

Dead Fish, Dead Trees, No Water to Drink

Chevron’s Own Environmental Impact Studies Show Its Ugly Environmental Record in Nigeria

- “The riverine area water is always fresh before. And it is the source of drinkable water for the community. And in the riverine area, there are species of fish that used to [be in] those water... these fish are no longer there, because of presence of salt water in the area And the source of drinkable water for the people is no more in there. People have to suffer, go very long distance in looking for freshwater.”
— Deposition of Ilaje villager Monday Omosaye.
- “One seemingly infallible conclusion that can be drawn from this ... is that a significant number of environmental problems and situations ... are in one way or the other related to dredging activities.”
— Chevron Environmental Impact Study, April 1997
- “The cause of this pollution [high level of metals in water] can be readily attributed to the existing oil related activities”
— Chevron Environmental Impact Study, March 1996



Ilaje Local Government Area
(© Ed Kashi)



Nigerian family fishing in the Niger Delta

The *Bowoto v. Chevron* case arises from Chevron’s involvement in the murders, shootings and torture of Nigerian villagers during a nonviolent protest at Chevron’s offshore Parabe Platform and barge. It’s one of many incidents where Nigerians who attempt to raise environmental and economic concerns with Chevron face violence as a result.

What are the environmental concerns of villagers that lead them to protest?

The Niger Delta is one of the largest coastal wetlands in the world, encompassing approximately 26,000 km. The communities where the oil and production facilities are located are rural – many reachable only by boat through serpentine rivers and creeks. The communities live largely on a subsistence basis as farmers and fishermen, so they are especially vulnerable to changes in their local environment.

The changes brought by Chevron’s activities are direct, immense and catastrophic. **Chevron’s own Environmental Impact Studies** confirm:

- Saltwater intrusion.
- Dredging
- Gas Flares
- Waste Material or “Dredge Spoils”
- Oil Spills

What does this mean for the villagers on a daily basis? Chevron's own **Environmental Impact Studies** (Chevron EIS) tell the tale:

Long Trip to Find Drinking Water: Dredging by Chevron and its predecessor Gulf Oil have caused the salty water from the Gulf of Guinea to penetrate the freshwater creeks of the Niger Delta where villagers get their drinking water. As a result villagers are forced to spend hours in their canoes seeking drinking water. Some witnesses report that the villagers use containers that previously held toxic chemicals to ferry water to and from their villages.

Far Fewer Fish, Less to Eat and Less to Sell: The fish used for subsistence and trading have been decimated by the side effects of oil production: salinization, metals left in the creeks, high acidity of the water, increased sediment and stirring up of the creek bottoms and the incursion of foreign vegetation that "may poison fishery resources."

"These effects include lowering the pH of the environment (mostly soil and water) which may in turn cause fish kill or migration ... in either case this is likely to have an economic backlash on the surrounding communities, who are mostly obligate fisherman."

— Chevron EIS, March 1996

"The low species diversity can be attributed to the harsh and variable environment occasioned by the oil production and exploration activities which have led to increased incursion of saline marine water into the area which were naturally low brackish waters."

— Chevron EIS, April 1997

"The low benthic population [bottom dwelling fauna] implies that there is inherent pollution in the area." — Chevron EIS, March 1996

Dying Vegetation and Agricultural Crops Means Less to Eat and Less to Sell: Saltwater incursion, dredging and the waste material left behind, metals, acid rain from gas flaring, oil spills -- all of these kill the local trees and plants, including the critical mangroves and the palm trees used by villagers for palm oil, wine, and trading. Coastal erosion caused by oil operations explain the 'inland flooding' and 'dying vegetation' found in the area by Chevron. — Chevron EIS, April 1997.

"There exists a delicate balance between salt and freshwater requirement by mangroves so vegetation is likely to be negatively impacted by dredging activities."

— Chevron EIS, March 1996

Erosion Eliminating Entire Communities: "The erosion is very aggressive such that residents keep on moving their settlements inland frequently."

— Chevron EIS, March 1996

Acid Rain Means Increased Respiratory Diseases: "Gas flaring is known to have serious negative health effects on humans. Gaseous emission from the gas flare and other combustion units may negatively impact the air quality in the project area... the main source of acid rain... This may bring about a high frequency of respiratory diseases among workers and neighboring communities." — Chevron EIS, March 1996

"Go to Awoye community and see what they have done. Everything there is dead: mangroves, tropical forests, fish, the freshwater, wildlife, etc. All killed by Chevron ... Our people complain of 'dead creeks.'" — Bola Oyinbo, one of the villagers beaten and tortured at Parabe.