

THE ECUMENICAL COUNCIL FOR CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY

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ECCR partners endorse UN Niger Delta oil spills report findings

The [National Coalition on Gas Flaring and Oil Spills in the Niger Delta](#) (NACGOND) has welcomed a new United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report highlighting the extraordinary scale of oil spills in the Ogoni area of the Niger Delta.

NACGOND was formed by partner organisations of church-based research and advocacy group the [Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility](#) (ECCR), including the Centre for Social and Corporate Responsibility, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, and Stakeholder Democracy Network, all of which work with oil-affected communities in the Niger Delta.

The 14-month [UNEP project](#) surveyed 122 km of pipeline rights of way and visited all known and accessible oil spill sites, wells and other oil-related facilities in Ogoniland. It concludes that 'most members of the current Ogoniland community have lived with chronic oil pollution throughout their lives' and that environmental restoration of Ogoniland 'could prove to be the world's most wide-ranging and long term oil clean-up exercise ever undertaken if contaminated drinking water, land, creeks and important ecosystems such as mangroves are to be brought back to full, productive health'.

According to NACGOND, the UNEP report 'estimates the need for a thirty year clean-up process that will cost \$1billion in the first five years, provides an explanation of how the current regulatory system is broken and explains that Shell has failed to adopt and uphold even its own environmental standards'. The report 'has for the first time independently explained what people in the communities knew already – that decades of environmental failings have caused an environment crisis in Ogoni', the coalition says.

NACGOND is calling for immediate implementation of UNEP's emergency response recommendations, including clean drinking water for those most at risk, and for Shell Nigeria to accept that 'its standards have contributed to the environmental disaster and immediately review and change its approach to oil spills'. It also urges 'a comprehensive and systemic survey' of environmental degradation across the entire Niger Delta region: 'Protection of land, waters and health of communities should be paramount.'

Oil giant [Royal Dutch Shell](#) has also accepted the report, acknowledging that 30% of Shell Nigeria's oil spills in the Delta 'have been caused by operational failure or human error ... this is unacceptable and [Shell Nigeria] has to improve its performance. It is determined to do everything within its control to reduce operational spills.'

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Shell has also recently accepted responsibility in a British court for two large oil spills in the Bodo area of Ogoni, in 2008/9.

NACGOND has criticised the UNEP report on one point. 'Not many civil society organizations in our coalition can claim to have been consulted; nor are there many communities in our networks that claim to have supplied information during UNEP's investigations,' it says.

ECCR's 2010 report *Shell in the Niger Delta: A Framework for Change*, featuring case studies by several NACGOND members, emphasises the importance of 'treating local communities as genuine partners' in developing the oil industry.

Notes for editors

NACGOND statement: 'Protection of land, waters and health of communities should be paramount' says coalition:

<http://www.stakeholderdemocracy.org/index.php?mact=News,cntnt01,detail,0&cntnt01articleid=362&cntnt01origid=67&cntnt01returnid=122>

UNEP report and executive summary, *Environmental Assessment of Ogoniland*:

<http://www.unep.org/nigeria/>

Shell response (Shell Petroleum Company of Nigeria):

http://www.shell.com/home/content/environment_society/society/nigeria/spills/unep_response

ECCR's 2010 report *Shell in the Niger Delta: A Framework for Change - five case-studies from civil society*: www.eccr.org.uk/ShellintheNigerDelta

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