



Environmental Assessment of Ogoniland

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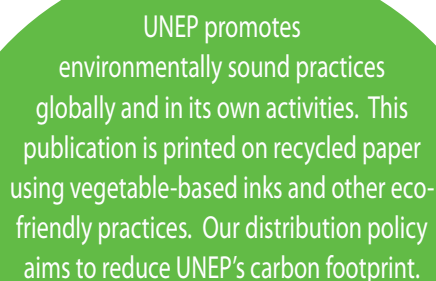
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Foreword

The history of oil exploration and production in Ogoniland is a long, complex and often painful one that to date has become seemingly intractable in terms of its resolution and future direction.

It is also a history that has put people and politics and the oil industry at loggerheads rendering a landscape characterized by a lack of trust, paralysis and blame, set against a worsening situation for the communities concerned.

The reality is that decades of negotiations, initiatives and protests have ultimately failed to deliver a solution that meets the expectations and responsibilities of all sides.

In an attempt to navigate from stalemate to action, the Government of Nigeria, in consultation with many of the relevant actors, invited UNEP to consider undertaking an assessment of oil pollution in Ogoniland.

UNEP has acquired an international reputation for assembling expert teams, coordinating demanding assessments and bringing scientific and empirical evidence to policymakers.

UNEP initially consulted with a wide range stakeholders and the United Nations Country Team in Nigeria in order to consider the scope and indeed the feasibility of the assessment.

We were confronted with a unique challenge: lack of trust between actors; political tensions between communities; regional and national government; gaining access to Ogoniland; security

In order to ensure the independence of the study and provide the logistics necessary, a framework for cooperation was negotiated in which all parties were involved and a recognized team of national and international experts then recruited for the two year assessment.

This report details how that team carried out their work, where samples were taken and the findings that they have made. Over a 14-month period, the UNEP team examined more than 200 locations, surveyed 122 kms of pipeline rights of way, reviewed more than 5,000 medical records and engaged over 23,000 people at local community meetings. Detailed soil contamination investigations were conducted at 69 sites. Altogether more than 4,000 samples were analyzed, including water taken from 142 groundwater monitoring wells drilled specifically for the study and soil extracted from 780 boreholes.

The findings in the report underline that there are, in a significant number of locations, serious threats to human health from contaminated drinking water to concerns over the viability and productivity of ecosystems. In addition that pollution has perhaps gone further and penetrated deeper than many may have previously supposed.

This report represents the best available understanding as to what has happened to the environment of Ogoniland – and the corresponding implications for affected populations – over many years of oil industry operations. It provides the government.

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