

COMPONENT BRIEF: ENSURING EFFECTIVE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF OIL SPILLS

OBJECTIVE

Help reduce grievances related to oil spills in the Niger Delta.

CONTEXT

In the Niger Delta, oil exploration and extraction have had multiple and devastating impacts on livelihoods and the environment. Poor responses to incidents of oil spills have pitched aggrieved communities against multinational oil corporations, government and security agencies. Many incidents of violent conflicts in the delta are linked to oil spills that deprive people of their livelihoods.

OUR APPROACH

We help to address the conflict context by building the capacity of communities and stakeholders to develop inclusive co-ordination platforms. We facilitate the convening of multi-stakeholder platforms that bring together communities and regulatory agencies to ensure prevention and effective management of oil spills.

WHERE WE WORK

We work in Rivers State and will cascade lessons learned to other Niger Delta states.

WHO WE WORK WITH

- National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA)
- National Coalition on Oil Spills and Gas Flares in the Niger Delta (NACGOND)
- National Environmental Standards, Regulations and Enforcement Agency (NESREA)
- Federal Ministry of Environment, Rivers State Ministry of Environment
- National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)
- Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR)
- Communities: Biara and Bomu (Gokana Local Government Area), Anyu and Otari (Abual Odual Local Government Area) and Abuluoma, Tere-ama Fimie and Rumuibekwe (Port Harcourt City Local Government Area)
- Oil companies
- Civil society organisations
- Women's groups
- Youth associations



OUR WORK

Assessing the current response to oil spills: We supported local partners to conduct an assessment of 15 communities in Rivers State to better understand how they respond to oil spills and associated conflicts. We supported civil society partners to engage oil companies to understand what agreements already exist with communities and past actions made.

Bringing together communities, government and oil companies: We supported the development of multi-stakeholder platforms to promote dialogue on better management of oil spills. The platforms include representatives from the community, women associations, oil companies, regulator and government (state and selected local government areas). They ensure gender balance and inclusion of young people and others from groups traditionally marginalised. We work with our media partners in the Niger Delta region to share information about the platforms, their mission and actions.

Reforming regulatory frameworks: We provide technical assistance to regulatory bodies and relevant legislative bodies to review and reform regulatory frameworks around the prevention and management of oil spills.

Raising awareness about harmful environmental practices: We support civil society organisations (CSOs) to sensitise communities about the environmental degradation caused by oil spills and to mobilise them to hold government and oil companies to account. Our CSO partners train community leaders, young people, women, and religious leaders to serve as watchdogs and mobilisers to prevent the vandalisation of oil equipment in their communities. The 'community watchdogs' also report oil spills as soon as they occur to reduce their damaging effects.

Sharing lessons and results: We will document lessons learned from Rivers State to inform the replication of these activities in other states. We communicate results to other development programmes working on environmental issues in the Niger Delta and other states.

FIND OUT MORE

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CASE STUDY

Bridging trust between oil companies and communities

We supported the National Coalition on Oil Spills and Gas Flares in the Niger Delta (NACGOND) to host consultations with key stakeholders affected by oil spills and gas flares. Two meetings were held with representatives from oil companies, oil-bearing communities and regulatory agencies. Although there were initial concerns about distrust between oil companies and communities, it was agreed that a co-ordinated framework that is participatory and transparent was needed to better respond to oil spills. All groups pledged to work together going forward.

Joint investigation visits: An integrated response to oil spills in Rivers State

In Rivers State, a platform was established by the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency, Shell Nigeria and community representatives, which involves joint investigation visits (JIV) to spill sites. The new mechanism promotes transparency and participation. The JIV will review responses to oil spills, work together to develop solutions and communicate results to the wider community. Working with civil society, the forum is engaging indigenous oil-producing companies to participate in the initiative.

