

# Soldiers open fire on protesting youths in Bayelsa, kill 1, injure others

**From Bassey Willie, Yenagoa**

Soldiers guarding a facility operated by Consolidated Oil and Gas Ltd. (Conoil) have reportedly killed one Ikiowori Benson when they opened fire on protesting youths in Sangana Community, Brass LGA of Bayelsa State.

Community sources said other youths who joined the protest sustained injuries while two others were still missing.

Daily Trust gathered that the protest, which was staged at the sea where Conoil operates a facility named "Antie The Matriarch Julie," an offshore oil platform in OML 59, was to demand the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Conoil and Sangana.

It was learnt that youths numbering more than 10 from the community approached the Conoil facility unarmed with the sole aim of registering their displeasure with the company.

But they were shocked when

the military guards opened fire on them, killing one person instantly.

The Community Development Committee (CDC) Chairman of Sangana, Rueben Preboye, said Conoil, which has been operating in the community for about 25 years, was delaying the implementation of the MoU.

He said: "This MoU last for three years subject to renewal. The 2013, 2016, 2019 and 2022 MoUs have not been implemented and accumulated over N300 to N420 million worth of projects.

"On a yearly basis, the youth wing of the community changes its leadership. By our arrangement, we are to hold four quarterly meetings with Conoil.

"This year, the youth leadership has been disturbing Conoil for a meeting. We are almost in the second quarter and even the first meeting hasn't been held.

"Unfortunately, in the 25 years they have operated in our community, they haven't employed anybody from Sangana, despite having many

qualified persons.

"Even on the 2021 PIA implementation, Conoil doesn't want to comply with federal government law to set up Host Community Development Trust as stipulated in the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA).

"Then on the major gas leak that made the company evacuate all personnel onboard the facility which caused toxic air and water contamination that affected people in the community, Conoil refused to pay compensation and send medical personnel to treat our people to date.

"It's a very pathetic situation we are facing. I have not seen such an irresponsible oil company."

When contacted, the police spokesman in Bayelsa State, SP Asinim Butswat, told *Daily Trust* that there was no police personnel guarding the Conoil facility in Sangana.

Also, the spokesman for Operation Delta Safe (OPDS), Major Adenegan Ojo, did not respond to calls or reply to a text message sent to him.