

- Oil spill pollutes Kalaba environment
- Two months after, Agip yet to clamp leaking pipeline

Kalaba is one of the six communities that make up Okordia clan in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. This Ijaw speaking community is located along the Taylor Creek. Kalaba's neighbours include Ikarama, Ayamabele, and Akumoni. Like most host communities, Kalaba is being negatively impacted by oil exploration and exploitation. The community is still suffering from the negative effects of Agip's oil pipelines ruptured in February 2009. Environmental Rights Action [ERA] monitors visited the community on April 15, 2009.

Mr. Roman Orukali, Chairman of the Community Development Committee [CDC] lead ERA monitors to the spill sites, across the Taylor Creek. As the monitors approached the first site, they heard the sound of gushing crude before they saw it. The ruptured Agip pipeline has been spewing crude oil into the environment since February and Agip is yet to clamp it.

Chairman of the Community Development Committee [CDC]

This pipeline belongs to the Nigeria Agip Oil Company [N.A.O.C]. It is identified as the Taylor Creek Location 11/13 Pipeline. The oil spill occurred on the pipeline on two spots, about seven hundred metres apart from each other. Agip has come to clamp one of the spill points but failed to clamp the other. Before they came to clamp, it took them over three weeks after they noticed the spill. These spills occurred at spots that had ruptured some time in the past. It was due to equipment failure. You can see how our swamp and general environment is being impacted. We are still lucky because this thing happened during the dry season; it would have found its way into the Taylor creek if it were to be during the rainy season. This is how we have continued to suffer in silence from the oil exploitation activities of Agip.

Paramount Ruler of Kalaba community.

I must express my gratitude to ERA for their mission to our community. We experienced two major oil spills in February, 2009. Though one of the leaking spots has been clamped by Agip, the other unclamped spot, as you must have noticed when you went to the site, is still spewing high volumes of crude oil into our environment. Not too long ago, an oil spill from our neighbouring community, Ikarama, also devastated our ponds and lakes behind the community. Later, we saw a huge fire from the Ikarama spill sites. That fire impacted negatively on us as it destroyed our farms, and economic trees like the raffia palm trees (our local zinc used for roofing). The two current oil spills from Agip pipeline in our community have equally damaged our natural swamps, trees, herbs and the general environment

The two spills occurred about the same period in February, 2009. We were surprised that it took Agip over three weeks to come for the clamping of one of the spots. More surprising is the fact that two months after these spills, Agip has not considered it fit to come and clamp the remaining spot. Before clamping the spot they did, Agip visited the site up to four times. Though Joint Investigation Visit (JIV) has been concluded, I wonder how many times they will visit again before clamping the remaining spot, and saving our environment from total destruction.

A Joint Investigation Visit to the spill sites has been carried out. The report revealed that the spill was due to equipment failure. Our representative signed the JIV report and because we insisted on having our own copy, they reluctantly gave us a photocopy. Those two spots have ruptured in the past. The pipes, if my memory is right, were laid in 1987; over 20 years ago.

In the light of the above, I would like to call on the authorities to direct Agip to return to site. Agip should show some corporate responsibility. After all, the spill was not caused by us, it was their own fault; equipment failure is their fault. So, government should prevail on Agip to effect clamping on their pipeline. This crude oil has been leaking since February, 2009 and, I wonder how Agip can feel relaxed over such a thing. Agip should take steps to do what is expected of them. After clamping, we expect Agip to clean up our environment because they are deliberately polluting our environment by their negligence. We also want Agip to carry out remedial measures to restore the fertility of the land and swamps. No doubt, we expect compensation from Agip for this deliberate damage to our environment.

Other community folks who were present when the Chief spoke to ERA include Mr. Ogbolosingha Dennis, Mr. Tamuno Gordon and the C.D.C. Chairman Mr. Roman Orukali. Before ERA departed, _____ pointed to the fact that the construction of the Agip pipeline in their environment did not take into consideration the livelihood concerns of

the people. In his words:

Our fish paths have been blocked. During the floods there are natural paths through which fish gets into our swamps, lakes and ponds. The construction of oil pipelines have denied us all these; they have blocked most of the paths. This is another sad aspect of the oil companies. They seem not to care about what the natives feel or do for a living. They consider us fools who know nothing but we are not.

One major observation about this particular spill is that the colour is just like that of kerosene. Some women and youths were seen collecting it. Some from other communities come to collect it for use in their houses saying they use it directly in stoves and lanterns without the usual danger associated with petrol.

It is shocking that Agip has allowed continuous spewing of the content from its pipeline into the environment for over two months. In view of the danger the act poses to the environment and people of Kalaba, it is hereby recommended that

- Agip moves to site immediately to clamp the leaking spot
- The authorities compel Agip to act responsibly, to avoid further damage to the ecosystem

and, to forestall violence.

- Agip ensures proper clean up and remediation of the environment
- Agip compensates the Kalaba community.