

Ikarama has been in the news for some time now as one of the most polluted communities in the Niger Delta. The pollution of Ikarama environment has been through oil spillages from ruptured pipelines owned by the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC). Instead of proper clean up of the several spill sites in the community, Shell has allegedly resorted to setting fire to such spill impacted sites; a very wrong approach to clean up. The last of such fires occurred on Sunday 1st of March, 2009.

Though none of the spill impacted sites has been cleaned, Shell's recent claim in the media that they have commenced clean up in oil spill impacted sites in Ikarama prompted ERA to visit the community with the Africa Independent Television (AIT) to confirm or place Shell's claim in perspective. ERA and AIT visited Ikarama on April 24, 2009.

Four members of the Egberi-wari family were interviewed at the oil spill / fire impacted lakes. They include: Pastor FearGod Kologa, Chief Luke Obonah, Mrs. Animate Kologa and Mr. Theophilus

Francis. They all expressed regret that Shell feels comfortable regardless of what the Ikarama people have suffered. They lamented the nonchalance of Shell and demanded that they clean up their environment. Pointing to the crude oil slick that was still very heavy on the lakes, the Egberi-wari family members wondered why Shell lied that they have commenced clean up in Ikarama.

Shell came to this environment in the early 1960s. They laid the pipes around that period. Since then, no efforts have been made to replace the pipes. We believe the pipes are old and are due for replacement. That is why there have been series of spills in this community. Yet, each time there is an incidence of oil spill, Shell will claim it was caused by third party /sabotage. Shell should take steps to change their pipes rather than apportioning blame where they are not supposed to. They claim the spills are caused by sabotage just to dodge the payment of compensation to victims. We want Shell to come and restore the fertility of our lakes and farms. They should come and carry out clean up. They have not cleaned the place

Shell came here yesterday and went round inspecting all their spill sites in our community. Maybe they are contemplating coming for clean up. When we observed that no attention was paid to this major case [the lakes sites], we asked them why. They replied that this one is a big case and we were not directed to look at it. We are not happy with their statement. We have decided that unless they come with the intention of cleaning up this place, we shall seize any of Shell's vehicles we see in this community. That is our plan now. Shell should come and clean up our lakes that they have destroyed. They have to compensate us too for damages suffered.

I really don't know what else to say. I have lost one main source of my livelihood. I used to set my crayfish traps here in the Oya Lake. That is how I used to get money to assist in clearing my farms and taking care of other family needs. Today, I no longer come here for fishing because the place is completely destroyed, as you can see. I have not been myself since this incident. I know what I used to make from this lake daily.

ERA observed that Shell has not cleaned up the oil spill/fire impacted sites in Ikarama. This was attested to by the A.I.T crew who expressed surprise at the extent of damage and crude oil slick that was all over the surface of the lakes. It was clear that the water in the lakes cannot sustain any aquatic life. The remains of burnt trees littered the spill/fire impacted environment. The visit was properly covered by A.I.T's video camera man Mr. Charles Kosipre. ERA's Alagoa Morris made some statements debunking Shell's media claims.

The joint visit by ERA and A.I.T to Ikarama has exposed Shell's lies and cover ups. It revealed that Shell was yet to commence actual clean up of oil spill sites in the community. ERA therefore recommends that

- 1 Shell takes immediate steps to clean up its polluted sites in Ikarama community.

- 2 Shell stops the unwholesome practice of setting fire on oil spill sites in Ikarama. They should adopt internationally recognised best practices.

- 3 The Local, State and Federal Governments should ensure Shell carries out effective clean up and remediation of the polluted environment

- 4 Shell pays compensation to victims of oil spill/fire in Ikarama.