

Ikarama Community, Yenagoa Local Government Area, Bayelsa State

Ikarama community is one of the six towns that make up Okordia clan, in Yenagoa LGA of Bayelsa State. This community, which is situated along the Taylor Creek, is host to Shell Petroleum Development Company and Nigeria Agip Oil Company [ENI]. The community has also been described as the community with the highest frequency of oil spills in the state, with several oil spill impacted sites lying waste in the community.

All the oil spills recorded in Ikarama have resulted from Shell's facilities, that is, either from pipelines or from the Okordia Manifold sited in the community. ERA's field monitor visited Ikarama on July 12, 2009 following report of two recent oil spills. Below are testimonies from community folks.

Mrs. Ayibakuro Warder [Women Leader]

We are actually getting tired of talking about these endless and devastating oil spills in our community. The worst of it all is that, whether it is genuine or sabotage [as they usually claim] Shell has never paid compensation to our people for the damages caused our land and water resources; as well as other properties. The two recent spills were as a result of equipment failure. It is sad that Shell treats us the way they do. We can not use oil spill impacted sites for anything. In July 2007 a spill resulted from equipment failure at Okordia Manifold. Now we are experiencing another spill from the same place for the same reason. I really don't know exactly what to say anymore. What I know is that we need help to get justice from Shell .

Mr. Roman Gesie (Vice Chairman of the Community Development Committee)

You can see that these oil spills have impacted areas that are not in Shell's right of way. Just look at the pillar [pointing at a small pillar near the fence of the Okordia manifold] that marks the boundary between Shell's acquired land and us. Shell fails to respond promptly when spills; they do not care about the environment. When they respond, they come with military men [the JTF] to intimidate us and deny us the right to express ourselves against the obvious injustices. Though they treat us like this, some Shell staff [like the CLO] are benefitting from our pains. They make a lot of claims from Shell, which never gets to us. With these financial gains at our expense they all have choice properties in places like Port Harcourt. The situation is pathetic. We are not happy about our plight.

Mr. Raphael Warder (The CDC Public Relations Officer)

The first of the two recent oil spills occurred in June, 2009 while the second one happened just last Friday, 10th July, 2009. Both were as a result of operational spill. Shell awarded a contract to an oil servicing company known as Dec Oil And Gas Ltd. The project site activity description talked about JIV/SECTIONAL REPLACEMENT ON 12 ADIBAWA D/L IKARAMA OKORDIA

COMMUNITY SEGMENT. So, Dec Oil and Gas Ltd officials were working on the line when in June, 2009 a spill occurred from one of the valves inside the Okordia manifold. The oil spill spread to the manifold surroundings [inside and outside], impacting our land. Without any Joint Investigation Visit [JIV] to formally determine the cause of spill, Shell officials, especially the Community Liaison Officer [CLO] ordered for the impacted soil to be turned upside down. You can still see the crude oil there now. This was done through the use of force and intimidation, using the JTF to scare us away from the site.

While we were still thinking of what to do about the above, another oil spill occurred inside the manifold, also as a result of operational lapses on the part of Dec Oil and Gas Ltd; from one of the valves. They came the following day [11th July, 2009] to stop/clamp the leaking spot. Our major concern in such a situation is that Shell should react promptly to also clean up the impacted environment, not just stop at clamping.

Chief Mission Neberi

Actually Dec Oil and Gas Ltd was working on the Adibawa/Okordia delivery line when the oil spillage of 26th or 27th June, 2009 occurred. From what we heard, they initially stopped or reduced the flow of crude oil from the Adibawa flow station at JK4. When they were flushing the line a spill resulted inside the manifold here in our community. So, both the oil spill of June 2009 and the one that just happened last Friday 10th July 2009 were as a result of equipment failure; from valves inside the Okordia manifold. Shell will not argue that, they know it to be so.

ERA's field monitor visited the spill impacted site and found oil slick floating on a large collection of water near the manifold. This was the very site that was impacted when a similar oil spill occurred inside the manifold in July, 2007. It was also observed during this visit that the land area not covered by water was not only being cleared of weeds, the top soil had been turned upside down. The particular valve from which the spill resulted was marked OKO 016. At the time of visit the leakage had ceased but crude oil was seen in some corners inside the manifold; on the floor and immediately behind the manifold building.

1. A proper clean up must be carried out around the impacted site of these recent oil spills.
2. Shell should not just turn impacted soils upside down, they should apply internationally accepted best practices for clean up and remediation.
3. In line with the polluter must pay principle, the victims should not only be compensated, they should be allowed to appoint a reputable clean up contractor to effect the clean up.
4. Shell should apologise to the Ikarama people for not following due process and intimidating them with the JTF.
5. The authorities should wake up and defend the environmental/human rights of Ikarama people, especially from the unjust environmental practices of Shell.