aim to encourage children and youth to take practical action to protect and restore their local environment.



UNEP's Josephine Nzidee visiting Community Primary School Kwawa, in Khana LGA, earlier this year

Remaining project timeline

Ongoing:	Scientific sampling and other fieldwork
Ongoing:	Liaison with government officials at all levels and with Ogoniland communities
Oct-Dec:	Scientific analysis and preparation of the assessment report
Early 2011:	Release of UNEP's environmental assessment of Ogoniland report

Meet the Project Team



Christie (right, with cap) presents project information to community representatives of Bodo city in Gokana LGA during an awareness session

Christie Austin-Gbaraba, Community Liaison Assistant

The UNEP team includes four full-time Community Liaison Assistants, one for each of Ogoniland's local government areas. As the focal point for community outreach in the Gokana area, Christie Austin-Gbaraba helps build relationships between UNEP and key local stakeholders, including the traditional rulers and local government officials. Christy facilitates consultations, awareness sessions and community involvement in UNEP's fieldwork in Gokana.

A local of Bodo in Gokana, Christy holds a philosophy degree from the University of Calabar, Cross Rivers State. She has over 15 years experience in human resources and development in the Niger Delta region, including contributing to women and youth empowerment programmes through Generation Next and Potters Heritage Foundation.

Project key facts (as at 30 September 2010)

Number of community outreach meetings	92
Number of participants at outreach meetings	21,500
Ground water monitoring wells installed	147



Some members of the UNEP Project Team assembled for a photo on 3 September during a visit to the Port Harcourt project office by UNEP's Regional Director for Africa, Mounkaila Goumandakoye, and the Chief of UNEP's Post-Conflict and Disaster Management Branch, Henrik Slotte.

Did you know?

The population of Ogoniland (Eleme, Tai, Gokana and Khana) is around 799,000 as declared by the National Population Commission.

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

Please contact:

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30 September 2010