

- Community experiences 5<sup>th</sup> oil spillage in seven months
- Spill continues on day 8 without clamping

Ikarama is an Ijaw speaking community in Okordia clan of Yenagoa Local Government Area, Bayelsa State. Five oil spill incidents have occurred in the community between June and December 2008. The latest spill occurred on December 6<sup>th</sup> 2008. See ERA reports numbers 184, 186 and 187.

ERA's field monitor visited the community on December 14<sup>th</sup> after receiving a report of the current oil spill. On getting to the site, we saw that the crude oil was still flowing with a humming sound that became louder as one got closer to the spot. The colour of the crude oil was yellow, like the yoke of an egg. The spilled crude followed the gradient and flows into the nearby lake.

, a member of the current Caretaker Committee of Ikarama and Mr. Washington Odoyibo, who is also the Chief Security Officer of Ikarama community.

*Well, I thank you [ERA] once again for visiting us. We have explained our position to you before as it relates to these seeming endless oil spills in our environment. Hence, there is little or nothing one can say again. As for the socio-economic consequences, they are huge; almost invaluable. Except concerned groups like yours come to us and express solidarity, we have no support from other quarters; definitely not from Shell and the authorities. Our land, air and water resources, including lakes are continuously subjected to pollution from oil spill. I will say no more; you may go with Mr. Washington to see the damage done.*

*I don't stay in the community like before. I got a little job with SAIPEM recently so I go to work in Yenagoa daily except on Sundays. I was duly informed of the most recent oil spill. It occurred on the 6<sup>th</sup> of December, 2008. I tried to make enquiries but up till now I have not received any information as to the cause of the spill. I was told the spill actually occurred at the very spot of a previous spill; very close to the Oya/Obran lakes. This will be my first visit to the site since the current oil spillage started.*

*Speaking further, Mr. Washington said I am really shocked that this crude oil is still flowing and polluting the lake. I thought Shell would have come to clamp the spot but you can see that they have done nothing to stop this damaging oil spill . Shell was in our community a day or so after the spill occurred.*

*That was when we were conducting elections into community leadership; for CDC and Youth. It is sad to note that Shell has allowed the crude oil to continue flowing into the environment. Right now, we cannot imagine the hundreds of barrels of crude oil that have spilled into the environment. This is a continuation of the wicked acts of Shell staff/contractors against our people.*

*I do not know the cause of this current oil spillage. If it is sabotage, it could be traced to some staff and contractors of Shell who have been taking undue advantage of some of our foolish youths. It is annoying; I am not happy at all. That is why I am ready to name names if need be. Unfortunately, the contractors will just give out about N150,000.00 [One hundred and fifty thousand naira] to these youths to either set fire on the spill site or make an attempt at cleaning. The contractors will then smile to the banks.*

When asked whether he could actually name names, and what the community had done in the past to stop anything like sabotage, Mr. Washington said,

*Yes, I am willing to mention names because it is very annoying. I make bold to mention Tunde, the Community Liaison Officer [CLO] at the Kolo Creek office of Shell. I say so because each time there is oil spillage here in our community he calls some community youths on phone to either Yenagoa or any other meeting point for them to discuss with the contractors. I am not hiding my bitterness as far as this issue is concerned. In the past I was instrumental in the arrest of some of these community youths. To our surprise, it was this same Tunde, Shell's CLO, that came to the rescue of the arrested youths. He ensured they were freed immediately. Call me anywhere this matter requires my attention; I will come and testify. Things cannot continue like this; even our ancestors are angry at the way Shell is toying with us. Instead of giving genuine employment to the youths, they are engaging in unwholesome acts that destroy our environment and sources of livelihood*

Speaking on the significance of the lakes, Mr Washington said, *We have some lakes in our environment that owners sometimes lease out for between N800,000.00 and N2 million per harvest season. During the periods of harvest, daily sales are sometimes up to N500,000.00. The harvesting can last for over two months. So, just imagine what the owners of these two lakes, the Oya and Obran, would be missing economically with this kind of oil slick that has covered the entire surface of both lakes. The Oya lake belongs to my family*

*, 16 years old, who was also at the spill site with his brother, Idubamo Sambo, told of the impact of the oil spillage.*

*As we were going round now with you, I saw some dead fishes floating on the lake. It shows that the oil slick is dangerous to aquatic lives. This oil spill has continued for days now but Shell*

*is yet to come and clamp the leaking spot on the pipeline. For us who are still under the care of our parents for almost everything: feeding, clothing, medicare and school fees, T oos spiussp of*