
Resistance to oil industry in Africa

A workshop on "Petroleum and Local Resistance", organized by Environmental Rights Action, took place at Port Harcourt, Nigeria, from 9 to 14 February. Oilwatch Africa also held its assembly in the same place. Delegates from several countries in the region --Cameroon, Ghana, Gabon, Chad and Nigeria-- as well as representatives of Oilwatch International attended both events, after which the group made a trip to oil fields in the Niger Delta, where a strong conflict between Shell and the indigenous Ogoni people is ongoing.

Several important issues were addressed, such as the situation of the oil industry in tropical countries, the relationship between oil exploitation, local communities and resistance, the role of the State, the conflict over the Chad-Cameroon pipeline, the role of the global economy. Experiences of local struggles -as that of the Ogoni people- were also presented.

More information on these activities is available at:
ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS ACTION
#214 Uselu Lagos Road, Benin City, Nigeria

In relation with the above, several US environmental NGOs organized for March 21 a rally in North Arlington, USA, to protest against Shell's activities in the Niger Delta. The multinational company started its activities in this area in 1958. While the company has in that period extracted oil valued in more than \$30 billion from the lands of the Ogoni people, in return, they have only received spoiled farmland, poisoned water reservoirs and toxic air. To this day, despite pleas from indigenous communities in the Niger Delta --particularly the Ogonis-- and millions of supporters around the world, Shell has done nothing to clean up its oil fields, claiming lack of funds to be devoted to that activity. Nevertheless the company has recently announced that U\$S 8.5 billion will be invested over the next 20 years on a new oil and gas project in the Niger Delta.

Sources: Oilwatch International, 12/3/99; Amigos en Defensa de la Gran Sabana AMIGRANSA/Orinoco Oilwatch, 18/3/99.