Through the support of Ogoniland community members of all ages, the scientific teams conducting the fieldwork for the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) have so far collected more than 2,300 samples of water, soil, sediment, plants, air and fish for analysis.

The local knowledge contributed by community members and their willingness to cooperate with UNEP staff and provide practical support has underpinned the significant progress made so far.

With fieldwork ongoing during September, UNEP continued to receive invaluable support from local community members, not least by enabling scientists to access land and waterways to take more samples, but also through guiding them to oil spill sites, helping to manually drill boreholes and groundwater monitoring wells and by providing personal accounts of their experiences with the impacts of oil contamination.

The UNEP study represents an unprecedented effort to examine the extent, nature and implications of oil contamination in Ogoniland.

At the request of the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is conducting a comprehensive, independent assessment of the environmental and public health impacts of oil contamination in Ogoniland, Rivers State, Nigeria, and options for remediation. The fieldwork and laboratory analysis are ongoing. The report writing will start in November. The report will be published in early 2011.
September actions in the field

UNEP has developed a robust procedure for labelling each sample which involves allocating an identification number and noting the exact location and date. Sediment samples like the one above are placed in coolboxes to conserve their organic compounds.

A UNEP team collecting ground water samples from a monitoring well in Korokoro, Tai LGA

Public health expert Harlee Strauss reviewing medical records in K.Dere Primary Health Centre, Gokana. The health team has so far visited 19 medical facilities and the Rivers State Ministry of Health.

Public health expert Donna Vorhees carrying out air sampling on an oil spill site in Gio, Tai. Air samples are being analyzed for respirable particulate matter (PM2.5 and PM10) and several volatile petroleum hydrocarbons.

Scientist Jonus Palsson and Okpaku Ajubo, a student of RSUST, use a telescopic rod to take a sediment sample from a waterway at Bane community in Khana.

A UNEP team collecting ground water samples from a monitoring well in Korokoro, Tai LGA

The socio-economic well-being of the people in Ogoniland is of concern to UNEP, including access to safe and potable water. A woman fetching water from a well discusses the quality of water in her community.

A woman fetching water from a well discusses the quality of water in her community.
Meanwhile, the UNEP Project Team is preparing to launch a pilot environmental education programme. The programme will build on UNEP's ongoing outreach efforts in Ogoniland by focusing on primary and secondary school students.

The initiative will aim to encourage children and youth to take practical action to protect and restore their local environment.
The UNEP team includes four full-time Community Liaison Assistants, one for each of Ogoniland’s local government areas. As the focal point for community outreach in the Gokana area, Christie Austin-Gbaraba helps build relationships between UNEP and key local stakeholders, including the traditional rulers and local government officials. Christy facilitates consultations, awareness sessions and community involvement in UNEP’s fieldwork in Gokana.

A local of Bodo in Gokana, Christy holds a philosophy degree from the University of Calabar, Cross Rivers State. She has over 15 years experience in human resources and development in the Niger Delta region, including contributing to women and youth empowerment programmes through Generation Next and Potters Heritage Foundation.

The population of Ogoniland (Eleme, Tai, Gokana and Khana) is around 799,000 as declared by the National Population Commission.

For more information on UNEP’s Environmental Impact Assessment of Ogoniland Project

Please contact:

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