

Location: Diamond Estate, Idimu-Isheri Olofin Local Council Development Area (LCDA), Lagos State

Date: February 5, 2010

HIGHLIGHTS

- Water sources remain polluted two years after incident was first recorded
- Boreholes in affected estate clamped, no alternative provided for owners
- NNPC denies responsibility, schemes to evade liability

ERA/FoEN monitors visited Diamond Estate, a prototype housing property with about 550 houses located along Iyana Iba-Igando Expressway in Idimu-Isheri Olofin Local Council Development Area (LCDA) on February 4 and 5, 2010 in response to a Save Our Soul (SOS) received on ERA's dedicated green lines.

Diamond Estate is sandwiched between Solous – a designated dumpsite in Lagos, and Isheri, a very busy link to Ikotun area of the state.

The Genesis

When ERA/FoEN fact-finding team visited the estate on two occasions, it was reliably informed by affected residents that the discovery of petrol gushing from the taps powered by water pumping machines started with occupants of plots in a particular section of the estate's phase two in October 2008. This happened when the homeowners moved in and started taking steps to provide themselves with potable water.

The occupants had initially thought the petrol which was in small quantity but very visible in the water would finally stop. But alas, it did not. Rather, the quantity increased significantly and posed a grave danger to the owners of the plots as they feared any careless spark may ignite an explosion.

Jemima Ayangba, wife of one of the affected homeowners told ERA/FoEN that before the Petroleum Products Marketing Company (PPMC) asked affected plots to stop using their boreholes in January this year, anytime the household pumped water, the smell of petrol hung so thick that a young man that visited the family and struck a match to light his cigarette actually triggered a minor incident.

Monitors confirmed that at the last count, about 50 houses recorded cases of petrol pumped straight from the ground.

PPMC Denies Culpability

It was learnt that several complaints to the PPMC on the dangers posed by the incidences of petrol coming from the taps were not acknowledged by the agency. When the complaints continued to pour in, what had seemed like a response from the agency by way of sending its officials to sample the polluted boreholes turned out to be an attempt to fool the property owners.

On the first occasion in December 2009 when three PPMC officials visited, it was learnt that they flatly told the residents that the nearest pipeline to the estate was in Iyana Ipaja, a 20-minute drive from Idimu-Isheri where the estate is located. They argued that it was not possible that any pipeline traversed underneath the estate. On that occasion, they only took samples from a few buildings and left.

When a second team came to the estate without giving the result of the samples the earlier team collected, the affected property owners decided to give them samples from their individual boreholes and tanks which they were subsequently told to stop using.

According to Ademola Omoboriowo, an inhabitant, When they came in January we were skeptical and insisted on getting a more concrete result so we took samples of water in our individual tanks and presented to them again to do an analysis but they outrightly rejected the samples. Instead, they told us that there were no pipes buried in the earth from where petrol could gush out. They told us not to use the boreholes to pump water assuring that the situation would soon normalize.

He explained that when some of the property owners threatened to sue, the PPMC officials told them that suing was a futile exercise as nothing could be achieved through that means. That was the last they heard from the agency.

ERA/FoEN gathered that until the PPMC told the concerned land owners to stop using their boreholes, the quantity of petrol coming from a particular borehole was so much that the owners started using the contents to power their electric generating set.

Omoboriowo took the ERA team round some of the impacted buildings where the occupants showed their pumping machines and tanks that were damaged by the petrol that corroded vital elements.

Observation

It is also noteworthy that apart from the petrol-in-the-borehole saga, residents also suffer from an acrid stench emanating from a nearby dump, the Solous Dumpsite, managed by the Lagos State Waste Management Authority (LAWMA).

The offensive odour from the open dumpsite with smoldering wastes worsens whenever it rains, forcing residents to lock their windows and remain indoors. It is also feared that because of the topography of the region, poisonous chemicals dumped at the site may have also leached into ground water furthering endangering the occupants of the estate.

Testimonies

It is not just all about collecting samples and pretending as if all is well. PPMC officials came here and lied to us that there was no pipeline underneath our plots but they have refused to tell us how refined petrol found its way into our water source. It is as bad as us becoming jittery when striking a match to even cook in our homes

-James Odeduan, resident

We need clean water for drinking and other uses. PPMC said that all will soon be well after taking samples in January but this is nearly four weeks after and nothing has changed. Now we depend on godly neighbors that were not affected for water but we cannot stretch our luck too far because they will deny us access whenever they feel we are using up too much of their water

-Adeniji Jaiyeola, resident

We are still waiting for PPMC to give us an alternative to the sources of water we have because it was their pipelines that polluted our water. At a point my household was using the water to bath but when we suddenly started having rashes and itching we had to stop. Even my baby that was barely a year old also suffered rashes all over his body. We now depend on the goodwill of other homeowners that are not affected for water for bathing and other uses. How long will this continue?

- Mrs. Adenike Jaiyeola, nursing mother and occupant

ERA s Recommendations/Demands

The PPMC should take immediate steps to trace and clamp the spill in the estate and halt the pollution of ground water in the area.

The PPMC should take steps to detoxify the area.

Impacted households should be relocated and compensated

PPMC should be compelled to out regular integrity checks on al NNPC facilities throughout the federation

The Federal Government should ensure that NNPC acts responsibly and adheres to internationally accepted standards. Failure by its subsidiary the PPMC to clamp the spill in the estate may lead to explosions in the near future.

The Solous Dumpsite should be closed or properly engineered, built and run to internationally accepted standard to safeguard the health of residents in the area.