

DYING FOR OUR CHILDREN'S FUTURE

By

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They sneak into your land and pretend they have your interest at heart. But do they care for your existence? Their interest is always one-sided. Their interest lies only in the amount of money they will drill and explore from your land. The billions of dollars they drill from your land is stored up in investments and savings for themselves and their children's over privileged future. Private education, living in the best neighbourhoods in the best cities of the world, travelling to the best countries on luxury holidays, shopping in only the most luxurious shops, driving only the finest cars and wearing the latest most glamorous clothes & jewellery etc etc.

Compare all these to what happens to us and our children. Living in the most impoverished parts of the most dangerous areas in our countries, having little or no education, have no access to go to the shops as there are no roads to our markets, no idea about fashion as we struggle to buy hand-me down clothes, no electricity, no water, drinking toxic and polluted stream waters, breathing polluted air which then leads to our varied unknown diseases causing us untold hardship as we cannot work on our devastated land to provide for our children etc etc.



If you think this is a story from a fiction novel then read some of the documented plight of my people - the Ogoni people of Nigeria.

FACTS ABOUT THE OGONI EXPERIENCE

- Oil was discovered in Nigeria in the 1950s
- Nigeria earns over 95 percent of its foreign exchange from the sale of oil on the global market.
- Shell Oil controls approximately 60 percent of the domestic oil market in Nigeria and operates many of its oil facilities in the oil-rich Delta region of Nigeria of which Ogoni community is a major part.
- Nigeria's export of 12 million barrels of oil a day comes from the indigenous minority communities in these areas who receive no economic benefits. The revenue gained has not helped to the indigenous Ogonis and other groups as we have been further impoverished due to environmental degradation from oil production. We have become more vulnerable due to food shortages, health hazards, loss of land, pollution, forced migration and unemployment etc due to the activities of these oil companies on our land.
- The welfare of the Ogoni people and the other Niger Delta communities continue to be neglected by the ruling leaders.
- Shell Oil Company extracted an estimated US \$30 billion of oil from Ogoniland since 1958 without giving anything back rather what we got was environmental degradation.
- For daring to seek compensation for the environmental damage to our land our peaceful protest has been met with force and extreme violence by Nigeria's military government leading to jail sentences, deaths, asylum, deserted villages, communal clashes etc.
- The social and environmental costs of oil production have been extensive. They range from destruction of wildlife and biodiversity, loss of fertile soil, pollution of air and drinking water, degradation of farmland and damage to aquatic ecosystems, all of which have caused serious health problems for the inhabitants of areas surrounding oil production. Pollution is caused by gas flaring, above ground pipeline leakage, oil waste dumping and oil spills. Approximately 75% of gas produced is flared annually causing considerable ecological and physical damage to other resources such as land/soil, water and vegetation. Gas flares, which are often times situated close to villages, produce "soot which is deposited on building roofs of neighbouring villages. Whenever it rains, the soot is washed off and the black ink-like water running from the roofs is believed to contain chemicals which adversely effect the fertility of the soil."
- Without fertile soil, indigenous groups lose their mode of survival and are faced with the crisis of food shortages. Gas pipelines have also caused irreparable damage to lands once used for agricultural purposes.
- These pipes should be buried to reduce risk of fracture and spillage. However, they are often laid above ground and run directly through villages, where oil leaks have rendered the land economically useless.
- The emergence of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), led by Ken Saro-Wiwa, threatened the Establishment to such an extent that the former military ruler, Gen. Sani Abacha, chose to execute Saro-Wiwa as the solution to that problem.
- Ken Saro-Wiwa and his 8 colleagues were hung on November 10 1995 but their death did not make the problem evaporate because we the Ogoni people were still poised to fight for our right to participate in the use of our natural resources. Indeed, our Movement was more of a pressure group than the political force or criminal gang that Abacha's government saw it. MOSOP is still alive today but not indulging in any anti-social activity.
- In Ogoniland, there are documented facts about burst pipes and slicks dead vegetation caused by the open pipelines. This is not the case with Shell's operation in other countries as it does not take such precautions in Nigeria.



