

Oil Spillage Kills 6, Devastates Environment

Following persistent leaks on a pipeline belonging to the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), CEHRD had in August, 2006 issued a report entitled, "Scooping oil for survival; NNPC celebrates Ecosystem Hazards in the Niger Delta". The report can be found on CEHRD website under the Conservation programme. The report raised a timely alarm of an impending danger, which was ignored by the local residents, the Nigerian government and their security agencies.

On Wednesday, October 4, 2006, the entire Sosioken area of Ogale community in the Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers State was heavily charged with choking fumes and hydrocarbons from spilled petroleum products on the NNPC pipeline which criss-cross the community. While the area was still smelling foul, the following morning, the local residents later discovered that 6 corpses of community residents who inhaled the poisonous fumes later got drown in the nearby ponds. They were scooping the spilled products from the water table in the pond in the area.

Following a search of the area, 6 corpses were recovered, 4 of which were identified as the following: Simeon Osaroachi, 16-year old boy, Olaka Ollor J. Olaka, Osilaka.

John Olaka, 10-year-old girl, a primary school pupil and Mrs Solomon Nwaforbobe, 31 a pregnant woman. The identities of the other 2 victims could not be ascertained, but they were teenagers who may have come in from neighbouring communities to scoop the petroleum products.

When the incident occurred, CEHRD visited nearby NNPC office to pressurised them to save the situation, but they told CEHRD monitor that in spite of the sad incident of the deaths, they could not stop the flow of the Premium Motor Spirit (PMS), because if they stop abruptly it would result into a fire outbreak. And that CEHRD should advise local residents not to enter the area with naked fire. The NNPC officials also blamed the police task force deployed to the area to guard the pipeline of conniving with vandals to steal their petroleum products.