CURRENT SITUATION

- The oil giant Shell has reported profits \$18.6BN (£11.5bn) for 2010 - almost doubled from \$9.8bn in 2009.
- In 2008 it made \$27.6bn (£13.9bn) making British corporate history with the record figures, which are equivalent to more than £1.5m an hour.
- The oil giant Shell agreed to pay \$15.5m (£9.6m) in 2009 in settlement of the legal action for collaborating in the execution of the writer Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other leaders of the Ogoni people. This settlement, reached on the eve of the trial in a federal court in New York, was one of the largest payouts agreed by a multinational corporation charged with human rights violations and this scale of the payment was seen by experts in human rights law as a step towards international businesses being made accountable for their environmental and social actions. The sum of \$15.5m (£9.6m) is peanuts for the company and cannot compensate the 500,000 Ogoni people for generations of devastating pollution, human rights abuse, displacements, persecution, lack of a future for our generations unborn etc etc.
- Everyone in the Niger Delta knows that real justice has not been done, as the environmental abuses continue. The company continues to needlessly burn off vast amounts of gas. The air is still poisoned, children are still sick, there are few jobs, the creeks are polluted and the poverty is still intense. The Delta is densely populated with about 31 million people. Thousands of miles of above-ground pipelines snake throughout the Delta, passing through cities, towns and villages as well as delicate wetlands.
- The organized resistance to oil extraction in Ogoniland prompted Shell to suspend operations there in 1993 and it has yet to resume, but pipelines, some prone to leakage from age or poor maintenance, still traverse the territory.
- The security situation in the Niger Delta is far worse than it was 21 years ago when the Ogoni case began. Then, the delta was politically volatile but the oil companies could work there more or less unimpeded and people felt reasonably safe. A new group has formed now called the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) sprang up with a different agenda—not only to pressurize the government for its fair share of the country's oil money or for the development of the Niger-Delta Region but to enforce this demand through armed rebellion. The instability that ensued cannot be described because MEND resorted to kidnapping of expatriate staff of the oil companies operating in the Niger-Delta Region; sabotaging oil pipelines; and engaging in confrontations with the Nigerian Security Forces (especially the Navy and Army). The armed resistance and sabotage cut down Nigeria's oil production by 20%, leading to loss of much revenue. The MEND's modus operandi indicated that the group knew the value of full-fledged armed

rebellion to seek redress. The arrest of its leader and repression of its activities by the federal and local governments didn't really end the rebellion.

- Today the whole region is awash with guns and the delta is one of the most dangerous places on earth.
- The kind of peaceful protest that the Ogoni led in the 1990s now seems quaint. Anyone who stands up for environmental justice or who challenges the oil companies continues to be in mortal danger.
- The Nigerian government estimates there were over 7,000 spills, large and small, between 1970 and 2000, according to the [BBC](#). That is approximately 300 spills a year, and some spills have been leaking for years. By some estimates, over 13 million barrels of oil have spilled into the Delta. These millions of spills across the fragile Niger Delta have destroyed and continue to destroy the livelihoods of fishermen and farmers, fouled water sources and have polluted the ground and air.
- Nigeria has generated about \$600 billion in oil revenue since extraction began in 1958. Government corruption is largely blamed for oil revenue not increasing the standards of living for average Nigerians.

CONCLUSION

We may not be able to fight these giants individually but collectively we can continue to protest the injustice these corporations meet on our people. Every voice counts, every action counts, every activity counts. Keep it peaceful and never stop. Ken Saro-Wiwa led the way when he gave his life for this struggle and we must all continue to do all it takes to ensure our land and our children's future are protected. THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES.

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Information sources

www.mosop.org

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment>

<http://www.unpo.org/article>

<http://www1.american.edu/ted/OGONI.HTM>

others are

Greenpeace International, Amnesty International etc.